**Independent Elections Commission (IEC)**

***SUMMARY OF SAMPLING AND AUDIT PROCESS***

**Background**

On 8 September 2009, the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) issued an order to the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to “…*conduct an audit and recount of ballot boxes for the Presidential election in polling stations nationwide for which the preliminary results indicate either (i) that the total number of votes cast in a polling station for the Presidential election is equal to or greater than 600, which represents a 100 percent turnout based on the IEC’s pre-poll estimate of likely voters in that location or (ii) that any one Presidential candidate received 95 or greater of the total valid votes cast in a polling station; provided that the total number of votes cast in the polling station exceeds 100. Such audits must be conducted in the presence of observers, agents, and representatives of the ECC*.”

The IEC and ECC agreed, in the interests of quality control of the audit and the need to reach a timely conclusion to the process, to conduct the audit and recount through a random sample of the ballot boxes that fall under the criteria of the Order.

**Sample concept and selection**

The specific complaint being examined is that of ballot stuffing. Polling station results are represented by ballots contained in ballot boxes. In terms of sampling, the unit for the sample is one vote or ballot and the sample size is based on an estimated number of ballots contained in the ballot boxes. However, because ballot boxes would have been stuffed as an entity, ballot boxes are randomly sampled rather than ballots within ballot boxes.

In statistical sampling, a population of observations larger than 100,000 is considered infinite and its margin of statistical error negligible. Thus, a sample of more than 100,000 papers should be more than enough to draw technically reliable and politically accurate conclusions.

Three different categories were identified to represent the different criteria in the ECC order, the third category being where a polling station would correspond to both criteria. Lists of the polling stations in each identified category were drawn up. The random selection of the ballot boxes to be recalled from the provincial warehouses was conducted in the presence of the ECC, observers and candidate agents. The full list of universes and samples are available on the IEC website – <http://www.iec.org.af/Content.asp?sect=4&page=audit>

Using the results database the IEC first identified 3063 polling stations that met the criteria established. Random samples were selected for the three distinct groups of polling stations, totaling 313.

However, it soon became apparent that there had been an administrative error in the identification stations meeting the criteria laid out by the ECC Order with the result that the initial universes (a statistical term meaning the total number in the criteria that the sample is selected from) and samples were selected in a way that did not include all polling stations covered by the Order. In addition quarantined results had also been included in the original sample, since these were also in the database. The Order applies to the preliminary results therefore quarantined stations needed to be removed from the sample. This was done in the presence of ECC members, observers and candidate agents on 5 October.

**Number of polling stations in original universe and sample**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Definition** | **Original Polling Station Universe** | **# Polling Stations in sample** | **Total Quarantined stations** | **Quarantined Stations in sample** | **Final Polling Station Universe** | **Final # Polling Stations in Sample** |
| A1 | Polling stations in which 600 or more valid votes were cast | 627 | 63 | 82 | 8 | 545 | 55 |
| B1 | Polling stations with more than 100 votes in which one candidate received 95 percent or more of the total votes cast | 1522 | 150 | 131 | 13 | 1391 -121[[1]](#footnote-1)= **1270** | 137 – 13 = **124** |
| C1 | Polling stations in which 600 or more valid votes were cast AND in which one candidate received 95% or more of the total votes cast | 914 | 100 | 173 | 18 | 741 | 82 |
|  | **Total number of polling stations in initial universe and sample** | **3063** | **313** | **386** | **39** | **2556** | **261** |

In addition the initial sample had been drawn from valid ballots cast rather than total ballots cast for category A1 and for total votes cast rather than total valid votes cast for category B1.

The IEC and ECC agreed that it was not either necessary or desirable to adjust the original sample, since the ballot boxes had already been retrieved to Kabul. Therefore an additional three categories were established as follows:

**Additional universe and samples**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Definition** | **Universe of Polling stations in category** | **# Polling stations in sample** |
| A2 | Polling stations in which 600 or more total votes were cast, except those already covered in A1 | 299 | 30 |
| B2 | Polling stations in which one candidate received 95 percent or more of the total valid votes cast, except those already covered in B1 | 343 | 40 |
| C2 | Polling stations in which 600 or more total votes were cast AND in which one candidate received 95% or more of the valid votes, | 121 | 14 |
|  | **Total new polling stations covered by ECC Order** | **821** | **84** |

The sample of 84 polling stations was drawn in the presence of the ECC, candidate agents and observers, on 5 October.

**After the adjustments, the total number of polling stations which fall under the criteria of the Order is 3377.**

**The total number of polling stations in the sample is 343.**

**Audit process**

Retrieval, of the ballot boxes took three days (September 28 to 30) for the first randomly selected sample and two days (October 6 and 7) for the second. The retrieval was done under the verification of the ECC and observation of candidate agents and observers.

The audit ran from 5 to 8 October . The first day started with the removal of the 39 quarantined ballot boxes that should not have been represented in the sample. The draw for the additional 84 ballot boxes for the second three criteria was then conducted.

The ballot boxes from the first three criteria were examined first while the additional boxes from the second three criteria were retrieved. These were examined on 8 October.

The Audit was conducted by 9 teams of three people each – two from the IEC and one international adviser, all of whom had experience of the previous audits. An ECC verification officer was assigned to each team and 62 candidate agents and observers were accredited to watch the process.

There was also a quality control team to ensure consistency in the audit.

Only one box was examined at a time by each team and a special checklist was completed for each examination. The ballot boxes were visually inspected for signs of tampering, then they were opened and the contents displayed to look for physical indications of fraud. Photographic evidence was collected where appropriate.

Full details of the audit process and of the checklist used are available on the IEC website.

**Analysis and extrapolation of results.**

The ECC considered the reports for each box which was audited. It distinguished between anomalies or human error (such as slight miscounts) and clear and convincing indications of fraud. It then aggregated the results from the sample in each category and extrapolated the percentage incidence of fraud to the total ballots in that category. This is further explained in the ECC fact sheet ‘Understanding the Process of ECC Policy Implementation’

The ECC also investigated and adjudicated complaints submitted on or after Election Day (20 August 2009) as well as deciding on ballot boxes quarantined by the IEC. The IEC have applied these orders to the results database, as provided for in the Election Law, which has produced the final, certified results.

1. These ballot boxes moved to category C2 below when the additional universes were calculated [↑](#footnote-ref-1)