

ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN



Handbook for Election Coordinators

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FOREWORD

The Election Commission is pleased to issue the *Handbook for Election Coordinators* to provide guidance for effective coordination in the conduct of Free, Fair and Democratic Elections.

This Handbook is expected to contribute in consistent application of the laws and procedures in the discharge of duty as the Chief, Deputy or Assistant Chief Election Coordinators.

While attempts have been made to make the Handbook exhaustive and comprehensive, it is advised to be read in conjunction with the relevant Electoral Laws, Rules, Regulations, Guidelines, Orders and Notifications issued by the Election Commission of Bhutan.

We hope it will help you to contribute meaningfully in bringing healthy and sound Democratic practices as enshrined in the Constitution and envisioned by His Majesty the King.



(Kunzang Wangdi)
Chief Election Commissioner of Bhutan

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CHAPTER 1

ELECTIONS

This *Handbook for Election Coordinators* is issued by the Election Commission of Bhutan to help guide the Election Coordinators charged with the responsibility to ensure conducive atmosphere and environment and coordinate activities required for conduct of Free, Fair and Democratic elections as required under:

1. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan;
2. The Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008;
3. The Public Election Fund Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008;
4. National Referendum Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008; and
5. The Local Government Act of the Kingdom of the Bhutan, 2009.

The Handbook explains in detail those aspects of the Election Act which relate directly to the conduct of elections and the duties of an Election Coordinator. However, it is not a substitute for the laws, and should be read in conjunction with the various Election Laws, Rules, Regulations, Guidelines, Orders and Notifications issued in this regard by the Election Commission of Bhutan.

Election Officials

1. The Election Act provides that the Election Commission can deploy any officer or staff of the Government including security personnel.
2. All persons so deployed will be deemed to be on deputation to the Commission and are subject to the control, superintendence and discipline of the Commission, during the period for which they are so employed.

3. The Election Officials appointed for the conduct of election shall include the Chief Election Coordinators, Deputy Chief Election Coordinators, Assistant Chief Election Coordinators, Media Arbitrator, members of the Election Dispute Settlement Bodies, Spokespersons, Observers, Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, Polling Officers, Polling Assistants and Counting Supervisors.
4. An Officer appointed as an Observer shall be responsible to observe objectively and report on the manner in which elections are conducted.
5. An Officer appointed as Returning Officer shall be the Officer-In-Charge of elections in a *Demkhong*.
6. The Assistant Returning Officer, Presiding Officer and Counting Supervisor shall be responsible to report to the Returning Officer.
7. The Presiding Officer shall serve as the in-charge of the Polling Station during the conduct of the polls.
8. A Presiding Officer shall be assisted by the Polling Officer and Polling Assistant.
9. The Counting Supervisor shall be responsible to carry out the counting of votes at the close of polls.
10. All Election Officials must be apolitical and further ensure that they are not posted to the Dzongkhag/*Demkhong* where his/her *Gung* or *Mitsi* is registered.

CHAPTER 2

ELECTION COORDINATORS

1. The Election Commission, to ensure that there is in place a conducive and safe working environment for the conduct of free, fair and democratic elections and National Referendums shall designate a senior government officer as the Chief Election Coordinator of a Dzongkhag, Deputy Chief Election Coordinator in a *Dungkhag*, Assistant Chief Election Coordinator in a *Gewog*.

Appointment of Election Coordinator

2. The Election Commission of Bhutan shall issue the order for appointment of the following:
 - 2.1. Chief Election Coordinators;
 - 2.2. Deputy Chief Election Coordinators; and
 - 2.3. Assistant Chief Election Coordinators.
3. The Officers so appointed shall be subject to the control, superintendence and discipline of the Election Commission.
4. The Election Commission shall notify these appointments not later than the date of the issue of Notification on the Parliamentary Election Schedule or calling for the commencement of the Local Government elections.
5. An officer so appointed shall be required to acquaint himself/herself with the Election Act, Public Election Fund Act, National Referendum Act, Local Government Act, Rules and Regulations, Guidelines, Notifications and this Handbook and familiarize thoroughly with the various stages of the election processes and the territorial extent of the various *Demkhongs* given in the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Local Government *Demkhongs* Order.

6. An Election Coordinator must at all the times act independently and totally be free from influences of any Political Party or Candidate.

