PILDAT
Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development And Transparency

CITIZENS' REPORT ON

IMPLEMENTATION OF 3RD STRATEGIC PLAN

OF ELECTION COMMISION OF PAKISTAN

(2019- 2023)

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PILDAT is an independent, non-partisan and not-for-profit indigenous research and training institution with the mission to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions in Pakistan.

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PREFACE

Participation of citizens in the political process, particularly in the electoral process, is at the heart of every democracy. To want to participate, however, citizens must have confidence in the institution entrusted with managing the electoral process. In Pakistan, this institution is the Election Commission of Pakistan, which undertakes strategic planning every five years to enhance its capabilities and performance. The ECP's 3rd Strategic Plan (2019-2023) encompassed extensive reforms, ranging from training improvements and infrastructure development to promoting gender parity. This report provides PILDAT's analysis, from a citizen's perspective, of the extent to which the ECP was successful in implementing its 3rd 5-year Strategic Plan.

PILDAT's report is based primarily on data provided by the ECP as well as on publicly available information, such as the annual reports of the ECP. Although a preliminary version of this report was published in January 2024 and shared with the ECP on February 1, 2024, PILDAT intended to publish an updated version that would have included the ECP's final progress reports on the Strategic Plan. However, despite persistent efforts including telephonic and email exchanges, PILDAT has been unable to secure either a meeting with the ECP for this purpose or obtain ECP's final progress report of the Plan. PILDAT shared a final draft of its report with the ECP on July 1, 2024 but did not receive a response. Thus, this report reflects the last update that was shared by the ECP with PILDAT in September 2023.

We wish to thank the Chief Election Commissioner and the ECP staff for providing the initial data on the strategic plan's implementation. Unfortunately, our subsequent requests for further updates were repeatedly ignored, which hampered the transparency necessary for effective monitoring of progress. We wish to emphasize that the real benefits of a Strategic Plan cannot accrue unless transparency about the progress is ensured by sharing progress annually, if not more frequently.

This report has been authored by Ms. Alena Sadiq, Projects Officer, under the overall direction and supervision of Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, President, who also reviewed the report.

Disclaimer
Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the contents of this report. Any error or omission, therefore, is not deliberate.

Lahore
August 2024

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
EMS	Election Management System
EVM	Electronic Voting Machine
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
MIS	Management Information System
PDM	Pakistan Democratic Movement
PMLN	Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
RMS	Result Management System
RTS	Result Transmission System
SPMC	Strategic Plan Monitoring Committee

Executive Summary

The Election Commission of Pakistan's 3rd Strategic Plan (2019-2023) contained 11 strategic pillars, which were further divided into 30 goals and 92 strategic actions. These translated to a total of 111 measurable indicators, majority of which laid out a specific task and a deadline for completion. The focus of the strategic plan was both internal, emphasizing the ECP's own organizational infrastructure, and external, emphasizing electoral management and relationships with stakeholders. Internally, the strategic pillars focused on institutional development (pillar 3), training and capacity building (pillar 4) and financial management (pillar 6). Externally, the focus was on legal reforms (pillar 1), transparency and public perception (pillar 2), election operations (pillar 5), voter registration (pillar 7), electoral technologies (pillar 8) and election dispute resolution (pillar 9). Gender sensitivity was to be improved internally and externally (pillar 10), as were monitoring and research capabilities (pillar 11).

While the ECP's consistent engagement in strategic planning over the past 15 years should be appreciated, there is a significant gap that needs to be filled when it comes to monitoring and reporting progress on implementation, which hinders the effective evaluation of the ECP's initiatives and efforts.

The ECP's mechanism for monitoring its own progress was described in detail in the 3rd Strategic Plan itself. The Strategic Plan Monitoring Committee (SPMC) was meant to meet every six months to plan and review the progress on the plan. Additionally, similar committees were to be formed within each wing of the ECP to plan and review the implementation of the Plan.[1] The heads of wings were required to make quarterly progress reports, which the SPMC would then compile annually. In response to a request from PILDAT, the ECP shared its progress on implementing the Strategic Plan in September 2023. However, the data shared with PILDAT were not detailed progress reports but rather presentations that listed progress on the strategic pillars as percentages and outlined the achievements of each wing of the ECP. Individual percentages were also provided separately for some strategic goals and actions. Overall, the data that the ECP shared with PILDAT was sparse and fragmented, with no clear explanation on how the reported percentage progress was calculated and what remained to be completed. It must be noted that the progress percentages included in this report have been given by the ECP and have not been independently verified by PILDAT.

Another progress update was expected from the ECP after the plan's scheduled completion on December 31, 2023. The ECP communicated that this update would be provided to PILDAT by January 31, 2024. However, given that the General Election was to be held on February 8, 2024, PILDAT did not realistically expect this information before March 2024. Unfortunately, till the date of this report's publication, PILDAT has not received an update from the ECP about the implementation of the 3rd Strategic Plan (2019-2023), despite persistent efforts to seek a meeting in this regard.

Other than this self-reported data, PILDAT relied on the ECP's annual reports of 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 to monitor progress. Notably, the 2023 annual report included a section titled "Assessing Progress on the Third Strategic Plan 2019-2023," but did not therein offer any detailed progress reports.

Here, it is important to mention that the ECP was significantly delayed in producing the annual reports of 2022 and 2023. The ECP had not uploaded the 2022 annual report to its website when the first edition of this report was published in January 2024, despite being mandated to do so by the Elections Act, 2017,[2] but a hard copy of the report was made available to PILDAT upon request. As per the Senate's record, the 2022 annual report was laid in the Senate on November 3, 2023.[3] On April 30, 2024 – about 6 months after the 2022 annual report was laid in the Senate – the report was also uploaded online.[4] The delayed release of the 2022 annual report thus, appears to violate the Elections Act, 2017, the relevant section of which is reproduced below:

> **16. Commission to submit an annual report. —** (1) The Commission shall, within ninety days after the end of every calendar year, publish a report of its activities for the year and send the report to the Federal Government and each Provincial Government.
> (2) The Federal Government and each Provincial Government shall, within sixty days from the receipt of the annual report from the Commission, lay the annual report in each House of *Majlis-e-Shoora* (Parliament) and each Provincial Assembly.

1. 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 34, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/dow3.pdf
2. "Elections Act, 2017 (as modified upto 5th August 2023)," page 14, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/Elections%20Act%202017%20updated/Updated%20Elections%20Act%202017-231011-105435.pdf
3. "Parliamentary Year Report 2023-24," Senate of Pakistan, page 59, accessed June 7, 2024. https://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1710148996_812.pdf
4. "Annual Report 2022," Election Commission of Pakistan, accessed June 7, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/annual-report-2022

(3) Immediately after the annual report is laid in any House of *Majlis-e-Shoora* (Parliament), the Commission shall publish the annual report on its website.

In light of the above, it is deeply concerning that the 2023 annual report was also not published within ninety days of the end of the calendar year. The report was made available to PILDAT in July 2024 but no evidence was found of it being laid in Parliament. It has also not been uploaded online. We urge the Federal Government to lay the ECP's 2023 annual report in Parliament without delay so that the Commission can release the report online as well. It is critical that the ECP adhere to the mandated timelines in order to maintain high standards of transparency and accountability.

