

## **THE QUEST FOR VOTER EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA, BENISHANGUL GUMUZ REGIONAL STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*The process of election is not independent from the awareness and involvement of voters. Voters' involvement is mainly the result of their awareness and political culture. The objective of this study is to assess the state of voter awareness and the role of the 2015 voter education in BGRS in improving the process of general election of the time. It was conducted by taking sample communities from the five Weredas where face to face voter education provided and communities from the three Weredas where no delivery of voter education in the 2015 general election of FDRE. For this purpose, both primary and secondary sources of data were employed. According to the study, in the towns where there was voters' educations, the understandings of voters regarding the rights and duties of voter, election related conflict resolution techniques, process of grievance hearing and compliance submission, usage of ballot paper and so on were relatively better. In the areas where face to face voter education has not been delivered, there were severe limitations in the awareness of voters. Moreover, since the rural areas of the region have no access to media and other channels of voter and civic educations voters' awareness and turnout of votes were limited. As a result, there were problems such as violent Conflict, apathy, indifference, deception about the when-about of the election-day, lack of information by some section of societies on the election date and place of election. In Metekel, Mengie, Bolojigabfoy and Kemash, voters and elites engaged in disputes by giving derogatory characterization of symbols of political parties namely "Mango" and "Sorghum." On the other hand, propagation of political program and policy alternatives were given less emphasis in the course of election campaign. On the other hand, there were troubles created by political parties that caused by both the lack of awareness and lack of commitment to struggle through democratic means. It is recommended that multi-faced voter education aided by the facilitation role of the government is imperative. The provision of voters' education must envisage fostering participatory political culture, multiparty politics, effective and constructive political socialization.*

**Keywords:** Election, Voter, Education, Ethiopia, Party

### **1. BACKGROUND**

In democracy, election is the means to ensure the political power ownership of the people. In this regard, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) has adopted legal rules that can guarantee and help the full exercise of democratic election. According to the constitution of the FDRE (1995), all sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples of Ethiopia; and their sovereignty shall be expressed through their elected representatives. This constitution declares that election is the only means of possessing political power. This provision also implies that the acquisition of seats in the federal parliament is possible only by democratic elections.

The constitution in article 55 (1) established a responsible body of election related management named by National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) for the realization of the constitutional provisions. The Board has been given myriads of duties and responsibilities by other law known by “The Amended Electoral Law of Ethiopia or Proclamation No.532/2007. One of the key tasks assigned to the NEBE (in article 7) is the provision of civic and voter education relating to elections. This duty encompasses the issuing of license to other bodies engaged in civic and voter education, and following and supervising of their activities. As a matter of fact, the limited awareness of the public about politics, the prevalence of the high number of illiterate persons, and the absence of historical exposure of the public for democratic election demand the necessity of provision of voter and civic education. In general saying, the full-fledged realization of democratic election and the power ownership of the people are dependent upon the awareness, attitudes of voters, and the political culture of the community. In other expression, in many instances, the active engagement of voters is likely the result of their awareness and participatory political culture. Needless to say that there is no voter involvement, there is no political election.

In the regions of Ethiopia where voter awareness and democratic culture are low, apathy, indifference, exposure for elections related deception and invalidation of votes were common. One of these states is Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGRS). Due to the aforementioned problems, in 2015, the regional branch of NEBE provided face to face voter education in the capitals of 16 Weredas out of 20 Weredas of the region in pre-election period. The region is inhabited by 784,345 populations (FDRE population Census Commission, 2007). It is one of the emerging regions of the country in which education infrastructure, and Media are at infant rate.

Based on the above background, this study designed to assess the role of the then face to face voter education in helping the process of the 2015 election of Ethiopia. On the other hand, the 2015 face to face voter education was the first attempt of NEBE in BGRS, and its impact has not been subjected for academic study. Hence, the rationale of this study is to fill the information gaps resulted from absence of academic researches.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Descriptive comparative study method was to arrive at meaningful conclusions in achieving the established objective of the study. Multiple sources of evidence that are secondary and primary sources were also used. The *Secondary sources* are reports, handbooks and literatures. *Primary sources*: laws of FDRE and the data through questionnaires, interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGD) were found in this category questionnaires were distributed to 400 statistically selected respondents from eight Weredas of BGRS. Interview and FGDs were conducted with 7 purposively selected respondents in eight Weredas. The participants of the data collection were the communities of Bambasi, Homesha, Kurmuk, kemash, Bologiganfoy, Debatie, Wenbera and Mandura Weredas. In Bambasi, Bologiganfoy and Wenbera, there was no face to face voter education delivered by NEBE in 2015.