Terms and Conditions

7. An Election Coordinator shall be treated as being on deputation to the Election Commission from the date of appointment till the completion of the election cycle.
8. The Commission shall reserve the right to revoke such an appointment at any time and proceed with administrative, disciplinary or penal actions including recall if any action of an officer is found to be adversely affecting free, fair and peaceful elections.
9. All entitlements for the Election Coordinators so deployed will be governed by the existing Financial Rules and Regulations (FRR) and provided as notified by the Election Commission of Bhutan.

CHAPTER 3

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHIEF ELECTION COORDINATORS

1. The Chief Election Coordinator, in close collaboration with the Dy. Chief Election Coordinator, Security personnel and the duly appointed Electoral Officials shall under the supervision of the Election Commission of Bhutan be responsible to perform a variety of functions in ensuring the conduct of Free, Fair and Safe elections.

Outline of Roles, Responsibilities and Duties

2. The Chief Election Coordinator shall be responsible to:
 - 2.1. Create a conducive and safe working environment for the conduct of free, fair and safe elections;
 - 2.2. Oversee the conduct of elections in respective Dzongkhag;
 - 2.3. Be well-versed in the Electoral Laws governing the conduct of elections;
 - 2.4. Ensure that extensive voter education and awareness is conducted under the respective jurisdiction;
 - 2.5. Mobilize public resources (personnel and materials) as required and put them at the disposal of the Dzongkhag Electoral Officer and Returning Officers/Assistant Returning Officers to be detailed for election duty;
 - 2.6. Oversee and maintain the updated and final Voter's List and distribute VPIC of the concerned Dzongkhags;
 - 2.7. Supervise the conduct of Functional Literacy and Possession of Skill Test;
 - 2.8. Ensure that the eligible and interested individuals under his/her jurisdiction are registered for availing the postal ballot facilities;

- 2.9. Apprise the Election Commission of the ground realities in the respective Dzongkhag in a prompt and timely manner so that these may not adversely affect or undermine the successful conduct of elections;
- 2.10. Coordinate and chair the Dzongkhag level Coordination Meeting of Electoral Officers and Security Personnel;
- 2.11. Take overall responsibility for the security situation in the respective Dzongkhag;
- 2.12. Serve as the competent authority to speak/liaise with the media on matters pertaining to electoral activities during an election period for the respective Dzongkhag;
- 2.13. Develop and monitor the election budget, alerting the concerned Dzongkhag Electoral Officers, or accounts officers, and the Election Commission of any shortcomings or unforeseen issues;
- 2.14. Manage the Dzongkhag Election Control Room as outlined in the Control Room Manual;
- 2.15. Settle election disputes in the respective jurisdiction as per the Election Act and the system and procedures set out in the Election Dispute Settlement Rules and Regulations and Election Dispute Manual;
- 2.16. Facilitate effective communication towards ensuring maximum participation of the voter in the electoral process;
- 2.17. Oversee that the candidate, political parties and electoral officials fully abide by the election code of conduct;
- 2.18. Appoint a transport officer and logistic officer for smooth administration of the elections;
- 2.19. Ensure that himself/herself and his/her officers conduct themselves in a neutral, objective and professional manner;

- 2.20. Establish and maintain effective working relationships with those officials designated on election duty;
 - 2.21. Render all necessary support and services to the Electoral Officers in the discharge of their lawful duties and responsibilities;
 - 2.22. Provide the Returning Officer and Assistant Returning Officers with adequate office space, support staff and all necessary office communication equipment;
 - 2.23. Submit reports as required under the election reporting system;
 - 2.24. Notify in advance about the closure of International Border, wherever relevant;
 - 2.25. Coordinate all other aspects of elections;
 - 2.26. Abide by the Code of Conduct in the discharge of duties and responsibilities; and
 - 2.27. Be in station and on election duty during the entire election period.
3. A Chief Election Coordinator shall work in close liaison and coordination with the Returning Officers and the Dzongkhag Electoral Officer of his/her respective Dzongkhag to:
- 3.1. Supervise efforts to build awareness about the use and working of EVM among the general public, political parties, candidates and media;
 - 3.2. Monitor the conduct of *Zomdus* for selection of the nominees of the *Gewogs/Thromde* for the National Council or Local Government Elections;
 - 3.3. Supervise training of the polling personnel on election procedures, law and Electronic Voting Machines;

