

Background of the Presidential Election -2010

The incumbent President of the Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka by virtue of the powers vested in him by paragraph (3A) of Article 31 of the Constitution of the country declared his intention of appealing to the people for a mandate to hold office, by election, for a further term on 23rd of November 2009. Subsequently the Commissioner of Elections has fixed 26th of January 2010 for the poll and nominations were received at his office on 17th of December 2009

This is the first island – wide electoral contest since the military defeat of the LTTE in May this year. How they are conducted and the outcomes of them will have direct bearing on the transition of the country from conflict to post – conflict and on the prospect for genuine peace, reconciliation and national unity.

Free and fair elections are an essential component of any democracy and effective observation by neutral and credible organizations help ensure the credibility of the election processes. PAFFREL intends to monitor and report on both elections to ensure the voice of the people getting through in a just and nonviolent manner.

There were large numbers of voters displaced from the districts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu and temporarily accommodated in mega camps in Vavuniya. As per the last records available, there were 159,540 registered voters in the districts of Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi. The presidential election is going to be a big question mark for those voters, given the controversial nature of the camps and the slow but now suddenly rushed pace of resettlement. PAFFREL understand that approximately 183,749 IDPs have been sent back to their original homes; the GoSL had indicated that it expects to complete resettlement by the end of January 2010.

The situation in the North is entirely different from the rest of the country. The predominantly Tamil population was asked to boycott the last presidential election in 2005, and this helped the current president to come to power. With political analysts predicting a split between the two main candidates among majority Sinhala votes, the votes of the North will play a very significant role in deciding the final winner. In this context, it is not unlikely that there will be both direct and indirect attempts to manipulate the vote in the North.

The Monitoring Process.

Monitoring an election properly is an enormous task and people with a high degree of impartiality are selected and deployed as monitors. For a one day country wide election, like the upcoming Presidential, at least one monitor is to be placed inside each polling booth. We intend covering all the polling divisions through stationery and mobile monitoring. These monitors are carefully selected from members of local voluntary organizations and before deployment they trained by competent and experienced resource persons.

The whole process is managed by the Board of Directors of PAFFREL and coordinated by an operation unit at the head office.

At district level coordinators will be engaged as Field Coordinators, District Coordinators and Divisional Coordinators/Long-Term Observers.

- The 26 Field Coordinators work as the link between the PAFFREL head office in Colombo and the respective coordinators' district. The Field Coordinator also ensures that orders from the head office are implemented correctly and that all necessary items are at hand when needed during the period.
- The 26 District Coordinators work as the link between PAFFREL and collaborating organizations and attend to the details of implementation of the project.
- The 160 Divisional Coordinators facilitate organization of the monitoring. They also receive information on the situation on the ground during pre-and post – election periods by collecting complaints from the public with regards to election violence/malpractices. They will function as long term observers and focal points in the implementation of the monitoring.

In order to further safeguard against allegation of partnership and bias, PAFFEL also obtains the services of International Monitors for observing the elections. They will be invited from several different countries through partnering International Election Monitoring Organizations mainly ANFREL (Asian Network for Free and Fair Election) and other

relevant agencies. 15 teams will be engaged in monitoring from 7 days before the elections to 5 days into the post-election period.

The election period is divided into three phases; the pre-election period, the Election day, and the post – election period.

- The Pre-election period ranges from the day the Commissioner of Elections calls for nominations, December 17th 2009, up to the Election Day. This period is meant for Divisional Coordinators observing the conduct of the election campaign. Experience has shown that most of the election laws violations and malpractices take place during this period. PAFFREL therefore puts an extra effort on this time to receive and demand proper actions for all complaints with regards to violation of election laws and any other illegal acts.
- During the Election Day, January 26th 2010, mobile monitors and stationary observers will observe the proceedings from the start to the close of the day. They will forward the forms to the head office through the offices in the districts.
- The post – election period stretches two weeks after the date of the poll. Divisional coordinators then observe the situation and report on it periodically so that in case of any violation remedial steps could be taken at proper level.

During the election period PAFFREL issues periodic situation reports. A formal report on entire monitoring activity will be issued, including recommendations for improving the election process. From time to time during the monitoring period observations are forwarded to the Government authorities, and made public through media conferences. After the election period a comprehensive report is issued, including recommendations to the governments for improvements of the systems of elections.

Voter Education

Voters must produce the National Identity Card or a valid document approved by the Commissioner of Elections when they turn up to cast their votes. PAFFREL understands that a significant number of voters in the North and estate sectors in the other areas of the country

may not have any identification documents that are approved by the Commissioner of Elections. Hence PAFFREL will design, print and display posters on this requirement to inform voters island-wide. Many Northern voters are likely to need temporary IDs issued by the administration in order to vote. There is room for misuse of temporary IDs so this issue will need careful monitoring. After negotiations carried out with Commissioner of Elections now the issue has been resolved. Only Grama Niladhari (Village Officer) has been authorized to attest the applications and either the Assistant Commissioner of Elections of the District or Divisional Secretary is authorized to issue the temporary identity cards for the purpose of casting one's vote at the forthcoming election.

Statistical Related to the Presidential Election -2010

Year	No.of registered Voters	No.of Polling Centers	No.of Candidates
2010	14,088,500	10,875	22
2005	13,327,160	10,486	13