## 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

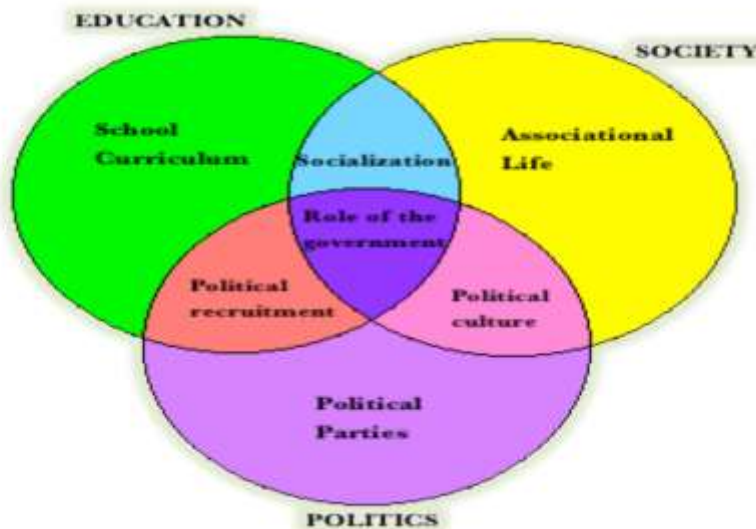
### 3.1. Voter education

Voting is a political process in order for the voices of voters to be heard. The right of expressing voices to be heard is mostly dependent on voter awareness that gained from voter education. Voter education is the process of public education through which voters are educated on their rights and responsibilities regarding the electoral process (UPIMAC, 2015). Voter education is generally used to describe the dissemination of

information, materials, and programs designed to inform voters about the detailed procedures of the voting process. Voter education involves providing information on who is eligible to vote; where and how to register; how voters can check the voters' register to ensure that their names have been included on the register; where, when and how to vote; and how to deal with election complaints and disputes (ibid). Civic education can be used as a vehicle to foster democratic process.

### 3.2. Interlocking rings of Civic and voter education (CVE)

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*Circle Chart adopted from Ibeanu and Orj (2014)*

#### 3.2.1. Associational life

Associational life is concerned about the sphere of social relations that is voluntary and distinct from “political society” and “economic society” (Cohen and Arato, 1994). Associational life includes what would be widely called civil society, but also includes many voluntary and semi-voluntary organizations based on culture, religious affiliation or trade, which can be found in any parts of Ethiopia and elsewhere in our world. Associational life is fundamental to democracy, deriving from the pluralism that underlines it. Indeed, governmental policy, at least in principle, represents the reconciliation of the interests and countervailing interests of associations. Consequently, a robust associational life presents a veritable platform and vehicle for CVE.

#### 3.2.2. School curriculum

The school system is one of the institutional processes that promote effective socialization in any society. Over the years, many countries have come to build CVE into both the formal academic curriculums of schools and in extra-curricular activities (participation in school clubs) of students. In Ethiopia, civics and ethical studies is an important subject delivered from primary, secondary school and tertiary curriculums, focusing on rights, duties and obligations of citizens, description of the system of government, organs of government and the electoral process. It has also been given in universities as common course and independent academic field.

### **3.2.3. Political parties and political culture**

*The role of Political parties (PPs)* is not limited to the organized competition for political power to represent the interest of the public. Rather, they have roles in civic and voter education. More importantly, PPs mobilize public support for their platforms during elections. Hence, effective political parties are desiderating for effective civic and voter education. As such, they have the most important role in raising voters' consciousness and ensuring that they turn out to vote. *Political culture*: Political culture is a widely shared orientation of citizens to the political system, at the cognitive, affective and evaluative levels and which can be changed over time. Political culture is also influenced by the levels of social developments. Almond and Verba (1989) distinguish three principal types of political culture namely, parochial political culture, subject political culture and the participant political culture (PPC). For the parochial political culture, frequency of orientations to political objects tends to zero (Almond and Verba: 1989). In parochial political culture people know very little about political system. Consequently, the practices of civic and voter education is unlikely. For the subject political culture, although there are strong orientations towards the general political system and specific output objects; "but orientations toward specifically input objects, and towards the self as an active participant, approach zero" (ibid) and thus there is a low level of CVE, which may emphasize on duties and obligations of citizenship. Finally, for PPC, members have strong orientations towards all the objects of the political system. Corollary, CVE flourish most in a PPC.