Finally, PILDAT strongly urges the ECP to adopt a more rigorous approach to monitoring and reporting its progress on the implementation of the strategic plans. Comprehensive progress reports should be made as was specified in the 3rd Strategic Plan and these reports should be released and uploaded on the ECP website annually, or even more frequently, to provide detailed updates on the implementation of the strategic plans. Although including 'measurable indicators' was a major improvement in the 3rd Strategic Plan, its utility was seriously impaired by the absence of specific 'means of verification' (MoVs) for each measurable indicator. In future plans, we strongly recommend the inclusion of means of verification so that the progress can be verified against each measurable indicator.

Lastly, it is concerning that the ECP's 4th Strategic Plan 2024-2028 has still not been released, even more than halfway into the year 2024. While it should have been released upon the conclusion of the 3rd Strategic Plan or even before that, we sincerely hope that the 4th Strategic Plan (2024-2028) will be made public without further delay after completing a thorough process of consultation with the stakeholders such as the parliamentarians, political parties and the civil society. The timely release of a new strategic plan, as well it's comprehensive monitoring, is essential to ensure continuity and institutional development.

The reported progress in implementation of each pillar of the 3rd Strategic Plan is briefly listed below. It must be noted that these progress percentages have been provided by the ECP and have not been independently verified by PILDAT.

Table 1: Reported Progress Percentages for the 3rd Strategic Plan

No.	Strategic Pillar	Reported Progress Percentage
1	Legal Framework	100%
2	Electoral Integrity and Public Perception	89%
3	Institutional Development	69%
4	Training and Capacity Development	91%
5	Election Operations	93%
6	Budget, Finance and Procurement	91%
7	Voter Registration and Participation	94%
8	Information, Communication and Technologies	76%
9	Electoral Complaints and Dispute Resolution	95%
10	Gender Mainstreaming, Youth and Social Inclusion	83%
11	Monitoring, Evaluation and Research	88%
	Overall	**88%**

YEARS IN REVIEW: 2019 TO 2023

The 3rd Strategic Plan of the ECP was implemented in the years 2019 to 2023. Therefore, it is important to revisit the electoral and political developments throughout the years in question in order to understand the context of the implementation of the strategic plan by the ECP during this period.

After the General Election in 2018, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Mr. Imran Khan became the 22nd Prime Minister of Pakistan. The elections were marred by accusations of pre-poll and post-poll rigging. This included the failure of the ECP's Result Transmission System (RTS), which led to significant delays in the reporting of election results.[5] This failure was never investigated and thus no findings were shared with the public. After a relatively stable three years politically, Mr. Khan became the first Prime Minister to lose a Vote of No-Confidence in the National Assembly on April 10, 2022. In protest, PTI's members resigned from the National Assembly. The opposition parties formed a PMLN-led coalition government which included parties of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) alliance, along with the PPP and some other parties, under Prime Minister Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. The usual cycle of Pakistan's civil-military imbalance was set in motion, with one party losing favour with the establishment and another gaining it.

In mid-January 2023, Mr. Imran Khan managed to dissolve two Provincial Assemblies where his party, or a coalition led by his party, held majorities. The constitution mandated that fresh elections be held within 90 days but these Assemblies remained vacant till the General Election on February 8, 2024 was held after more than 365 days since their dissolution. The National Assembly was dissolved on August 9, 2023 but these elections were also not held within 90 days. The reasons given by the government and the ECP ranged from unavailability of funds and security concerns to fresh delimitation of constituencies. A delayed General Election and prolonged Caretaker Governments, despite clear constitutional provisions to the contrary, lowered public confidence in democratic institutions and some political parties. The credibility of the Election Commission of Pakistan unfortunately also suffered amid these controversies. In Gallup's July 2023 survey, only 42% of Pakistanis approved of the ECP.[6]

Blatant instances of state partiality added to the public perception that state institutions were involved in pre-poll rigging. This perception, sadly, also extended to the Election Commission of Pakistan. When the ECP deprived the PTI of its election symbol, 'bat,' forcing its candidates to contest as independents, it further became a polarizing institution for voters. The ECP's decision to strip a party of its electoral symbol due to issues related to intra-party elections was viewed as unprecedented, though not illegal as the decision was later upheld by the Supreme Court.

The General Election was finally held on February 8, 2024. The suspension of mobile and internet services on polling day hindered voters and rendered the ECP's Election Management System (EMS) software inoperable. The subsequent delay in the announcement of the provisional results beyond the deadline fixed in Section 13 (3) of the Elections Act, 2017 raised serious concerns about the credibility of the election. Moreover, the ECP did not publish Forms 45, 46, 48 and 49 on its website within 14 days of polling day, as required by Section 95 (10) of Elections Act, 2017. These delays, and the lack of a satisfactory explanation for them, raised serious questions about the fairness of the General Election 2024 and further damaged the public's perception of the ECP.[7]

5. "Assessment of the Quality of General Election 2018," PILDAT, August 2018, accessed June 14, 2024. https://pildat.org/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2018/09/AssessmentoftheQualityofGeneralElection2018b.pdf?Submit=Download
6. "National Public Opinion Poll Report, July - July 2023," Gallup Pakistan, page 25, accessed January 31, 2024. https://gallup.com.pk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Public-Pulse-Report-June-2023-3.pdf
7. "Assessment of the Quality of General Election 2024," PILDAT, March 2024, accessed June 1, 2024. https://pildat.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/AssessmentoftheQualityofGeneralElection2024.pdf

ECP'S PERFORMANCE ON THE 11 PILLARS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Pillar 1: Legal Framework

The Commission's stated strategic goals for pillar 1 were to improve laws governing national and local elections, and to improve the Election Rules, 2017. The ECP reported that it has met 100% of its goals for this pillar.[8]

ECP's Local Government Elections wing reported that they proposed amendments in Local Government laws to the federal and all four provincial governments, to bring their respective local government laws relating to the ICT, Cantonment Boards and provinces, in line with the Elections Act, 2017.[9] Meanwhile, the law wing reported that the ECP proposed 67 amendments to the Elections Act, 2017 and 90 amendments were made to Election Rules, 2017.[10] It was not specified whether the four Strategic Actions included under Strategic Pillar 1 were completed by the specific dates mentioned under Measurable Indicators.

Table 2: Pillar 1 – Legal Framework

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
1.1 To contribute towards improved electoral laws for National and Local elections	1.1.1 Review the Elections Act, 2017 and Local Government Acts	1.1.1.1 Review of the Elections Act completed, including from a gender and social inclusion perspective, by June 2020	100%	Here, it could have been helpful to have a means of verification, such as a report showing the gender-based analysis of the Elections Act.
		1.1.1.2 Review of Local Government (LG) Acts completed within one month of their enactment or any amendments		No evidence has been provided of the reviews or the dates on which they were completed.
	1.1.2 Propose amendments to harmonize Local Government Acts with the Elections Act, 2017	1.1.2.1 Amendments proposed to the Federal and Provincial Governments within one week after completion of the review of LG Acts or any amendments therein	100%	The LGE Wing shared that it gave feedback on Punjab Local Government (Delimitation of Union Council) Rules, 2022 with the Government of Punjab on 22-11-2022. They also shared feedback on the draft PLG (Election) Rules 2022 on 25-11-2022. Similarly, the LGE Wing also shared this information about the feedback they had given to other provinces.

8. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 2.
9. "Progress on Strategic Plan, Local Government Elections Wing," Election Commission of Pakistan, April 7, 2023.
10. "Achievements of Election Commission," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 47.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
1.2 To improve the Election Rules, 2017	1.1.3 Propose amendments to improve the Elections Act, 2017	1.1.3.1 Amendments proposed to the Federal Government by December 2020	No % progress reported	A list of amendments and the dates they were proposed could have been provided.
	1.2.1 Review and amend the Election Rules, 2017	1.2.1.1 Review completed and amendments made in the Election Rules, 2017 by September 2020	No % progress reported	The dates of the reviews should be documented. A list of amendment made in rules, along with dates, should be provided as a means of verification.
		1.2.1.2 Review completed and amendments made in the Election Rules, 2017 within two months of any amendment made in the Elections Act, 2017		The dates of the reviews should be documented. A list of amendment made in the rules, along with dates, should suffice as a means of verification.
Overall Progress on Pillar 1: Legal Framework			**100%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Strategic Pillar 2: Electoral Integrity and Public Perception

The Commission's stated strategic goals for pillar 2 were to boost stakeholder engagement in the electoral process, to have greater transparency, to ensure compliance with electoral laws, and to establish a reliable social media presence. As per the ECP, it has achieved 89% progress on these goals.[11]

The Elections wing reported that they have met 90% of their goals to enhance stakeholder engagement and to increase public access to information.[12] However, since the ECP did not define 'stakeholders' in its strategic plan, we cannot infer with surety who they are referring to.

The Media Coordination and Outreach wing of the ECP reported 90% progress on increasing stakeholder awareness of elections (2.3.1) and 87% progress on their social media related goal (2.4).[13] They shared that a social media committee was functional since 11th January 2022 and SOPs had been developed.[14] The ECP created Facebook and YouTube accounts in 2020.[15] ECP's X (formerly known as Twitter) account was created in March 2020.[16] Study tours to the ECP Secretariat were arranged for various stakeholders including students, trainee police officers and female journalists in 2023.[17]

Table 3: Pillar 2 – Electoral Integrity and Public Perception

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
2.1 To enhance stakeholders' engagement in the electoral process	2.1.1 Review stakeholders' existing coordination and communicatio n practices and systems	2.1.1.1 Review completed by September 2020	90%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or if a report came out of it.
	2.1.2 Establish a mechanism to improve coordination and communication with stakeholders	2.1.2.1 Mechanism established by March 2021		Was an output document prepared about the mechanism?
	2.1.3 Implement the mechanism to improve coordination and communication with key stakeholders	2.1.3.1 Mechanism adopted with effect from June 2021		Was a document prepared to guide the implementation of the mechanism?
		2.1.3.2 At least one activity held with each category of stakeholders per year		The number or list of activities held per year as well as the list of stakeholders involved could serve as a means of verification.

11. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 3.
12. "Pro forma-A," Elections Wing, Election Commission of Pakistan.
13. "Strategic Plan 2019-2023, Activity Report by MCO," Election Commission of Pakistan, April 12, 2023.
14. Ibid.
15. "Annual report 2020," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 21, accessed January 30, 2024: https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/annualreport2020.pdf.
16. "Election Commission of Pakistan (OFFICIAL) @ECP_Pakistan," Twitter, https://twitter.com/ECP_Pakistan
17. "Annual report 2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 71.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
2.2 To institutionalize transparency and enhance public access to information in electoral management	2.2.1 Review and improve current practices and policies to enhance transparency and public access to information in electoral management	2.2.1.1 Policies reviewed and improved by October 2020	90%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or if a report came out of it.
	2.2.2 Establish and implement a mechanism to institutionalise transparency and public access to information in electoral management	2.2.2.1 Mechanism established and implemented by February 2021		Was a document prepared defining the established mechanism?
2.3 To ensure compliance with electoral laws by all stakeholders	2.3.1 Increase stakeholders' awareness of the Election Laws, procedures and policies	2.3.1.1 Election laws and rules translated in Urdu, printed and disseminated by December 2021	90%	Were these laws and rules translated by the required date? The dissemination plan should be shared.
		2.3.1.2 At least 10,000 representatives from various stakeholders (i.e. segregated by political parties, CSOs, media) participated in or engaged through awareness activities each year		The number or list of activities held per year as well as the list of stakeholders involved could serve as a means of verification.
	2.3.2 Strengthen and implement accountability mechanisms in relation to violations of the Election Act and Rules	2.3.2.1 Accountability mechanism improved and implemented by June 2022	No % progress reported	Was a document prepared to guide the implementation of the mechanism?

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
2.4 To improve public perception through social media	2.4.1 Establish official social media presence	2.4.1.1 Social media strategy developed by June 2020	87%	Was a document detailing the strategy prepared by the committed date?
		2.4.1.2 Official social media presence established by August 2020		The ECP could have listed the dates of account creation as a means of verification.
	2.4.2 Counter disinformation prevalent on social media	2.4.2.1 Public perception and awareness enhanced by keeping accounts active and regular on social media	87%	Insights from the accounts, including impressions and engagement, could be shared as a means of verification.
Overall progress on Pillar 2: Electoral Integrity and Public Perception			**89%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Strategic Pillar 3: Institutional Development

The Commission's focus in pillar 3 was on strengthening their office infrastructure, human resource capabilities, record management practices and internal communications. Additionally, they hoped to increase exchange of knowledge exercises with other stakeholders and institutions. The ECP reported to have achieved 69% of these aims.[18]

ECP owns only 4 out of 160 of its offices; the rest are housed in rented properties.[19] In data shared with PILDAT, the Development wing stated that the ECP has purchased 18 plots between 2020-2022 to construct their field offices. [20]

The ECP launched its Human Resource Management System in 2020.[21] The Administration wing reported that they completed their review and rationalization of human resource in 2020 nationally and 2021 provincially.[22] As per the 2023 annual report, a rationalization exercise was also conducted in 2021-2022 and as a result new posts were created within the organization.[24] The record room was established in January 2023. At the invitation of the ECP, the PILDAT team visited the record room and it was found to be a modern and well-maintained facility.

As far as international exposure is concerned, officers from the ECP attended conferences organized by the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) and by the Commonwealth UK during 2020[25] and 2021.[26]

We should note here that while reviewing data provided by the ECP, we noticed an apparent lack of coordination across different wings. For example, for 3.3.2 (Develop and deploy an integrated office record management system), the Administration wing reported 85% [27]progress while the IT wing reported 80% progress.[28]

18. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 3.
19. "Annual report 2022," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 106.
20. "Achievements of Election Commission," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 19.
21. "Annual report 2020," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 27, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/annualreport2020.pdf.
22. "Achievements of Election Commission," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 13.
23. "Annual report 2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 91.
24. "Achievements of Election Commission," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 18.
25. "Annual report 2020," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 24, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/annualreport2020.pdf.
26. "Annual report 2021," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 85-86, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/annual%20report/ECP%20Annual%20Report%202021%20(1).pdf.
27. Administration Wing (Record Branch)," Election Commission of Pakistan, April 7, 2023.
28. "IT Wing Activity Plan," Election Commission of Pakistan.