- 3.4. Ensure that the final list of polling officials, screened for medical /physical fitness to perform their duty, is rendered to the Returning Officers for due appointment ;
- 3.5. Participate in recruitment and placement activities of polling officials as required;
- 3.6. Monitor dissemination of information notices of electoral events to the general public;
- 3.7. Oversee distribution and storage of voting machines;
- 3.8. Inspect the selection of polling places including the requirement for the construction of temporary polling stations in conjunction with the Dzongkhag Election Offices and submit to the Election Commission;
- 3.9. Ensure first-aid medical facilities are being put in place in the far-flung and remote polling stations;
- 3.10. Require that an upto-date list of government, public, private vehicles in the Dzongkhag is maintained for any necessary deployment on election duty by the Returning Officer
- 3.11. Oversee public transport arrangements as per the *Public Transport for Election Regulations*; and
- 3.12. Ensure the forwarding of the election returns of political parties and candidates to the Election Fund Division within a month of the declaration of election results.

Authority

4. The Chief Election Coordinator shall have the authority to:
 - 4.1. Requisition the services of any officer and staff of the Royal Government necessary for the smooth conduct of the Elections in the Dzongkhag;
 - 4.2. Requisition any government resources, private vehicles or horses needed in connection with any election

arrangement on payment of reasonable compensation;
and

- 4.3. Exercise the powers delegated by the Election Commission in the Appointment Order to fulfill the mandate and responsibilities of a Chief Election Coordinator.

Accountability

5. The Chief Election Coordinator shall:
 - 5.1. Be directly answerable to the Election Commission for all acts of commission and omission adversely affecting the conduct of an election in the respective Dzongkhag;
and
 - 5.2. Submit a Report of the election in the respective Dzongkhag upon its completion to the Election Commission of Bhutan as per the prescribed format given in **Annexure 1**.

CHAPTER 4

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEPUTY CHIEF ELECTION COORDINATOR

1. The Deputy Chief Election Coordinator shall be responsible to assist and support in carrying out the responsibilities of the Chief Election Coordinator of the respective Dzongkhag during the elections.

Outline of Roles, Responsibilities and Duties

2. The Deputy Chief Election Coordinator shall be responsible to:
 - 2.1. Receive immediate supervision from the Chief Election Coordinator;
 - 2.2. Fulfill the duties and responsibilities as authorized by the Chief Election Coordinator in his/her absence;
 - 2.3. Assist to oversee the conduct of elections in the respective Dzongkhag/*Dungkhag*;
 - 2.4. Assist in creating a conducive and safe working environment for the conduct of free, fair and safe elections;
 - 2.5. Be well-versed in the Electoral Laws governing the conduct of elections;
 - 2.6. Ensure that extensive voter education and awareness is conducted in the respective Dzongkhags/*Dungkhag*;
 - 2.7. Assist in the conduct of *Zomdus* for selection of the nominees of the *Gewogs* for the National Council or Local Government Elections efficiently;
 - 2.8. Assist the Chief Election Coordinator to coordinate the Dzongkhag level Coordination Meeting of Electoral Officers and Security Personnel;
 - 2.9. Assist in managing the Election Control Room as outlined in the Control Room Manual;

- 2.10. Assist in facilitating effective communication towards ensuring maximum participation of the voters in the electoral process;
- 2.11. Assist in the training and rendering of the final polling officials list by the returning officers;
- 2.12. Render support in distribution and storage of voting machines;
- 2.13. Assist in inspection and selection of polling places including the construction of temporary polling stations in conjunction with the Dzongkhag Election Offices for onward submission to the Election Commission;
- 2.14. Assist in the settlements of election disputes as per the Election Act and the system and procedures set out in the Election Dispute Settlement Rules and Regulations and Election Dispute Manual;
- 2.15. Render all necessary support and services to the Electoral Officers in the discharge of their lawful duties and responsibilities;
- 2.16. Assist in providing the Returning Officer and Assistant Returning Officers with adequate office space, support staff and all necessary office and communication equipment;
- 2.17. Abide by the Code of Conduct in the discharge of duties and responsibilities; and
- 2.18. Be in station and on election duty during the entire election period.