### **3.2.4. Political socialization**

Political socialization (PS) is a process of familiarizing the society with the political culture and system. Every political system inducts its members into existing political culture from childhood and throughout life (Ibeanu and Orji, 2014). Members of the political system form ideas and acquire attitudes, behaviors and values about politics. PS is therefore a major form of voter education. It is carried out by a variety of agents including the schools, churches, voluntary groupings, political parties and, to some extent, the family. The success of PS is dependent on the political ideology and political norms of the nation. Effective agents of socialization are vehicles of effective civic and voter education.

### **3.2.5. Political recruitment**

As a principle, competitive, transparent and participatory political recruitment is likely helpful to civic and voter education. Members of a political system partake in various ways in political decision-making. But, only few can reach to the higher decision making role in government apparatus. Thus, members could be recruited to be party officials/wipes or even mere espouser for a political party. Political staffing is a process by which members of a political system are recruited to participate in different political roles. There are verities in participation and the role in political recruitment. Milbrath (1965) identifies three levels of political participation in ascending order namely, spectator/watcher/, transitional and gladiatorial. Recruitment to higher political roles is known by gladiatorial roles (ibid). It shows more political participation and therefore more knowledge of the political system.

### **3.2.6. Role of government**

Government and its agencies constitute the nucleus of civic and voter education, which is a public good (Ibeanu and Orji, 2014). In Ethiopia, the constitutionally established government body that empowers to regulate, facilitate, canvass and deliver voter and civic education is NEBE, However, civic education as an academic fielded delivered and administered by Ministry of Education FDRE. According to the election law of FDRE,

the board has assigned to facilitate and ascertain that elections held periodically and at every level are conducted in free and fair manner; and to provide to voter education, issue license to other bodies engaged in civic and voter education, follow and supervise their activities (Proclamation No. 532/2007). This body engages in harmonization, standardization and shaping of the entire system of CVE.

#### 4. THE ROLE OF FACE TO FACE VOTER EDUCATION OF 2015 IN BGRS

For the sake of examining the role and impacts of the 2015 “voter education” communities from eight Weredas have been selected for interviews, questionnaires, and FGD. These were the communities residing in Bambasi, Homesha, Kurmuk, Kemash, Bologiganfof, Debatie, Wenbera, and Mandura Weredas. Regarding questionnaires, from 400 questionnaires distributed for respondents and only 396 of which returned with the required information. From the outset, key variables such as democratic election, rights and duties of voter, voter participation, and voter turnout have taken to deal with the subject under study.

##### 4.1. The General conditions of the 2015 Voter education

Before forwarding questions related to the basic variables of the study participants were asked about the general necessity of voter education. Different voters asked open-ended questions. FGD sources asserted that face to face voter education was essential and preferable because it:

- Gave chances of buzz discussion, question and answer, elaboration for unclear ideas
- Attracted and encouraged the attention of the trainees
- Enabled the trainers to understand the level of learning of his/her trainees and

Moreover, according to the report of NEBE (2015), the approximate numbers of voters who have got face to face voter education in 2015 were 9000 out of 340,159. According to the regional context, this amount of voters could not form more than 17 ( $340,159 \div 638 = 553.2$  and  $9000 \div 553.2 = 17$ ) polling stations out of 638 polling stations of BGRS. Most of the voters who accessed this education were dwellers of Wereda towns. The most uninformed parts of the communities have been ignored. It was not also given based on need assessment. In addition to the lack of depth and coverage, the education was given after the end of voter registration.

##### 4.2. Rights and duties of voters

Table 1: The roles of the face to face Voter education to aware the rights and duties

No	questions	Answers	In number	Present (%)
1	Did you get awareness about your rights and responsibilities from the training given by NEBE of BGRS?	Yes	210	85.02%
		No	30	12.15%
		No answer	7	2.83 %
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: Data gathered through questionnaire from the sample respondents in 2016/17

According to the above table, 85% respondents admitted that “the 2015 voter education” was essential in familiarizing them with the rights and responsibilities. The table also shows that 12.15% respondents inform

the aforesaid education has nothing to do with creating awareness about their rights and duties. The remaining 2.83% of the respondents failed to the question. Further, outnumbered respondents of the questionnaire and participants of both interview and FGD vindicate that the coverage and depth of the 2015 voter education was limited. The reports of NEBE (2015) points out that, voters who have got voter education were approximately 9000 out of 340,159 registered voters. Depending on the varieties of data gained through different tools, the research proves that the 2015 voter education has certain role in fostering voters` awareness. The communities of voter who had got voter education have better understanding about their rights and duties. Corollary, their cognitions have to the process of “democratic election.” However, most of the respondents didn’t know some of the rights stated in voter registration implementation rules No. 2/2009 of FDRE. To elaborate, they have no ideas on the right to have accessible registration center and polling station (article 13) as well as on the right to oversee the registration files upon the completion of registration (article 28). Respondents were also less aware on the right to object door to door registration or election campaign.