Table 4: Pillar 3 – Institutional Development

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
3.1 To strengthen the ECP's offices infrastructure for a more conducive working environment	3.1.1 Assess needs for strengthening infrastructure of the ECP's offices, including from an accessibility perspective	3.1.1.1 Assessment completed by June 2020	100%	A dated needs assessment document could serve as a means of verification.
	3.1.2 Formulate the ECP's Infrastructure Development Plan	3.1.2.1 Plan formulated and approved by December 2020	100%	Proof of formulated plan could serve as a means of verification.
	3.1.3 Acquire land for construction of ECP offices at provincial, regional and district levels	3.1.3.1 Land acquired for 50% ECP offices by December 2023	37%	The ECP could provide a list of cities where land acquired against the number of required offices.
	3.1.4 Construct the ECP's own purpose-built offices at provincial, regional and district levels, and a Federal Election Academy (FEA) in Islamabad	3.1.4.1 At least 25 offices, along with FEA, built by December 2023	10%	A list of existing offices and year of completion should be provided. This can be similar to the list of in-progress projects that has been provided in the 2023 annual report.
	3.1.5 Resource mobilisation for development of infrastructure	3.1.5.1 Resource mobilisation plan developed and deployed by December 2020	20%	If the plan has not been developed, this should be specified and reasons should be given for the delay.
	3.2.1 Assess needs to rationalise and strengthen human resource management	3.2.1.1 Needs assessment completed by June 2020	90%	A dated needs assessment document could serve as a means of verification.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
3.2 To rationalize human resource strength, improve recruitment processes and promote performance-based human resource management	3.2.2 Review and improve existing policies and procedures on human resource management	3.2.2.1 Existing policies and procedures (including recruitments, postings, transfers and promotions) reviewed and improved by November 2020	80%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or if a report came out of it.
	3.2.3 Formulate plan of action to rationalise and improve human resource management	3.2.3.1 Plan of action developed and approved by March 2021	90%	A draft of the plan of action could be used as a means of verification of partial progress.
	3.2.4 Review and improve systems for performance-based human resource management	3.2.4.1 System for performance-based human resource management improved by February 2022	90%	No clear information given on the timeline of improvements in the HRMS.
3.3 To improve record management procedures and systems	3.3.1 Identify areas of improvement for record management procedures and systems	3.3.1.1 Needs assessment completed by December 2020	100%	A dated needs assessment document could serve as a means of verification.
	3.3.2 Develop and deploy an integrated office record management system	3.3.2.1 Integrated office record management system developed and deployed by December 2021	80% (IT wing) or 85% (Administration wing)	in the documents provided in September, the Administration wing said that the scanning of records is being regularly carried out under the IORMS. The 2023 annual report gives further details that serve as means of verification. It states that all records were scanned by September 26, 2023 and digitized by November 2023. However, the integration of these documents with "e-office" is yet to be done.
	3.3.3 Develop and deploy a warehouse management system	3.3.3.1 Warehouse management system deployed by December 2021	No % progress reported	A progress report, showing steps taken along with dates, could have been given.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
3.4 To enhance internal communication and coordination	3.4.1 Review of existing internal communication and coordination procedures	3.4.1.1 Internal communication and coordination reviewed by November 2020	No % progress reported	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or if a report came out of it.
	3.4.2 Devise and implement mechanism for internal communication and coordination	3.4.2.1 Internal communication and coordination mechanism deployed by November 2021	No % progress reported	A dated progress report, showing steps taken towards the new mechanism, could have been provided.
3.5 To promote experience and knowledge sharing at national and international levels	3.5.1 Organise national conferences and symposia on electoral issues for knowledge and experience sharing	3.5.1.1 At least one event on electoral issues held each year	No % progress reported	A list of events should be provided. If no events were held, a reason should be given.
	3.5.2 Explore and leverage international opportunities for knowledge and experience sharing	3.5.2.1 At least 10 ECP officers attend international events each year	100%	A list of events attended and by whom should be provided for each year.
	3.5.3 Host international conferences and symposia in Pakistan on electoral issues for experience and knowledge sharing	3.5.3.1 At least one international event hosted in Pakistan every three years	No % progress reported	A list of events hosted should be provided.
Overall Progress on Pillar 3: Institutional Development			**69%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Strategic Pillar 4: Training and Capacity Development

The ECP's strategy for pillar 4 was twofold. Internally, they aimed to provide quality trainings to their employees while externally the focus was on training the temporary but critically important electoral workers. As reported by the ECP, they have achieved 91% progress.[29]

The ECP trained numerous polling staff in 2020[30] and 2021,[31] including training election officials for the Senate and LG elections. Additionally, new training modules were developed for ECP staff and the Training wing was restructured.[32] We should note here that the name of Federal Election Academy was changed to Pakistan's Electoral Academy for Democratic Practices, Research and Management (PADRM) in April 2022.[33]

Th ECP actively trained polling personnel in 2023 as well. 20 ECP officers were trained as lead trainers in order to further train more than 2400 master trainers across Pakistan. [34] As per the list of trainings provided in the 2023 annual report, more than 1.4 million election officials, including security personnel, were trained during the year.[35] Trainings were also held at the Civil Service Academy and the Pakistan Audit and Accounts Academy for the capacity building of ECP staff.[36]

Table 5: Pillar 4 – Training and Capacity Development

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
4.1 To strengthen the capacity of ECP employees by providing quality trainings and learning opportunities at the national and international level	4.1.1 Develop and deploy a policy, procedural and administrative framework for FEA	4.1.1.1 Framework developed and deployed by July 2020	100%	Was a document prepared outlining the framework and guiding its deployment?
	4.1.2 Establish cooperative arrangements between FEA and other training and educational institutions	4.1.2.1 Cooperative arrangements established with at least five institutions by December 2020	100%	The press releases or other notes of such agreements could be shared.
	4.1.3 Conduct mandatory gender sensitive induction trainings at FEA for newly recruited staff	4.1.3.1 All newly recruited staff trained within three months of their induction	100%	The list of gender sensitivity trainings should be provided.

29. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 4.
30. "Annual report 2020," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 22-23, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/annualreport2020.pdf.
31. "Annual report 2021," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 68-72, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/annual%20report/ECP%20Annual%20Report%202021%20(1).pdf.
32. "Annual report 2021," Election Commission of Pakistan, Page 77-78, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/annual%20report/ECP%20Annual%20Report%202021%20(1).pdf.
33. Election Commission of Pakistan (OFFICIAL) @ECP_Pakistan, Twitter, April 23, 2022, accessed January 31, 2024. https://twitter.com/ECP_Pakistan/status/1517765757609955330.
34. "Newsletter July to September 2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 18, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/newsletter/ECPs%20Newsletter%20July-September%202023.pdf.
35. "Annual report 2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 25-27.
36. "Annual report 2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 99-102.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
4.1 To strengthen the capacity of ECP employees by providing quality trainings and learning opportunities at the national and international level	4.1.4 Conduct periodic gender sensitive management and specialised trainings on a regular basis for ECP officers and staff at or through FEA	4.1.4.1 At least eight management / specialised trainings of various types arranged each year	100 %	A list of trainings held per year should be provided.
		4.1.4.2 At least 250 employees trained annually		A list of employees trained could be provided
	4.1.5 Arrange external training and learning opportunities at other national training and educational institutions	4.1.5.1 At least 50 employees trained through other institutions annually	100 %	A list of employees trained and the institutions of training should be provided.
	4.1.6 Arrange lectures, talks and seminars at FEA by eminent national and international experts for ECP employees	4.1.6.1 At least three events arranged annually	No % progress reported	A list of events should be provided.
	4.1.7 Explore and leverage international training opportunities	4.1.7.1 At least 10 ECP employees avail international training opportunities annually	No % progress reported	A list of employees who availed international training opportunities and the details of training should be provided.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
4.2 To provide efficient and quality training to election officials and improve awareness of other relevant stakeholders	4.2.1 Embed election modules in the ongoing trainings for other government officials	4.2.1.1 Election modules developed by December 2020	28%	The drafts or frameworks of the election modules should be shared.
		4.2.1.2 At least five training institutions that embedded / implemented election modules in trainings by December 2022		A list of training institutions that implemented the modules should be provided.
	4.2.2 Ensure availability of a pool of trained lead and master trainers	4.2.2.1 A pool of 100 Lead Trainers maintained by December 2020	100 %	A list of lead trainers as of December 2020 should have been provided.
		4.2.2.2 A pool of 2500 trained Master Trainers, including at least 30% women, maintained by December 2021		Statistics such as number and gender of master trainers as of December 2021 with actual percentage of women trainers should have been provided.
	4.2.3 Strengthen capacity of election officials in partnership with government training institutions	4.2.3.1 Cooperative arrangements established with at least 50 training institutions by June 2021	100 %	The list of cooperative arrangements and names of training institutions should be provided.
		4.2.3.2 Training of all election officials appointed for local government / General Elections conducted by September 2023		Dated list of trainings should be provided.
	4.2.4 Improve awareness of other relevant stakeholders on the election process	4.2.4.1 At least five awareness sessions conducted annually	No % progress reported	Dated list of sessions and related details should be provided.
Overall Progress on Pillar 4: Training and Capacity Development			**91%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Strategic Pillar 5: Election Operations

For pillar 5, the ECP's focus was on the entire process of elections, starting from nominations to the transmission of results. The stated strategic goals were to improve scrutiny of campaign finances, improve accessibility of polling stations and overall improve logistical management. They claim to have achieved 93% of these goals.[37]

In data shared with PILDAT, the Commission contended that a nationwide survey of polling stations began at the end of 2021 to ensure all proposed polling stations were accessible and had basic facilities.[38] This process has been completed.

In its annual report 2022, the ECP stated that a Management Information System (MIS) for political parties' financials and other enlistment materials is under development.[39] They have apparently missed their deadline as it was March 2021 in the strategic plan.

Table 6: Pillar 5, Election Operations (ECP's Strategic Plan, 2019-2023)

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
5.1 To improve political parties' enlistment process and scrutiny of campaign expenditures, election expenses and statements of assets and liabilities	5.1.1 Review and improve SOPs for scrutiny of documents submitted by political parties	5.1.1.1 SOP's reviewed and improved by June 2020	100%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or if a report came out of it.
	5.1.2 Develop and operationalise a Management Information System for political parties' enlistment, election symbols and financial statements	5.1.2.1 Management Information System developed and operationalised by March 2021	90%	A dated progress report, showing steps taken towards the new MIS, would have sufficed as means of verification.

37. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 4.
38. "Achievements of Election Commission," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 31.
39. "Annual report 2022," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 37.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
5.1 To improve political parties' enlistment process and scrutiny of campaign expenditures, election expenses and statements of assets and liabilities	5.1.3 Review and improve SOPs for submission and scrutiny of campaign expenditures by contesting candidates and statements of assets and liabilities by members of the different legislatures	5.1.3.1 SOP's reviewed and improved by December 2020	100%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or what recommendations were made and whether they were implemented.
	5.1.4 Devise and deploy an efficient system for monitoring and scrutiny of campaign expenditures by contesting candidates and of statements of assets and liabilities submitted by members of legislatures	5.1.4.1 Devised and deployed by December 2021	90%	A dated progress report, showing steps taken towards the new system, would have sufficed as means of verification.
5.2 To improve electoral procedures and access to polling stations	5.2.1 Review, simplify and improve the quality of existing forms, envelopes and materials used for elections	5.2.1.1 Reviewed and improved by December 2021	90%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or if a report came out of it.
	5.2.2 Review and improve SOPs for efficient and gender sensitive management of election operations	5.2.2.1. SOPs reviewed and improved by June 2022	90%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or what changes were made.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
5.2 To improve electoral procedures and access to polling stations	5.2.3 Review and improve existing SOPs for development of polling scheme and ensure selection of accessible and better equipped government buildings having basic facilities to serve as polling stations	5.2.3.1 SOPs reviewed and improved and deployed by December 2020	90%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or what changes were made.
5.3 To improve planning and ensure efficient management of election logistics and election officials	5.3.1 Develop integrated operational plans for effective coordination and efficient management of elections	5.3.1.1 Integrated operational plans developed by March 2022	90%	A dated progress report, showing steps taken towards the new plan, would have sufficed as means of verification.
	5.3.2 Review, improve and strengthen mechanisms for the secure management of election logistics	5.3.2.1 Mechanism for secure management of election logistics reviewed and strengthened by March 2022	No % progress reported	A dated progress report, showing steps taken towards the new mechanism, would have sufficed as means of verification. In view of the apparent failure of logistics in the General Election 2024, a detailed report on this Strategic Action would be useful to ascertain the weaknesses, if any.
	5.3.3 Identify and expand options for secure and efficient printing of election materials	5.3.3.1 Options identified and expanded by September 2020	No % progress reported	A document outlining the options should have been provided.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
5.3 To improve planning and ensure efficient management of election logistics and election officials	5.3.4 Develop a mechanism that ensures timely appointment of trained election officials	5.3.4.1 Mechanism developed by March 2022	90%	A dated progress report, showing steps taken towards the new mechanism, would have sufficed as means of verification.
Overall Progress on Pillar 5: Election Operations			**93%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Strategic Pillar 6: Budget, Finance and Procurement

The ECP's strategic goals under this pillar were to improve management of budgets, to ensure financial autonomy and to optimize resource mobilization. The ECP has reported that it has achieved 91% of its goals.[40] A notable development in 2023 was the establishment of an "Accounts cadre," which previously didn't exist within the ECP.[41]

Table 7: Pillar 6 – Budget, Finance and Procurement

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
6.1 To improve planning, implementation, transparency and quality assurance in the management of procurements, budget and finance	6.1.1 Develop and implement an Automated Procurement Management System in consultation with different wings and field offices	6.1.1.1 Automated Procurement Management System developed and deployed by December 2021	No % progress reported	A dated progress report, showing steps taken towards the new system, would have sufficed as means of verification.
	6.1.2 Review and improve SOPs to regulate and improve transparency in election related payments	6.1.2.1 SOPs reviewed and improved by March 2021	100 %	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or what changes were made or whether an output document was compiled.
	6.1.3 Develop and deploy an Automated Budget Management System that ensures efficiency and transparency in election operations	6.1.3.1 Automated Budget Management System developed and deployed by June 2021	100 %	A dated progress report, showing steps taken towards the new system, would have sufficed as means of verification.
	6.1.4 Develop and implement SOPs for enhanced transparency in procurements and budget management	6.1.4.1 SOPs developed and implemented by March 2021	100 %	A dated progress report, showing steps taken towards the new SOPs, would have sufficed as means of verification.

40. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 5.
41. "Annual report 2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 107.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
6.2 To ensure financial autonomy and improve the ECP's financial management system	6.2.1 Review administrative challenges and develop recommendations for Government's consideration to ensure the ECP's financial autonomy	6.2.1.1 Reviewed and developed by June 2020	85%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or what recommendations came out of it.
	6.2.2 Resolve contentious issues with relevant federal authorities	6.2.2.1 Contentious issued resolved by March 2020	No % progress reported	Some examples of "contentious issues" should have been specified in this strategic action.
	6.2.3 Explore and pursue options for an in-house audit system of pay, allowances and contingency expenses	6.2.3.1 Options established by June 2020	70 %	No information is given regarding whether the research was completed or if a report came out of it.
6.3 To optimize resource mobilization for improving the ECP's infrastructure, institutional capacity and operations	6.3.1 Develop and implement a resource mobilisation plan	6.3.1.1 Resource mobilisation plan developed and implemented by October 2020	No % progress reported	No information is given regarding when the plan was developed or implemented.
Overall Progress on Pillar 6: Budget, Finance and Procurement			**91%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Strategic Pillar 7: Voter Registration and Participation

ECP's stated strategic goals under pillar 7 were to ensure increased voter registration and participation, especially for women, youth, and marginalized groups. Additionally, the goal was to improve the quality of electoral rolls. The ECP reported that it has achieved 94% of these targets. [42]

We should acknowledge with thanks at the outset that after PILDAT's request to include youth in the strategic plan, this pillar was extensively amended by the ECP.[43] We have reproduced the amended version verbatim as sent to us by the ECP.

As per the data shared with us by the ECP, the media wing has conducted more than 1650 student voter awareness sessions since November 2021.[44] During 2023, mock poll exercises were conducted across colleges and universities in Pakistan. [45]

Electoral rolls are reviewed and updated periodically by the ECP. As per their latest publication, there are more than 128 million registered voters in Pakistan.[46] In its latest newsletter for the last quarter of 2023, ECP said it has brought down the gender gap in electoral rolls to 7.88%. [47] However, in the 2023 annual report, it is reported that the gender gap is 7.74% as of December 2023.[48]

We should note here that while reviewing data provided by the ECP, we noticed an apparent lack of coordination across different wings. This is why we have reported two progress figures against some of the strategic actions under pillar 7.

Table 8: Pillar 7 – Voter Registration and Participation

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
7.1 To ensure that eligible citizens, especially women, youth and socially excluded groups, get NICs and are registered as voters	7.1.1 Conduct research on issues related to NIC issuance and voter registration, particularly related to women, youth, and other marginalized groups	7.1.1.1 Research completed with strong focus on women, youth, and most marginalized groups by 2022/2023 20% of joint campaigns of NADRA and ECP for NIC registration focus on youth, girls and youth from other marginalized groups A youth voter communication and outreach strategy is developed and adopted by June 2023 A consortium of more than 50 universities from across Pakistan is established and functional by June 2023	100 %	A research document, a list of campaigns, proof of strategy development, and list of members of the consortium should be provided.

42. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 5.
43. Amina Sardar to Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, May 11, 2023.
44. "Achievements of Election Commission," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 39.
45. "Annual report 2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 67-69.
46. "Electoral Rolls," Election Commission of Pakistan, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/electoral-rolls.
47. "Newsletter October to December 2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 7, accessed January 30, 2024. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vnz5pZ46-TeLa5FKY3szBo9nqCC6sxSo/view.
48. "Annual report 2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 83.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
7.1 To ensure that eligible citizens, especially women, youth and socially excluded groups, get NICs and are registered as voters	7.1.2 Develop and execute a plan with clear targets for NADRA to bridge gender gap and ensure issuance of NIC to all eligible voters including youth	7.1.2.1 Plan developed and agreed with NADRA by December 2020	No % progress reported	No information is given regarding whether the plan was completed or if NADRA agreed to it.
		7.1.2.2 Gender gap reduced in the electoral rolls to 6% by 2023		A simple comparison of gender gap can be provided as a means of verification.
		7.1.2.3 90% of all eligible citizens are registered as voters by 2023		A simple comparison of registered voters over the years can be provided as a means of verification.
	7.1.3 Plan and execute cooperative initiatives involving stakeholders (e.g. CSOs, political parties, media, legislatures) to facilitate the issuance of NICs and voter registration	7.1.3.1 Five Stakeholder groups engaged and mobilised in each district by June 2020	83%	The list of stakeholder engagements involved could serve as a means of verification.
		7.1.3.2 Five million citizens facilitated by stakeholders by June 2023		A report on the activities held as well as breakdown (e.g. Gender, Provinces, Age etc.) of number of participants involved should be provided.
	7.1.4 Develop a youth voter and communicatio n strategy for enhanced mobilization and outreach to youth voters		No % progress reported	No Measurable Indicators are provided against this action.
	7.1.5 Establish a consortium of universities across Pakistan for increased outreach to young voters		No % progress reported	No Measurable Indicators are provided against this action.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
7.2 To further improve quality of electoral rolls	7.2.1 Review and improve SOPs for voter registration	7.2.1.1 SOPs for voter registration reviewed, improved and deployed by June 2021	100%	No information is given regarding when the SOPs were reviewed.
	7.2.2 Develop and deploy an efficient mechanism for correct allocation of census blocks and verification of particulars of eligible voters	7.2.2.1 Mechanism developed and deployed by December 2020	100%	No information is given regarding what mechanism was developed and when it was deployed.
	7.2.3 Develop and deploy a mechanism for removing deceased voters from the electoral rolls, in coordination with relevant government authorities	7.2.3.1 Mechanism developed and deployed by October 2020	100%	While the documents provided by the ECP mention that more than 3 million deceased voters were removed from the electoral rolls, no detail about a new mechanism is mentioned.
	7.2.4 Review existing arrangements for printing and delivery of electoral rolls and explore more efficient and cost-effective options	7.2.4.1 Existing arrangements reviewed, and more cost-effective and efficient options explored by December 2020	100%	No information is given regarding when the review was completed or what actions were taken thereafter.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
7.3 To facilitate and improve voters' participation and turnout in electoral process	7.3.1 Review and improve structure, mandate and performance of DVECs with increased representation of youth led organizations to facilitate voters' participation	7.3.1.1 Structure and mandate of DEVECs reviewed and improved with increased youth led organizations representation among others	88% (MCO wing) or 63% (Administration Wing)	No information has been provided about the review. However, restructuring and funding of DVECs was reported in the 2023 annual report.
		7.3.1.2 At least one DVEC meeting held in each district every quarter		A list of district-wise meetings held every quarter should be given
	7.3.2 Improve structure, mandate and performance of GDEWG	7.3.2.1 Structure and mandate reviewed by March 2020	86%	No information has been provided about the review.
		7.3.2.2 At least five meetings held in each quarter (i.e. one at ECP HQ, one each at the respective provincial capitals)		A list of meetings held every quarter should be given.
	7.3.3 Research on causes of low voter turnout and high number of rejected votes	7.3.3.1 Research conducted by June 2020	86%	No details have been provided about the research.
	7.3.4 Ensure safe and secure environment to voters for participation in the polling process	7.3.4.1 Protocols for security, and voter facilitation developed by September 2020	90% or 100%	No details have been provided about the protocols.
		7.3.4.2 Security arrangements made to facilitate citizens participation and enhance trust in the polling process		No details have been provided about the arrangements.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
7.3 To facilitate and improve voters' participation and turnout in electoral process	7.3.5 Improve voter education and awareness about the electoral process through targeted campaigns for different audiences including youth through innovative campaigns such as Millions Signature Campaigns for girls/youth or pledges to vote in next general elections Hold voter awareness and education sessions such for youth in colleges, universities and communities7.3.6 Inclusion of voter education content in curriculum for educational institutions in ICT and Provinces	7.3.5.1 At least 10 national / provincial level campaigns till December 2023	100% or "83% to 87%" (MCO wing)	A detailed list of campaigns should be provided.
	7.3.6 Inclusion of voter education content in curriculum for educational institutions in ICT and Provinces	7.3.6.1 Voter education content included in curriculum in ICT and Provinces by December 2020	No % progress reported	A project progress report should be provided about voter education curriculum.
Overall Progress on Pillar 7: Voter Registration and Participation			**94%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Strategic Pillar 8: Information, Communication and Technologies

