

PART TWO

MONITORING VOTER REGISTRATION

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WHY MONITOR VOTER REGISTRATION

All phases of an election process warrant observation to reduce human error, deter manipulation, enhance transparency and build confidence in the process – and in the government that results from those elections. Monitoring the voter registration process therefore is important for a variety of reasons to political parties, candidates, civic organizations and the public.

Ensuring the Rights of Eligible Citizens to Vote

In many electoral systems, people who do not register to vote, even if they are otherwise eligible, will not be permitted to vote on election day. Such electoral systems require that a person's name be on the voters list in order to cast a ballot. Even if this is not required, it often will be left to the discretion of local election officials to decide whether or not to permit an individual to vote who appears eligible, but whose name does not appear on the voters list.

Civic organizations that seek to protect the public interest have a responsibility to help ensure that those who are eligible and who wish to participate in the electoral process have an equal and fair chance to do so. At the same time, political parties and candidates contesting an election must ensure that their supporters are able to vote on election day. If the adherents to a particular party or candidate are not able to register to vote or are not permitted to vote because their names do not appear on the voters list, then that party or candidate may be unfairly denied a victory or may challenge the legitimacy of the electoral outcome. By monitoring voter registration, both civic organizations and political parties can help increase political participation and guarantee that voters have a real opportunity to exercise their right to cast ballots.

Building Confidence Before Election Day

Electoral institutions in new democracies often have problems establishing their credibility because they are inexperienced, or because they previously failed to conduct truly genuine and meaningful elections. When political parties and civic organizations monitor the voter registration process, they provide an opportunity to build the confidence of contesting parties, their supporters and the broader public in the electoral process. When the efforts of electoral authorities show that the voter registration process is being conducted properly, or that electoral authorities act quickly and effectively to correct identified shortcomings in the voter registry, confidence and trust in the electoral institutions are built.

Contacting Potential Voters

Monitoring voter registration enables political parties and civic organizations to make direct contact with people who are eligible to vote. Civic organizations also can use monitoring as an opportunity to conduct voter education, which can raise a civic organization's profile and can set the stage for other watchdog and citizen participation activities. Political parties can direct their monitoring to areas where they have strong support and can use these activities as a basis for campaigning, conducting their own voter education, or organizing "get out the vote" (GOTV) efforts. A party that demonstrates that it is well organized and defends the rights of its supporters is likely to attract more votes.

Preparing for Election Day

Political parties and civic organizations that monitor voter registration may be required to engage in activities that are similar to those they conduct as part of their election day monitoring efforts. By conducting activities several months before election day, political parties and civic organizations can identify important

monitoring strengths and weaknesses. The lessons learned from monitoring the voter registration process can serve to enhance their monitoring of voting, counting and tabulation of results, as well as to strengthen GOTV efforts. The skills and experience acquired will be transferable in many ways, and a volunteer base can be established or expanded.

Building Institutional Capacity

Just as monitoring the registration process can help prepare political parties and civic organizations for election day activities, it can also serve to strengthen their overall organizational capacity. A successful monitoring effort requires a political party or civic organization to engage in strategic planning to clearly identify its goals, strengths and weaknesses, in addition to other requirements:

- ▶ That existing staff learn new skills;
- ▶ That new members are recruited;
- ▶ That nationwide structures are activated or created; and
- ▶ That new sources of financial and material resources are found.

See Part Three of this guide for a detailed discussion of developing a monitoring strategy.

CRITERIA FOR VOTER ELIGIBILITY

The criteria for eligibility to vote should be analyzed with respect to local laws as well as international standards. No fixed set of criteria is appropriate for all situations, but, as noted in Part One, consensus does exist that certain restrictions are inappropriate. With the aid of legal and human rights experts, a review of relevant legal documents, such as the country's constitution and electoral code, can be conducted to determine the suitability of the criteria for eligibility to vote. Among the questions to be considered when assessing such criteria are the following:

- Are the criteria for voting clearly defined, or are they ambiguous or arbitrary?

- Are the criteria inappropriately discriminatory given the country's constitutional, legal and international human rights obligations?
- Do these criteria systematically disenfranchise a particular societal group or the supporters of a particular political party?
- Are individuals required to take a test or pay a fee to be eligible to vote?
- Are resident non-citizens permitted to vote? Should they be? Are there particular groups, such as internally displaced persons, who are denied the right to vote? Does the inclusion or exclusion of such people disproportionately affect a particular group or supporters of a particular political party?
- If resident non-citizens are permitted to vote, how many years must they have been a resident of the country in order to be eligible? Is this an appropriate amount of time? As a practical matter, are resident non-citizens likely to have documentation to prove how long they have been in the country?
- Are non-resident (e.g., out-of-country) citizens permitted to vote? Should they be? Does the inclusion or exclusion of non-resident citizens disproportionately affect a particular group or supporters of a particular political party? Is it financially and logistically feasible for the country to allow non-resident citizens to vote? Is there a large refugee population? Does the inclusion or exclusion of refugees affect the interests of any particular political party?
- What is the minimum voting age? Is this age consistent with the age when individuals are considered an adult by the state? Does the minimum voting age disproportionately affect a particular group or supporters of a particular political party?
- Are people who are deemed legally incompetent by the state permitted to vote? Are there safeguards to ensure that persons who have the capacity to make free and informed

political choices are not declared legally incompetent to vote?

