

## Civic Network OPORA Local Election Monitoring Highlights

With support from NDI from resources generated by USAID, starting September 11, the Civic Network OPORA began observing the October 31 local elections throughout Ukraine. OPORA deployed **177 long term observers** who are monitoring the election campaign in 24 oblasts and in the Autonomous Republic Crimea during a 50 day election campaign. Monitoring will continue after the Election Day when election results are disputed in court.

OPORA believes that the **main obstacle for democratic elections is the adoption of new election legislation** before the start of election campaign. According to the opinion of Ukrainian experts as well as international organizations, the new law set the stage for the tone and potential conduct of the election. The rules governing this election are more unbalanced and contradictory than the previous election law.

OPORA has publicized observation findings in two reports and in six regional digests. The next pre-election report will be released on **October 28, 2010.**

### **The main findings of the current election campaign made by OPORA are as follows:**

1. Disproportionate representation of parties in election commissions gives three political parties comprising the governing majority an advantage over opposition parties and other non-parliamentary parties to make key election decision. Party of Regions, the Communist Party of Ukraine and People's Party attained the majority of seats in 281 TECs out of 669 TECs.
2. Law enforcement authorities have been used to create a climate of fear and harassment for the purpose of eliminating competition in races.
3. Administrative resources are being used at a larger scale compared to the 2010 Presidential election.
4. The pressure on and intimidation of candidates by law enforcement bodies, government and tax authorities is pervasive.
5. Non-transparent and uncontrolled election campaign financing creates grounds for "black" electoral budgets, which are being used for unfair campaigning, buying votes and bribery of election commissioners.
6. Weak control by the government and official observers over printing ballots at printing houses, as well as the low cost of a ballot, makes it open to forgery.
7. The potential for abuse at the TEC level given the partisanship of selected members is already exposing inequities, such as: (1) TEC members are not doing the work required of them in part due to improper training and preparation; (2) election commissions refused registration of party lists and candidates for either vague technical mistakes or nonsensical additional requirements; (3) the advantages given by the formation of TECs has put the Party of Regions at the top of the ballot in all but one oblast.

On the Election Day, 1,428 short-term observers (STOs) will join OPORA long term observers to ascertain that voting procedures and vote tabulation are carried out within the law. **1,003 STOs will be deployed to polling stations** to observe voting and vote count at precinct election commissions (PECs), whereas **425 STOs** will focus on the accuracy of vote tabulation and certifying election results at the territorial election commissions (TECs). Given the late invitation issues to other election observation entities, OPORA will be the only organization providing comprehensive and timely election reports from the official beginning to the end of the election.

*The Civic Network OPORA's experience includes three previous national monitoring efforts. OPORA provided observation for the pre-term parliamentary elections in 2007 and at two-rounds of the 2010 Presidential elections. OPORA is an independent, non-governmental, and non-partisan nationwide organization that mobilizes citizens to influence and monitor government decisions that impact upon people's lives. Since its founding in 2005, OPORA has served the public interest through successful implementation of civic campaigns on issues relating to elections, housing, education, and public oversight.*