Accountability

3. The Deputy Chief Election Coordinator shall be:
 - 3.1. Directly answerable to the Chief Election Coordinators for all acts of commission and omission adversely

affecting the conduct of an election in the respective Dzongkhag/*Dungkhag*; and

- 3.2. Submit a report of the election in respective *Dungkhag* upon its completion to the Chief Election Coordinator with a copy forwarded to the Election Commission.

CHAPTER 5

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASSISTANT CHIEF ELECTION COORDINATOR

1. Under the broad administrative direction of the Election Commission and the Chief/Deputy Chief Election Coordinator, a *Gewog* Administrative Officer (GAO) shall serve as the Assistant Chief Election Coordinators in the respective *Gewog*.

Outline of Roles, Responsibilities and Duties

2. The Assistant Chief Election Coordinator shall be responsible to:
 - 2.1. Ensure that the voter education and awareness are well coordinated and conducted in the respective *Gewog*;
 - 2.2. Oversee the preparation and updating of Voters' List of the concerned *Gewog*;
 - 2.3. Maintain the Election Advertising Boards and ensure they are functional;
 - 2.4. Facilitate the conduct of elections in the respective *Gewogs*;
 - 2.5. Facilitate the conduct of Functional Literacy and Possession of Skills Test;
 - 2.6. Collect and assimilate information needed for the delimitation exercise;
 - 2.7. Consult with the Chief Election Coordinator and Dzongkhag Election office regarding any election matters;
 - 2.8. Assist in the settlement of election disputes as per the Election Act and the system and procedures set out in the Election Dispute Settlement Rules and Regulations and Election Dispute Manual;

- 2.9. Maintain physical condition appropriate to the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities;
 - 2.10. Establish and maintain effective working relationships with those polling officials designated on election duty;
 - 2.11. Assist to monitor the construction of temporary polling stations as per the prescribed design;
 - 2.12. Abide by the Code of Conduct in the discharge of duties and responsibilities; and
 - 2.13. Be in station and on election duty during the entire election period.
3. An Assistant Chief Election Coordinator shall be responsible to work in close liaison and coordination with the Dzongkhag Electoral Officers for the following arrangement:
- 3.1. Drafting the schedule for the *Zomdu*/Common Forum to be conducted in his/her respective Gewog based on the geographical size and population of voters;
 - 3.2. For the bigger *Gewogs*, the *Zomdu*/Common Forum may need to be conducted in more than one designated Venue, to ensure that the distance and remote voters can participate equally;
 - 3.3. The venue for *Zomdu*/Common Forum must be centrally located for convenience and participation by maximum number of voters;
 - 3.4. The venue and details must be made widely known within the concerned *Demkhong*;
 - 3.5. Assist the Dzongkhag Electoral Office in setting up an operational polling station at the venue of the nominee selection *Zomdu*, along-with the Voter's List for the concerned *Demkhongs*;
 - 3.6. Facilitate the conduct of *Zomdu*/Common Forum in the respective Gewog;

- 3.7. Perform other duties as directed and/or delegated by the Election Commission; and
- 3.8. Maintain the record of the respective *Gewogs* as per the Forms in the **Annexure 2 to 6**.

CHAPTER 6

ELECTION DISPUTE SETTLEMENT BODIES

1. The Election Commission shall establish the Central Election Dispute Settlement Body and the Dzongkhag Election Dispute Settlement Body for the purpose of adjudication of election disputes during Parliamentary and Local Government elections.
2. The Dzongkhag Election Dispute Settlement bodies shall comprise of:
 - 2.1. Chief Election Coordinator as Chairperson;
 - 2.2. Concerned Deputy Chief Election Coordinators as Member;
 - 2.3. Concerned Gewog Administrative Officer as Member;
 - 2.4. Dzongkhag Electoral Officer as Member; and
 - 2.5. Dzongkhag Legal Officer as Member-Secretary.
3. The responsibilities, functions and authorities of the Election Dispute Settlement Bodies shall be exercised as per the provisions of the Law and in particular the Election Dispute Settlement Rules and Regulation of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2012 and the Election Dispute Settlement Manual.