- Are individuals convicted of a serious crime permitted to vote? Are individuals who are in prison permitted to vote? Are people in pre-trial detention allowed to vote? Is this appropriate? Does this disqualification disproportionately affect a particular group or supporters of a particular political party?
- Are members of the military and police force permitted to vote? Is this appropriate? Does this disqualification disproportionately affect a particular group or supporters of a particular political party?
- Are there other requirements that disenfranchise potentially eligible voters?

VOTER REGISTRATION FRAMEWORK

There is no single correct process for registering voters. However, any method needs to be appropriate for local conditions and consistent with international standards, and it must produce a complete, accurate and current voters list. In reviewing the voter registration framework the following issues should be considered:

- What is the plan for identifying eligible voters? Does it require individuals to go to centers, will officials travel to the people's homes, or will a population registry be used? Is the method appropriate?
- Is an entirely new voters list to be created, or will an existing list be updated? Is the method appropriate?
- Are plans for creating the voters list feasible given available time and resources?
- When does the identification of voters take place? Is this early enough in the election process to allow for both the production of an accurate voters list and an opportunity for the voters list to be verified? How long does the identification of voters last? Is this enough time for all potential voters to be registered? Are political parties and civic organizations able to monitor this process?
- Is the voters list computerized? Is there verification of the computer software by independent experts? How are the experts chosen? Is their report public? Are political parties and civic organizations allowed to test the software and, if so, at what points?
- Are voters given a receipt as proof that they have registered to vote? Does such a receipt enable an individual to vote on election day even if he/she did not receive a new ID card or his/her name is absent from the voters list?
- Are individuals provided national ID cards or voter ID cards as part of the registration exercise? What steps are taken to ensure timely distribution of ID cards? What steps are taken to ensure that the card cannot be forged? What steps are taken to prevent ID cards that are not distributed by election day from being used for illegal voting?
- Is a preliminary voters list open to public inspection? Where and when is it displayed? Are copies of the preliminary voters list provided to political parties and civic organizations? Are safeguards required to protect voter privacy interests, and, if so, what measures seem appropriate?
- Are there clear procedures for filing claims and objections to add, update or remove names from the voters list? Are the procedures known and easily applied by the public? Do the procedures ensure timely decision-making? Do they permit decisions to be appealed? How can political parties and civic groups monitor the claims and objections process?
- Are political parties and civic organizations provided a copy of the final voters list? Is the final voters list posted for public information?
- How is the voters list for election day generated and distributed? Does a photograph for

each voter accompany, or appear on, the voters list? Do political parties and civic groups have an opportunity to both observe the production of the final voters list and verify its authenticity? Are they able to monitor the distribution of the final voters lists to the polling stations? Are they provided copies of the final voters list?

- Are individuals whose names do not appear on the voters list at a polling station permitted to vote? How do they establish their identity? Are political party pollwatchers or others allowed to challenge a voter's identity on election day? Is there a tendered or challenged ballot procedure? Is there a supplemental voters list procedure? Is there a special election day court procedure to issue orders that allow voting by eligible people who are not on the list?
- How are registration officials selected? What steps are taken to ensure that officials are

unbiased? What plans are there for training officials to properly conduct voter registration? Do the laws or regulations allow political parties and civic groups to monitor the training of officials?

- What plans are there to educate potential voters about why, where, when and how to register to vote and why, where, when and how to correct errors in the voters list? Does the law permit civic organizations to conduct voter education activities?

ACCESS TO VOTER REGISTRATION

Two issues are critical for analyzing the quality of the process of identifying eligible voters:

- ▶ Whether sufficient access is provided to eligible voters; and
- ▶ Whether reasonable procedures are uniformly applied.

It is crucial that everyone have an adequate opportunity to register and that procedures are applied effectively and without discrimination.

In the case of individual-initiated registration processes, enough centers must be established at locations that are accessible and convenient to eligible voters. The centers must be open for a sufficient period of time, with adequate supplies, so that the opportunity to register is genuine and the burden to eligible voters is not excessive.

Do all individuals have adequate access to the voter registration process?

