

Feed back on study trip to Finland

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Experience of Somaliland Delegation to Local elections in Finland

Somaliland International Local Elections observers in Finland on 19 Oct – 28 October 2008.

Delegation consists of Members, namely Amina Haji Warsame, Baashe Farah and Omer Jama Farah.



Our trip was sponsored by International solidarity foundation (ISF). The purpose of the trip was to build our capacities of participation on local election system in Finland and enhance democratization and peaceful development in Somaliland. ISF arranged us to witness activities related to Finnish local elections such visiting polling stations, as well as follow up on election campaigning in Helsinki.

We had also opportunities to meet and share experience between other international participants such as delegates from Nepal, Namibia, and Uganda. We had also met Finish candidates, human right organizations, Members from the parliament, Government officials and political parties and Finnish NGO'

On 20 of October we had first meeting with ISF team at their heard quarter for briefing us our activities and give us timetable of our work during our visit in Finland.



Regarding the elections:

The councilors are elected in general municipal elections for four calendar years at time.

Right to vote and eligible

The municipal elections were held in Finland on 26 October 2008.

- The age of eligibility to vote is 18 yrs of age
- Voter should register in the register book and should have notification card including instructions on voting. And his address.

Nomination of candidates for municipal election

In Municipal elections, candidate may be nominated by

- Registered parties

- Persons with the right to vote who have formed a constituency association.
- The number of councilors depends on the population of the municipality.
- Parties in Finland has right to form an election coalition.
- Two or more constituency associations have the right to form a joint list.
- Each candidate is placed in the list in the order of their candidate number.

Voting days

- A person may vote in advance
- Voting on the election day
- Not both
- Voting twice is punishable as provided for the panel code.

The Election Day was on Sunday 26 June 2008 between 9:00 am and 8:00 pm, the voter has right to vote only specific polling station, where his voting register is available.

The advance voting were begin on 15 October 2008 for the people living in abroad where they casting their vote on the embassies.

In Finland voters, voting in advance were casting their vote through the post office.

In polling station

We have observed on election day one polling station where member staff of ISF casting her vote Paiva Anttila



- Voting takes place at the polling station.
- Voter must show proof at their identity to the electoral official.
- The electoral official gives a ballot to the voter
- The number of the candidate the voter wants to vote for is entered on the ballot.
- Voter may vote for only one candidate
- The voter fills in the ballot in a polling booth, in which there be can be only be one voter at a time.
- The ballot is folded so that the number can not be seen by others.
- The folded ballot is handed to the electoral official to be stamped so that the secrecy of the vote is resrvded.
- The voter drops the stamped ballot into the box



The voting process was quit, calm and peaceful, open and transparent to all candidates, no fear of voting rigging, irregularities and any wrong doing during the voting, counting and declaring the result of the election.

The ballot papers has been taken to municipality hall where counting started by the election staff as well as local election staff.



The public was following up the election results on TV, internet and Radios and visiting municipality hall.

Campaigning process

Most of candidates were campaigning door to door, distributing leaflets, Pictures, news letters, organizing events, setting up tents, distributing logo's etc. Most of the candidates can't afford to pay ads expenses, they rely on heavily talking to the people, convincing, persuading and giving information about what he wants to change in the social problems.

Visiting political parties' offices

We visited Social Democratic part (SDP), first under the name of "Finnish labor party" the present name was adopted by 1903. It's the second party in Finland now. The organization principle of SDP is individual membership. The part has members of which 50% are women. The highest decision making body is party congress, which convenes every other year. The highest power is vested in the party Council elected by the party congress. The congress also elects chairman, general secretary, three vice chairman and the part executive committee.

Left Alliance party



The fundament values of Left Alliance party are:

Equality, freedom, and sustainable development. They believe democracy must be strengthened.

We try to meet the top lever management of the parties, but we wouldn't be able to meet them because they were busy with campaign. We raise some questions the people we meet how they get funds to run their parties. They got funds from the governments funds in proportion with their seat of the parliament. They also get funds from their membership contribution, and other business people and companies.

DEMO

Finland

Political Parties of Finland for Democracy

- DEMO functions As a co-operative organization for Finnish parliamentary parties. It seeks to enhance democracy by carrying out and facilitating collaborative project between Finnish political parties and political movements in Developing countries. Demo is focusing on promoting gender equality in politics and strengthening the voice of youth in politics.





Promoting Gender Equality in Finland

- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has four separate bodies working for the promotion of gender equality. These are:

The Gender Equality Unit, the Ombudsman for Equality, the Council for Gender Equality and the Equality Board.