CHAPTER 7

CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES

1. An Election Coordinator, in carrying out his/her duties, may come into contact with the personal information of the candidates, political parties, friends, family members, neighbours, colleagues and others that must remain private and confidential.
2. An Election Coordinator must not take part in any partisan activity during the Election Period.
3. The Election Coordinators shall carry out their duties without fear, favour or prejudice without any breach of trust, fraud, embezzlement, or dishonesty in carrying out a responsibility involving public trust.
4. An Election Coordinator must be able to work responsibly to manage the conduct of Elections and perform high quality and complex managerial functions.
5. An Election Coordinator would have direct contact with the electorates and the manner in which he/she works and communicates with public would influence the opinion on the electoral process and the integrity of an election. Therefore, an Election Coordinator shall not:
 - 5.1. State opinions or display material that support or oppose a political party or candidate while performing his/her duties;
 - 5.2. Answer questions other than those relating to the electoral process as may be authorised;
 - 5.3. Work for any Candidate or Political Party, nor attend any political functions or meeting during the Election Period; and
 - 5.4. An Election Coordinator shall abide by the Election Code of Conduct at all times during the Election Period.

Report of the Election in Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog

Election to

Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog

1. Background

[Please specify and provide information with regard to your appointment and geographical jurisdiction for the election coordination.]

2. The Electoral Administration

[Please specify and explain in detail the system and procedures in place for conduct of elections in your Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog, and the arrangements made for the conduct of free and fair elections.]

3. Voter and Civic Education

[Please provide details as to how prepared the voters were to objectively vote in the elections and the level of information dissemination with regard to Candidates/Political Parties, electoral process, etc.]

4. Voter Registration

[Please provide details with regard to the extent of voter registration in your Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog. Also, provide details of any inclusion or exclusion made to the Electoral Roll.]

5. Candidates and/or Political Parties

[Please provide profiles of Candidates and Political Parties involved contesting elections in your Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog. Provide details of activities carried out by them over the entire election cycle or period.]

6. Election Security

[Please provide an account of the security arrangements and security provided to the polling teams, election materials and secured storerooms as well as the voter in general such that every voter felt safe and secure to turn out to vote freely in the polling station was maintained. Any untoward incidences including coercion, intimidation or threat to voters and polling officials that took place must be reported as appropriate and completely to enable effective actions to be taken.]

7. Media

[Please provide an account of the conduct of the media personnel, media's coverage in the entire election cycle or period and also report any violation of the electoral laws and cases of evident partisan reporting and coverage. Media also includes foreign media agencies and personnel.]

8. Poll Day and Polling Stations

[Please provide details of arrangement of Polling Stations and an account of the voter turnout and the behavior of the conduct of general voter, the level of voter enthusiasm and satisfaction of the process, environment and election administration.]

9. Conclusions

[Please provide an account of the general understanding gained from coordination of the elections and how well the elections were conducted, the shortcomings and inadequacies. You could include any action that were taken by you or any action taken by concerned authority based on your on-the-spot recommendations and suggestions.]

10. Recommendations

[Please recommend changes and improvements needed in the conduct of future elections and delivery of electoral services including any further actions that are necessary to be taken by the Election Commission or any other authorities of the Royal Government.]

NB: All the points and event reported must be as self-conclusive as possible with specific mention of time, place and details of persons associated or involved. Where the infraction of laws and rules are reported these should also be quoted for ease and correctness of expected actions to be taken on the observations.

Record of Party Activities in Dzongkhag/Demkhong during National Council and Local Government Elections

Sl. No.	Party Name	Party Post	Gewog	Chiwog	Activity	Date	Time

Record of Functional Literacy Test Certificate Holders during Local Government Elections

Sl. No.	Name of FLT Certificate Holders	CID NO.	Contact No.	<i>Chiwog</i>	Village	Post Applied/Holding	Shortage In post	Remarks

Record of Religious Personalities

Sl. No.	Name	CID No.	<i>Gewog</i>	<i>Chiwog</i>	Name of Institute	Designation	Remarks

Annexure 5

Record of Power, Telecommunication and Road Connections

Sl. No.	<i>Gewog</i>	<i>Chiwog</i>	Power Connection	Year of Connection	Remarks

Note: Same Form can be used for Telecommunication and Road by changing the headings.

Annexure 6

Record of Schools/Basic Health Units/Out-Reach Clinics/Non-Formal Education Centers

Sl. No.	Type of Infrastructures	Location		Year of Establishment	Remarks
		<i>Gewog</i>	<i>Chiwog</i>		

Note: Same form can be used for individual infrastructure by changing the headings.