When the identification process is state-initiated, registration teams must travel to all parts of the country and spend sufficient time in each location to ensure that all eligible individuals who wish to register are located and interviewed and that the relevant information for voter registration is recorded. When the voter registration is state-created based on a population registry, all groups within the population must have an



Access to Voter Registration in Nicaragua

In 1996, Grupo Civico Etica y Transparencia 96 (ET 96) monitored Nicaragua's electoral process, including voter registration. For that election, the process of identifying individuals eligible to vote was done on a continuous basis in most of the country. However, in 26 central and northern municipalities that had been at the heart of the former conflict zone, identification was done for two weeks on an "ad hoc" or periodic basis at registration centers. This area of the country at the time of the election was still plagued by violence, making continuous registration hazardous. The ad hoc process was criticized by some as being too short and for requiring people to travel long distances. In addition, it was argued that many people in the former conflict zone did not have proper identification to demonstrate their eligibility and that voter education about the registration process had been insufficient. In response to these concerns, ET 96 recruited volunteers to monitor two weekends during the voter identification process, collecting data from 589 of the 972 registration centers in the 26 municipalities. ET 96 reported that security was sufficient at most registration centers; that people had learned about voter registration from a variety of sources; and that most citizens were successful in their attempt to register. However, it was also discovered that some centers opened late or closed early due to logistical problems; that some political parties were campaigning near centers in violation of legal restrictions; that some people had to walk a great distance to a center; and that some centers lacked adequate supplies. Those people who volunteered to observe voter registration were retained by ET 96 and served as the core for its election day monitoring effort.

Source: *Voter Registration and Domestic Election Observation in Nicaragua*, by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

adequate opportunity for inclusion in the population registry without discrimination.

Whether the identification process is individual-initiated, state-initiated or state-created based on a population registry, the procedures by which an individual is registered to vote should not be so onerous as to discourage registration or to present unnecessary

obstacles to eligible voters. In all cases, the procedures must ensure accurate recording of voter information. The procedures must also be applied in a consistent manner. If some voters are given preferential treatment, or if some are excluded based on illegal discrimination, the voters list could be used to deny the political will of the people rather than to ensure democratic elections.

Individual-Initiated Process

Where registration centers are established around a country and individuals are required to go to them in order to register to vote, the common observation practice is to deploy monitors to centers or to include representatives of political parties and/or civic organizations among the registration staff. In either case, monitors serve to collect information about both access to and conduct of the process.

Timing

As noted above, the registration process can be conducted on either a continuous basis, in which centers are open year round, or on a periodic basis, where centers are open for only a short period of time, typically during the run-up to an election or once every specified number of years.

Monitoring is more difficult when identification is continuous because it is not possible to deploy full-time observers to centers throughout the year. In such cases, it may be advantageous for political parties or civic organizations to attempt to have individuals loaned to the staff at registration centers; attention would then need to be given to ensure that the voter



Access to Voter Registration in Malawi

During the run up to the 1999 National Assembly Elections in Malawi, concerns were raised that registration centers, particularly in the north of the country, were not open or lacked the materials and equipment necessary to register voters. Because of these concerns, a coalition of groups, known as the Church/NGO Consortium, deployed observers to registration centers throughout the country in order to collect information to verify or refute these claims. During a two-week period, Church/NGO observers visited 2,361 of 3,622 registration centers. Of the visited centers, 65%, or 1,709, were found to be open. Closed registration centers were evenly distributed across the country, however, 52% of the centers that were found open in the north of the country reported that they had been forced to close at least once due to lack of supplies (typically a lack of film and cameras for producing ID cards). In the central region, only 27% of such centers and 30% in the south reported being forced to close for this reason. Using this information, the Church/NGO Consortium successfully lobbied for a general extension of the identification exercise and for an even longer extension in the northern part of the country to provide an opportunity for all citizens to register to vote. The exercise also demonstrated to the public and to the Church/NGO Consortium that it could successfully deploy thousands of observers to all corners of the country. This exercise served to build public and institutional confidence for election day monitoring.

Source: *First Interim Report on Registration*, by the Church/NGO Consortium

registration staff is politically balanced. When it is not possible to include members of political parties and civic organizations as part of registration center staff, monitors can be deployed to “spot-check” centers on random days. In such cases, it is usually best to pay more attention to the period just preceding an election. It may also be more useful in these cases to concentrate on analyzing the quality of the resulting voters list as a measure of access to, and conduct of, the identification process.

With periodic registration, monitoring usually begins when registration centers open. The longer observers can remain at centers, the more information they can collect, and the better they can ensure that the center is open and the identification procedures are being followed correctly and consistently. However, even with periodic registration, it is usually difficult to station observers at registration centers for the entire process because registration may go on for several weeks or longer. It may be possible for political parties and civic organizations to deploy monitors or representatives as registration officials. When party representatives serve as officials, registration staff must be politically balanced.