The goals for pillar 8 were to upgrade technologies used in elections, to pilot new technologies and to improve the use of technology within ECP offices. The ECP has claimed to have achieved 76% of its stated aims.[49]

In 2021, the Commission reported that it made improvements in RMS and RTS, upgraded their online recruitment system (launched in 2020) and also upgraded their complaint management system (launched in 2020).[50] They have also launched an app called Click ECP for quick dissemination of latest updates to voters.[51]

In the annual report 2022, the ECP stated that because of multiple challenges including very high cost, they still are in the process of planning pilot studies of EVM (electronic voting machines).[52]

Table 9: Pillar 8 – Information, Communication and Technologies

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
8.1 To improve electoral technologies used during past elections to enhance transparency, awareness and efficiency in electoral processes	8.1.1 Review, optimise and upgrade the GIS, RMS, CERS network, the ECP's official website, mobile applications, system for electronic transmission of results from polling stations, and intranet technologies	8.1.1.1 Reviewed, optimised and upgraded by December 2022	GIS: 88% RMS: 99% CERS: 85% Website and App: 99% RTS: 80%	While it is appreciable that progress is given against each software, more details such as date, developed in house or outsourced etc, are needed regarding the reviews and upgradation.

49. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 6.
50. "Annual report 2021," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 61-65, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/annual%20report/ECP%20Annual%20Report%202021%20(1).pdf
51. Annual report 2021," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 66, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/annual%20report/ECP%20Annual%20Report%202021%20(1).pdf
52. "Annual report 2022," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 69.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
8.2 To identify, develop and pilot new electoral technologies to facilitate and increase voters' participation and awareness, and improve public trust in the process	8.2.1 Conduct more pilot tests of electoral technologies [i.e. Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), Biometric Verification Machine (BVM) and Overseas Voting Mechanisms] to develop feasibility studies for operational and legal consideration by Parliament and other relevant authorities	8.2.1.1 Feasibility reports developed by December 2021	EVM: 75% BVM: 53% Overseas Voting: 75%	While it is appreciable that progress is given against each technology, more details are needed regarding the feasibility reports.
	8.2.2 Explore new technologies and assess their feasibility	8.2.2.1 New technologies assessed, and feasibilities developed by September 2022	95%	Details of the 'New Technologies' and their assessments should be shared.
8.3 To improve the use of technology for efficient performance of ECP offices	8.3.1 Establish in-house data centre facility or acquire an external facility with full ECP access and control	8.3.1.1 In-house data centre facility established, or an external facility with full ECP access and control acquired, by December 2021	50%	Detailed progress report should be provided.
	8.3.2 Obtain ISO-27001 certification for CERS and its policy implementation	8.3.2.1 ISO-27001 certification for CERS obtained by May 2021	65%	The certificate, if obtained, can be used as means of verification

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
8.3 To improve the use of technology for efficient performance of ECP offices	8.3.3 Develop and implement an IT governance framework in the ECP Secretariat and all field offices	8.3.3.1 IT governance framework developed and implemented by May 2023	85%	No evidence or details of framework given.
Overall Progress on Pillar 8: Information, Communication and Technologies			**76%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Strategic Pillar 9: Electoral Complaints and Dispute Resolution

The Commission's strategic goal for pillar 9 was to ensure the timely resolution of complaints and disputes. The ECP reported that it has achieved 95% of its goals.[53]

A complaint management system was launched in 2020 by the Commission.[54] As per data provided by the ECP, the law case management system is still in test / trial phase.[55] However, ECP's annual report 2020 mentions that the legal case management portal has been deployed.[56] It remains unclear whether the ECP is referring to the same system in these two statements.

Table 10: Pillar 9 – Electoral Complaints and Dispute Resolution

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
9.1 To ensure timely disposal of electoral complaints and adjudication of electoral disputes	9.1.1 Develop and deploy complaint management system	9.1.1.1 Electoral complaint system, including a digital option, developed and deployed by June 2021	No % progress reported	Detailed project progress report should be provided.
	9.1.2 Review existing dispute resolution mechanism and engage relevant stakeholders for its improvement	9.1.2.1 Existing dispute resolution system reviewed by December 2020	No % progress reported	Date of review should be given.
		9.1.2.2 Recommendations shared with relevant stakeholders by February 2021		Date of sharing should be documented.
	9.1.3 Develop an online case management system to document and track disputes/cases decided by or pending before the ROs, Commission and Tribunals	9.1.3.1 Online case management system developed and deployed by December 2021	No % progress reported	Detailed project progress report should be provided
Overall Progress on Pillar 9: Electoral Complaints and Dispute Resolution			**95%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

53. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 6.
54. "Annual report 2020," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 20, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/annualreport2020.pdf.
55. "Achievements of Election Commission," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 11.
56. "Annual report 2020," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 20, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/annualreport2020.pdf.

Strategic Pillar 10: Gender Mainstreaming, Youth and Social Inclusion

ECP's stated strategic goals were to ensure a safe environment for women and other marginalized groups within ECP offices but also during the election processes. ECP has reported an 83% rate of completion.[57]

The Commission has reportedly carried out extensive research on identifying reasons for the gender gap in voter registration.[58] It has also conducted the fourth phase of the Women's NIC and Voter Registration Campaign.[59] The ECP has also developed training manuals for the capacity building of its female employees.[60] Moreover, the Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion framework was developed in 2022.[61]

It should be noted here that upon PILDAT's request to include youth-specific strategic actions in the strategic plan, amendments were made by the ECP in May 2023.[62] One of these amendments was to include youth in pillar 10's title. Additionally, 10.2.2 was also added after the aforementioned exchange.