### 4.3. Democratic election

Table 2: Variables showing the state of democracy in the 2015 election process of the study areas

Respondent from <i>the areas where voter education Delivered (AVED) in 2015</i>					Respondent from <i>the areas where NoVoter Education Delivered (ANVED) in 2015</i>		
No	Questions	Answers	number	In Percent	Answers	In number	In percent
1	Did you face any unnecessary influence in your ways of participating in election by 2015?	Yes	40	16.19%	Yes	39	26.10%
		No	207	83.81%	No	107	71.81%
		No answer	0	00%	No answer	3	2.1%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	Did you know the system of complain submission& grievance handling system?	yes	193	78.14%	Yes	89	59.53%
		No	54	21.86%	No	60	40.27%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>
3	Did you have awareness concerning fee election and secret ballot principles?	Yes	213	86.23%	Yes	99	66.44%
		No	34	13.77%	No	41	27.51%
		No answer	0	0%	No answer	9	6.04%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>
4	Was there full-fledged realization of the principle of secret ballot?	Yes	233	94.33%	Yes	137	91.95%
		No	14	5.67%	No	12	8.05%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data gather from respondents in 2016/17 through questionnaires

A). *Free election*: According to table 2 (1),16.19% respondents from the AVED and 26.10% respondents from ANVED affirmed the prevalence of unnecessary influence in their ways of participating in election. In comparative saying, these two data evinced that the obstruction on the freedom of voters was not severe in the AVED. In addition, 78.14 % respondents from the AVED have know-how on complain submission and

grievance handling system. On the other hand, in the ANVED, only 59.57% have know-how about the aforementioned issues. Hence, in the AVED, the awareness of voters towards election related problem handling techniques were in a better position.

However, there were certain moves that can be considered as anti-these to the freedom of voter. For instance, in Dibatie Wereda voters were intimidated by party leaders to expel or expatriate from the region (BGRS) for failure to vote them. According to the response of some interviewees, during the pre-election in Kemash, Wembera and Bambasi Weredas one to five cooperatives were used for indoctrination of the agenda of political party. This was caused by lack in awareness of the public and the political elites. The lack of awareness also resulted from the absence of “effective political parties”, “political recruitment” and participatory political culture. Residents of Bambasi and Kmesh Zone admitted that government officials lobbied, insisted and influenced voters to register and vote by rounding door to door. In addition, in Wembera, Bambasi and Bologiganfoy Weredas, there were intimidations both by the members of ruling and opposition parties against people who were unwilling to register. However, it is contradictory to the law of Ethiopia. According to the election law known by proclamation 532/2007 article 26 (1 and 4) ... electors express their consent freely... and no Ethiopian shall be compelled to elect or be elected.

*B). Secret ballot:* According to table 2(4), 94.33% and 91.95% respondents from AVED and ANVED respectively asserted that the principle of secret ballot was realized. Hence, these data asserted that the principle of “secret ballot” has implemented in most parts of the study areas.

*C). legitimacy:* In few polling stations parties were field to agree on the result of the election. Opposition party: Gumuz People Democratic Movement (GPDM) did not believe that the defeat by the ruling party was not though democratic election. The leaders of GPDM argued that the defeat was as a result of intimidation, arrest of their members and supporters as well as ‘rigging. Moreover, there were limitations in formation of effective political party and genuine discussions. These were resulted in the shadowing of the legitimacy of the election process.

