

1) What is electoral integrity?

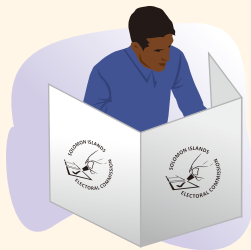
Electoral integrity ensures that the democratic principles and measures are embedded in the electoral procedures. In short, it is what makes a "good election".

2) What is Solomon Islands Election Commission (SIEC) doing to prevent fraud?

Many steps are taken to ensure that voting is secret and that there is no tampering with the election material. Polling and counting staff are well trained and able to ensure the integrity of elections. In keeping with international standards, SIEC has put in place measures and procedures to prevent fraud during polling, counting or vote tallying process.

3) What are the integrity measures during polling?

a) Vote Secrecy



Vote secrecy is one of the most essential integrity measures. This means that no one can know which candidate a voter will or has cast his/her vote for. It is an election offence if a person asks a voter who he/she will or have voted for.

Each voter will mark the ballot paper behind a voting screen and then cast the folded ballot paper in the ballot box. The issued ballot papers will not have any serial number on them. The serial numbers will only be on the counterfoil of the ballot paper booklet for reconciliation purposes.

There is no way to trace a ballot paper to a voter.

b) Ballot Box Seals

Ballot box seals are another important integrity measure. Ballot box seals are used to secure ballot papers inside the ballot box and each seal has a serial number.



When the polling staff open the polling station on Election Day, he/she will first ensure that the ballot box is empty and show it to other polling staff, candidate agents and observers. They will then put seals on the ballot box.

Each seal has a serial number. In line with international electoral standards, the seal serial numbers are recorded; this procedure is designed so that no one opens the box without breaking the seals.

Before counting begins, the Returning Officer checks the serial numbers in front of counting staff, candidate agents and observers to ensure they match the serial numbers that were recorded during polling.

c) Biometric Voter Registration and Voter List



A voter entering a polling station will first be identified against the Voter List, this means that the voter's name has to be on the list. During registration, person's biometric and biographic data is recorded during registration.

The voter is issued a ballot paper, and the polling staff member will make a note on the list that this voter has already cast their votes. This means that if the voter returns to attempt one more time, the list will show that he/she has already voted.

d) Indelible Ink

Many election commissions around the world, including the SIEC, implement an additional integrity measure, the indelible ink. After a voter is identified on the Voter List, his/her left pinky finger will be marked with ink. This mark will remain on the finger for days.



e) Tamper-evident envelopes

Tamper-evident security envelopes are also an excellent integrity measure. They are used for

transportation of material such as forms with serial numbers, unused seals and ballot papers. They are called tamper-evident because once they are closed, they can only be opened by tearing. This means that if anyone tries to open a tamper-evident bag, it will be visible.

4) What are the integrity measures during counting?

a) Verification



Verification is the process of accounting for all election material. Before the counting starts, all material such as ballot boxes, forms and unused ballot papers are accounted for. After the ballot box serial numbers are

checked to ensure they match those on the forms, staff can proceed with opening the ballot boxes.

The first step is the process of checking that the number of ballots matches the number of ballots found inside the ballot box.

b) Batching

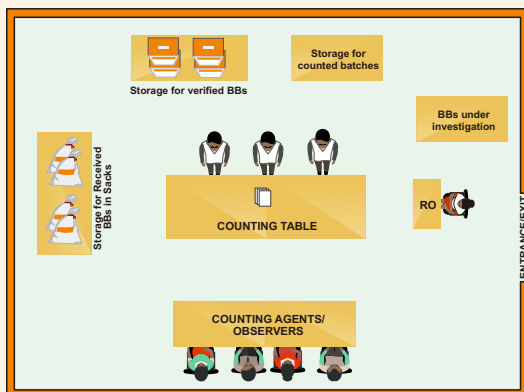
Batching is another important integrity measure before the counting process begins. When all ballot boxes in the constituency and a ward have been received and verified, the Returning Officer will select ballot boxes from different polling stations, empty them and mix the ballot papers. This way, it is impossible to tell how people in the polling station voted, as the ballot papers will be mixed with those from other polling stations.

c) Presence of counting agents and observers

Counting will take place in the presence of agents and observers. If any mistakes in counting occur, it will be noticed by candidate agents and observers, and can be immediately addressed.

d) Counting process

Counting will take place in Counting Centers established in each provincial capital and in

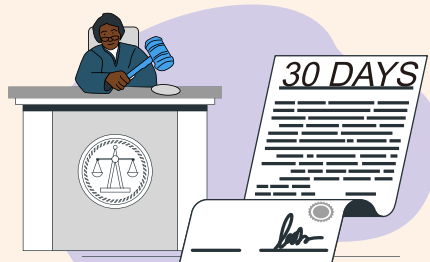


Honiara. Each Counting Center consists of separate counting units for each constituency and each ward. A Constituency Counting Unit will verify, batch, sort and count votes for the parliamentary election, while a Ward Counting Unit will verify, batch, sort and count votes for the provincial election and Honiara City Council election in Honiara.

For the parliamentary results to be released in a constituency, ballot boxes from all polling stations within the constituency need to be counted first. For provincial elections, the votes are counted by wards, which have fewer number of polling stations than the constituencies. This means that results for the provincial elections will often be released before those for the parliamentary elections.

5) What if there is fraud in elections?

In Solomon Islands, and all countries who adhere to international standards of elections, there is a way to address this. If anyone who believes that fraud took place, they can pursue the issue through



peaceful means, that is, through an election petition filed with the Solomon Islands courts. If anyone believes that a fraud is being committed, he/she should report the matter to the police or file a petition case. For petition cases, only the voters and the candidates in the same constituency as the offender can file a petition against the person who committed the fraud. The case must be filed within 30 days after the election results are gazetted. The High Court will address petition cases within 12 months from the time the petition is filed.

Allegations of fraud are a matter that is taken seriously by the courts, but it should also be taken seriously by individuals; if there is fraud, allegations have to be substantiated. Specific and concrete evidence has to be presented for any irregularities to be investigated.

6) What is the difference between fraud and irregularities in elections?



If irregularities occur, they can be detected. If there are problems with voter registration, polling, counting or tallying process, it will leave a trace and these traces can be found. Irregularities are mistakes that can occur during the process and can be traced and corrected. Contrary to irregularity, fraud is a deliberate and widespread manipulation of the electoral system, it is very important not to confuse the two.

7) What should the public do in the event of allegations of fraud?

If anyone makes allegations of fraud, they must present sufficient evidence and use the existing legal mechanisms to investigate these allegations. It is not advisable to make sweeping comments about alleged fraud and "stolen" election before the matter is investigated. Inflammatory language can undermine trust in elections, even if the process was conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

2024 JOINT ELECTIONS



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

ELECTORAL INTEGRITY AND PREVENTION OF ELECTORAL FRAUD