Among the duties of the Gender equality Unit are:

- Drafting and developing the Government's gender policy in collaboration with other ministries

Tasks

- Tasks related to the mainstreaming of gender equality
- Preparation of national legislation

The Ombudsman for Equality

The Ombudsman for Equality operates in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is an independent authority supervising the implementation of the Act on Equality between women and men and attending to the tasks assigned to the Ombudsman by Law.

The ombudsman for Equality:

- Supervises compliance with the Act on Equality between women and men, in particular the prohibition on discrimination

- Promotes the purpose of the Act by means of initiatives, advice and counseling
- Gives information about the Equality Act and its application
- Monitors the implementation of equality between women and men in different sectors of society

Equality Board

The Ombudsman for Equality or the central labor market organizations can bring matters concerning violations of the Equality Act before the Equality Board. The Board can prohibit continuation or recurrence of activity violating the Act. The Board can issue opinions to the court of justice.

The Council for Gender Equality (TANE) was established in 1972 as a permanent advisory council in the state administration. It has 13 members that are appointed by the Council of State for the term of Parliament according to the relative strength of political parties in the Parliament. Representatives of the National Council of Women in Finland and the Coalition of Finish Women's Associations for Joint Action (NYTKIS) take part in the Councils work as expert members.

Council for Gender equality



The Council of Gender Equality:

- Monitors and promotes the implementation of equality between women and men in society
- Prepares initiatives and issues opinions on topical gender equality questions

- Issues opinions in order develop the legislation on equality and other measures
- Promotes cooperation among authorities, the social partners, women and men's association and other organizations
- Promotes gender equality research and utilization of its results
- Follows international developments in the field of gender equality

The Finnish NGO Foundation for Human Rights (KIOS)

During our stay in Finland, we had a chance to participate in a workshop with some representatives from NGOs/rights organizations from Nepal, Kenya, Uganda and Namibia, where these representatives presented their experiences in human right violations in their countries and other issues. For example, youth groups from Nepal presented a video film showing a mass demonstration they organized to fight for their right to political participation by fasting and making a hunger strike. These and other mass demonstrations contributed to getting rid of the King of Nepal. This workshop was organized by KIOS.

Goals of KIOS

Is to promote the awareness and realization of human rights in developing countries as human rights are defined in the international human rights instruments

Democracy and human rights

- Interdependent and inseparable
- Democracy as necessary for the creation of an environment in which human rights can be fully realized

Human rights

Finland's human right policy is based on the principle of universality, the interdependence of human rights, non-discrimination and openness.

Democracy and sustainable human development

In the development policy Finland is guided by the human rights-based approach.

There is not just one right model for democracy.

Essential elements for democracy include such human rights and fundamental freedoms as:

- The right to freedom of association,
- Freedom of expression and opinion
- Free, independent and pluralistic media.
- Independence of the judiciary and
- The right to equal access to public service in one's own country

The parliament of Finland

In a democracy, power belongs to the people; supreme decision making authority in Finland is exercised by parliament. The 200 members of parliament elected every four years using a direct proportional. Parliament enacts legislation, approves the state budget, ratifies international treaties and oversees the Government.

Parliament has three key arenas: The plenary session makes final decision, the committees prepare matter and the parliamentary groups shape policy. Legislation is enacted according to the constitution and the procedure of the parliament. The speaker directs parliamentary work together with the Deputy speakers council. The parliamentary office provides services for MPs and is headed by secretary General of the parliament.

People can learn more about the parliament and its work in many ways. The public is welcome to observe plenary sessions, with no need for advance registration.

Parliamentary buildings are arranged for visitors, and are open for visitors on Monday through Friday



The plenary session is where parliament performs its key task of enacting legislation. Parliament also decides on the state budget, handles Government reports and statements and approves international treaties.

Legislative proposals are presented to the parliament in the form of Government bills or members' initiatives. The handling of Government bills or members' bills begins with a preliminary debate in plenary session. Then the bill is referred to a committee.

After committee handling a bill returns to plenary session. Where it is handled in two readings. In the first reading the content of the bills is decided section by section. In the second reading the bills are either approved or rejected. Once it has been ratified by the president of the Republic, an act is published in the statutes of Finland.

The plenary session is Finland's most important forum for political debate. This is ensured by Thursday question hours, topical discussion and statements by the Prime Minister.

All of these are important to ensure political openness, the focusing of attention on social problems and the proper functioning of democracy. Question hours in particular provide an occasion for timely debate—some times quite heated—between Government Ministers and the opposition.



The parliament has 15 permanent special committees. Their task is to prepare Government bills, legislative initiatives, reports and white papers. Committees also issue statements when requested to do so.

Budget:

Along with its legislative role, exercising budgetary power is one of parliament's basic tasks. Parliament exercises this power by approving the state budget, which outlines revenue and expenditure during the following year.