#### 4.4. Voter education versus Peaceful Election

Table 3: Variables showing the state of democracy in the 2015 election process of the study areas

Respondent from the areas where voter education delivered (AVED) in 2015				Respondent from the areas No Voter Education Delivered (ANVED) in 2015			
No	Questions	Answer	In number	Percent	Answer	In number	In percent
1	Did you have awareness on the election related conflict management skills in 2015?	Yes	171	69.23%	Yes	86	57.72%
		No	72	29.15%	No	63	42.28%
		No answer	4	1.62%	No answer	3	0.00%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	Was there conflict and disputes between political parties and supporters?	yes	81	32.79%	Yes	74	49.66%
		No	166	67.2%	No	75	50.50%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data gather from respondents in 2016/17 through questionnaires

The above table shows that during the election time, in AVED some 69.23% of the respondents have awareness about dispute management. In the ANVED, 57.72% of the respondents have know-how on the same subject. The second majority of the respondents that accounted 29.15% and 42.28% in AVED and ANVED respectively have no idea on how to solve election driven conflicts. Data stated in table 2 (2) evinces that in AVED only 32.79% of respondents asserted the prevalence of disputes and conflict during the 2015 general election. On the other hand 49.66% respondents admitted the occurrences of conflict in ANVED. According to these data, in the areas where face to face voter education delivered, there was relative awareness of voter regarding conflict management. Furthermore, data gained from interviews and FGD with officials indicates that election related violent conflicts were happened in rural and sub-rural areas. For instance, in Homesha Wereda, Al-Metema Kebele there was conflict between the supporters of the ruling and opposition parties. Eating of mango fruit by the supporters of party, a fruit used as symbol for the ruling political party, was the cause of the violence. During the `Election Day`, the members of opposition party threatened the people who had been eating mango fruit. In Bolojiganfoy and Kemash some people considered Mango fruit and the political party one and the same. So, opposition party members campaigned that: “Mango is no more edible food, “Mango is easily rotten fruit, Mango is perishable fruit-impossible to put mango in store house, no porridge from Mango, “our food is porridge”, and “Mango is no more our food.”

Some of the elites of the ruling party committed similar fallacies by sticking to the characteristics of sorghum to counter the opposition party. Note that the symbol of the opposition party was sorghum. Hence, some of the ruling party elites campaigned by saying that: sorghum is rotten cereals, sorghum affects by weevil and impossible to store it for long period. Both groups were not able to pursue their political programs. The campaign made impossible to identify the best political party. Further, in Bologiganfoy there was security tension that demanded the involvement of additional Special Forces. There were security problems in areas of, Kemash, Dibatie and Mandura Weredas that are far from the respective towns. It was resulted from hate monger speeches and provocative ethnic related campaigns of party leaders and supporters.

#### 4.5. Participation of voters and value of votes

Table 4: Variables showing the state of voter participation in the 2015 election processes

Respondent from the areas where voter education delivered (AVED) in 2015		Respondent from the Areas where <i>no</i> Voter Education Delivered (ANVED)					
No	Questions	Answer	number	Percent	Answer	In number	In percent
1	Did you have enough knowledge on how to use signs on ballot paper?	Yes	177	71.66%	Yes	88	59.06
		No	64	25.91%	No	58	38.93%
		No answer	6	2.43%	No answer	3	2.01%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	Have you made mistakes in marking that resulted in invalidation of the paper?	yes	38	15.38%	Yes	34	22.82%
		No	209	84.62%	No	115	77.18%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>
3	Do you know any penitential voter who failed to register for external influences?	Yes	26	10.14%	Yes	30	20.14%
		No	212	85.83%	No	108	72.48%
		No answer	9	3.64%	No answer	11	7.38%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data gather from respondents in 2016/17 through questionnaires



1). *Voters participation:* The data gained from interviews and *questionnaires* (71.66% respondents in the AVED) asserted that the 2015 education had certain value in ensuring the participation of registered voters in vote casting. Bolojiganfoy and Kemash voters were not informed about the places and time. Significant numbers of voters were deceived by others about the where and the where-about of election. The supporters of the opposition party expected that there would be separate date and polling station for their party. Consequently, they did not participate to vote. Rural areas of the region people have no prior experiences of election participation in the face of democratic competition between political parties. Further, due to the deception and influence of others in Boljiganfoy, lack of information about the 'Election Day 'in Wembera Wereda, registered voters were not participated in voting. The data tabulated in table 3 (3) has also confirmed that there were potential voters failed to participate in election of 2015 due to external influences. Moreover, according to NEBE (2016), out of 400,504 potential voters 340,159 were registered for 2015 election. The achievement of BGRS in voter registration was in a lowest position compared to other regional states of the country (Ibid).