Table 11: Pillar 10 – Gender Mainstreaming, Youth and Social Inclusion

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
10.1 To ensure that the office environment is secure and conducive for women and socially excluded groups	10.1.1 Review existing office protocols, service rules, facilities and work environment from a gender sensitivity and social inclusion perspective	10.1.1.1 Existing office protocols, facilities and work environment reviewed by June 2020	50%	No information is given regarding the review or why its completion was delayed.
	10.1.2 Develop and implement a comprehensive gender mainstreaming and social inclusion framework	10.1.2.1 Gender mainstreaming framework developed and deployed by June 2021	80%	An activity report about the framework development is needed.

57. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 7.
58. "Annual report 2021," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 93-94, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/annual%20report/ECP%20Annual%20Report%202021%20(1).pdf.
58. "Achievements of Election Commission," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 44.
59. "Annual report 2021," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 95, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/annual%20report/ECP%20Annual%20Report%202021%20(1).pdf.
60. "Annual report 2022," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 87.
61. Amina Sardar to Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, May 11, 2023.
62. Amina Sardar to Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, May 11, 2023.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
10.1 To ensure that the office environment is secure and conducive for women and socially excluded groups	10.1.3 Review and improve gender sensitisation efforts and implementation mechanisms related to the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010	10.1.3.1 Implementation mechanism reviewed and improved by December 2020	100%	No information is given regarding the review or what improvements were made.
		10.1.3.2 At least four ECP officers participated annually in international learning opportunities on gender mainstreaming		A list of trainings should be provided.
10.2 To ensure gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in election administration and electoral process	10.2.1 Special measures to facilitate female staff and other socially excluded groups (e.g. day-care centres, common rooms, washrooms)	10.2.1.1 50% of ECP offices have requisite facilities to facilitate females and socially excluded groups by October 2023	100%	A statistical representation of facilities in ECP offices should be provided.
	10.2.2 Expand mandate of the Gender Affairs Wing to include social inclusion and youth in its portfolio.	The mandate of Gender Affairs Wing is expanded to include social inclusion and youth under its portfolio by 2020.		A notification about the expansion of the mandate should be provided.
Overall Progress on Pillar 10: Gender Mainstreaming, Youth and Social Inclusion			**83%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Strategic Pillar 11: Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

The focus here was to strengthen ECP's election monitoring capabilities and make the Monitoring wing independent. Additionally, the ECP also wanted to create a Research wing that would publish at least four studies annually. They have reportedly achieved 88% of their goals.[63]

The Monitoring wing was restructured as the Monitoring and Evaluation wing, and was tasked with reporting pre-election and post-election activities as well as with monitoring the actual elections.[64]

According to the Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, the role and scope of monitoring teams were enhanced. Provincial Monitoring Coordinators were appointed at the provincial level while Regional Monitoring Coordinators were appointed at the division level.[65] Moreover, an Election Monitoring Control Center was launched, which was termed as a "paperless ecosystem for efficient monitoring and complaint management."[66]

Table 12: Pillar 11 – Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
11.1 To expand ECP's monitoring & evaluation scope and strengthen the monitoring system	11.1.1 Redefine scope and mandate of the Monitoring Wing in light of the Elections Act, 2017 and the requirements for efficient and transparent election management	11.1.1.1 Scope and mandate of the Monitoring Wing redefined by December 2020	100%	A notification about the expansion of the mandate should be provided.
	11.1.2 Strengthen Monitoring Wing's capacity and independence	11.1.2.1 Independent Monitoring Wing established by December 2022	70%	A notification about the establishment of the wing should be provided.
		11.1.2.2 Monitoring framework / methodology developed and implemented by December 2022		A project progress report should be provided for the development of the monitoring framework.

63. "Implementation Status of 3rd Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 7.
64. "Annual report 2021," Election Commission of Pakistan, page 91, accessed January 30, 2024. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/2/annual%20report/ECP%20Annual%20Report%202021%20(1).pdf.
65. "Achievements of Election Commission," Election Commission of Pakistan, September 21, 2023, page 37.
66. Ibid, page 38.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions	Measurable Indicators	Progress	PILDAT's Analysis
11.1 To expand ECP's monitoring & evaluation scope and strengthen the monitoring system	11.1.3 Monitor all elections, election related activities and ECP operations	11.1.3.1 All elections and related activities monitored, and reports prepared throughout electoral cycles	100%	A dated list of reports should be provided.
11.2 To strengthen research and development capacity to inform the ECP's policies, procedures and decision making	11.2.1 Strengthen human resource capacity and infrastructure for quality research on electoral issues	11.2.1.1 Research capacity reviewed, and improvement recommendations developed by June 2020	No % progress reported	The date of the HR review of the Research wing should be provided.
		11.2.1.2 Research Wing strengthened with adequate staff having relevant skills and qualifications by June 2021		The HR details of the Research wing should be shared
	11.2.2 Develop annual research agenda in consultation with all Wings	11.2.2.1 Research agenda developed before the start of each calendar year	No % progress reported	The research agenda for each year and its implementation details should be shared as evidence.
	11.2.3 Carry out and publish regular research studies on election related issues	11.2.3.1 At least four research studies published annually	No % progress reported	Research studies for each year should be listed along with dates of publication
Overall Progress on Pillar 11: Monitoring, Evaluation and Research			**88%**	Without means of verification for each measurable indicator, it is difficult to verify this overall progress percentage provided by the ECP.

Overall Implementation of the 11 Strategic Pillars

The ECP's self-reported progress on implementing the 11 Strategic Pillars of its 3rd Strategic Plan (2019-2023) is summarized in Table 12. It must be noted that the progress percentages against each pillar have been given by the ECP and have not been independently verified by PILDAT.

Table 13: ECP's Overall Progress on 11 Strategic Pillars (2019-2023)

No.	Strategic Pillar	Reported Progress Percentage
1	Legal Framework	100%
2	Electoral Integrity and Public Perception	89%
3	Institutional Development	69%
4	Training and Capacity Development	91%
5	Election Operations	93%
6	Budget, Finance and Procurement	91%
7	Voter Registration and Participation	94%
8	Information, Communication and Technologies	76%
9	Electoral Complaints and Dispute Resolution	95%
10	Gender Mainstreaming, Youth and Social Inclusion	83%
11	Monitoring, Evaluation and Research	88%
	Overall	**88%**

Conclusion

The ECP's 3rd Strategic Plan represented a continuation of the Commission's commendable planning efforts over the last 15 years. It provided a comprehensive framework for improving the internal workings of the ECP as well as for strengthening its engagement with external stakeholders. However, it is extremely difficult to evaluate the plan's success in the absence of detailed progress reporting against the measurable indicators provided in the plan.

Although the 3rd Strategic Plan laid out a monitoring plan which required the heads of wings to make quarterly progress reports and the Monitoring Committee to compile annual progress reports, the data shared with PILDAT was limited to percentages with scarce details of the progress made. To address this gap, PILDAT recommends that the next Strategic Plan should contain specific 'means of verification' (MoVs) against each measurable indicator. Progress should then be reported against these MoVs on a quarterly basis. These progress reports should be made available online for the benefit of Pakistani citizens as transparency is essential for building public trust in the ECP.

Lastly, it is imperative that the ECP release the 4th Strategic Plan (2024-2028) without any further delay as continuation in planning is crucial for institutional development and advancement.

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