2). *Invalidated ballot paper:* Voter education is a means to aware voters about the technical issues of invalidation of vote casts and, creates understanding on the required cautions to be taken during election. Hence, it is believed that it has value in reducing the number of invalidated votes. It induces the voter about their chance to request alternative ballot paper in case of mistake markings. According to table 3(2), 15.18 % and 22.82% respondents invalidated the ballot paper in the AVED and ANVED respectively. According to these figure, there were more voters who had marked the paper mistakenly in ANVED than in AVED. In towns where voter education was delivered, there were less numbers of invalidated votes. The slight differences are possibly the result of awareness created by the given voter education.

3). *Value of Votes:* The telos of voting is valuing the voices of voters and influencing electing one's own representative. If the vote of voters disqualified the entire process of election will not have meaning. In this case, the individuals` voices are valueless and their participation from registration to vote casting is futile acts. According to the report of NEBE (2015), there were 1300 valueless votes in the areas where voter education was delivered. On the other hand, 1014.33 invalidated votes were registered in the areas where no voter education was delivered. These two data show that the invalidated votes of the participants were less in the ANVED. Thus, the delivered voter education has nothing to do with lessening voice invalidation.

### **Concluding Remark**

In many of democratic states the governments have legal rules and practices of voter and civic education to ensure the popular participation of the public to the election processes. Particularly voter education is time oriented mainly focused on the creation of awareness about voter registration, vote casting, vote counting, grievance handling processes, voters rights and duties and another issue related to election rules. In Ethiopia, there are normative frameworks that take into account the key factors of voter and civic education such as associational life, civic education content of school curriculums, "political parties", PPC, political socialization and supportive role of the government. This study was aimed at assessing the condition of voters' awareness vis a vis the voters` education of BGRS for the 2015 general election of FDRE. To comprehend the issue through comparative analysis, samples taken from Weredas which were not covered by face to face voter education of 2015. In view of framing the investigation the study established four specific objectives includes the examination of the role the 2015 voter education in raising the awareness about rights and obligations,

maintenance of peaceful election process, means of avoiding of invalidating vote and the virtue of voters participation.

According to the study, the face to face trainings given by the name of “Voter education” during the pre-election period of the fifth general election of FDRE was value adding and desiderative. Accordingly, relatively, the said education has certain role in minimizing apathy, conflict, political intolerance, and invalidation of votes. This was possibly resulted from the awareness of voter about their rights and obligations, election related appealing process, conflict resolution means, proper usage of casting paper, the value of political participation, and other key election rules. Residents of towns that have got voter education have better awareness regarding democratic election and party politics. However, it has been proved that the geographic coverage and the accessibility of the 2015 face to face voter educations were limited. It was also not given based on need assessment and as a result, there were little consideration of training priority and identification the basic awareness gaps. Voters who have been given a day long voter education were mainly the residents of 16 towns though the gravity of awareness problem and in accessibilities of awareness raising media were rampant in the rural villages. Time error: It was also delivered after voter registration period and arguably this education was unlikely to have impacts on voter turnout. Hence, for future, any provider of voter education and training need to emphasis on need assessments to identify the gravity of awareness problem; and consideration of priority needs to employ the scarce resources to redress the grave election related problems.

In the areas where no voter education and adequate media, the 2015 election was accompanied by conflict during the election-day and in post-election period. As a matter of fact, high numbers of population lived in the rural areas where adequate media and civil societies are unavailable. These areas were also denied by the 2015 voter education and as a result apathy and indifference was common. Some registered voters had no information regarding the when-about of the “Election Day” and the where-about of the place of election. Some of them were also deceived by the contending political groups about the venue and the time of election. There were limited voter turnouts due to apathy. The lack of awareness affects the voters’ expression of their choice on the ballot paper. In the areas that have not covered by the 2015 face to face voter education there were violent conflicts among and between the people and the government securities. This was happened mainly in Kemash, Bologiganfoy, Metekel, Mengie, Homesha and kur muk wereda. Further, there were manipulations of one-to-five cooperative arrangements to disregard the opposition parties. These were problems mainly associated with the lack of awareness about the politico-legal implication of doing so. In light of strategic perspective, there were limitations in ensuring participatory political culture, effective political party system and government’s facilitation role to improve civil and voter education due to the lack of commitment by the BGRS. So, the government needs to work in realizing the full implementation of the already established norms of and establish new institutional systems that allow the participation civil societies to foster voter education. To wind up, the 2015 voter education was an icebreaking moves and has certain impacts in helping the improvement of the election process in certain. Therefore, it is necessary continue the provision of voter education by giving a particular focus to the rural communities such as pastoralists and traditional gold miners.

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