Deployment

There are three methods for deploying monitors to registration centers:

- ▶ Comprehensive;
- ▶ Strategic; or
- ▶ Representative.

Comprehensive Deployment – In this case, monitors are sent to nearly every registration center. This method provides the greatest level of information and the highest degree of confidence. However, such a deployment plan is obviously very labor-intensive and costly. It may also be organizationally prohibitive, depending on the other activities planned by the political party or civic organization.

Strategic Deployment – Rather than attempting to send monitors to all registration centers, monitors may instead be deployed to a selected group of centers. Political parties may deploy most of their monitors to areas where they are concentrating their campaign; civic organizations may deploy monitors to areas where there historically have been problems or are current concerns. This method reduces

the organizational effort and cost of the exercise while ensuring that the most sensitive areas of the country are covered. However, for civic organizations, this method introduces a risk that their monitoring will result in a skewed report that highlights problems rather than presenting a truly national perspective.

Representative Deployment – It is also possible to draw a statistically representative sample of registration centers on a random basis and to deploy observers to only those selected centers. Because the registration centers are selected at random, it is possible to draw conclusions about access to and conduct of the identification process at all centers, based on the analysis of information collected from the sample. This can significantly reduce the number of monitors required and the cost of the monitoring exercise. However, observers are not necessarily deployed to a large number of registration centers and may not be deployed to centers in all strategic areas.

It is further possible to mix strategies. For example, some monitors could be deployed to a random sample of registration centers (representative deployment) and others could be sent to specific centers in critical areas (strategic deployment).

Methodology

As with election day observation, there are four elements of the observation of access to and conduct of the registration process:

- ▶ Presence;
- ▶ Documentation;
- ▶ Reporting; and
- ▶ Analysis.

Presence – Deploying registration monitors can reduce human errors, deter manipulation, identify errors and manipulation where they occur, and build public confidence. In addition, the monitoring effort can help build organizational capacity and public awareness of the efforts of the political party or civic organization.



SADC PF Observes 2001 Voter Registration in Zambia

In 1996, the Election Commission of Zambia (ECZ) commissioned a private company to compile a new voters list and produce voter ID cards. Opposition parties and civic organizations strongly protested, claiming that many fictitious names were included on the new list and that voter ID cards were printed and issued for ineligible or fictitious voters. In response, the ECZ conducted an entirely new registration exercise for the 2001 elections.

The Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) – a regional body comprising members of parliaments from 12 African countries that is charged with many tasks, including observing national elections in the region – sent observers to Zambia for 10 days to meet with interested parties and monitor registration. Their monitors witnessed registration at 31 centers chosen from both rural and urban areas. The SADC PF delegation found that, although registration was being conducted properly, the process was administratively burdensome and that few people were registering to vote. The delegation recommended that the voter registration period be extended, that mobile voter registration teams be established and that the use of national voter registration cards be reconsidered.

Source: *Voter Registration Observation Mission Report: Zambia, 12 - 13 July 2001*, by the SADC Parliamentary Forum

Documentation – Beyond presence, observers at registration centers should record what they monitor. There should be documentation of what transpired at each registration center, both recording irregularities and noting when procedures were conducted properly. Many questions could be appropriately included on the form:

- How long has the registration center been open?
- Have there been any closures or disruptions in the process?
- Are procedures being followed?
- How many people have registered there?
- Does the location of the registration center, its hours of operation, its staffing or other factors create a hindrance for women or any identifiable group that has traditionally had limited political participation?
- Have people been denied registration for improper reasons? How many?
- Are people given a receipt as proof of registration (if appropriate)?
- Are photographs taken of people when they successfully register to vote (if appropriate)?

All these questions should include a method of quantifying the number of problems and indicating the degree of their severity. This will allow credible analysis and reporting. A form should be developed to assist the monitors. (See the Appendices for sample forms.)

Reporting – It is not enough for monitors to complete observation forms. While presence alone can have beneficial effects, monitoring reports must be sent in a timely manner to a central location so that an analysis can be developed and remedies sought for shortcomings or irregularities uncovered in the process.

Analysis – It may not be possible, however, to read all of the observation reports at the center quickly or to develop a clear understanding of their meaning if

hundreds of lengthy reports come in simultaneously. It is therefore advisable to develop concise reporting forms in a format that can be easily tabulated for analysis. It is wise to enter these reports into a computer so that data can be efficiently consolidated for analysis. By using simple database or spreadsheet software to quickly tabulate the results, national and sub-national trends can be identified. This can serve to point out the strengths and weaknesses in the process. Care must be taken to distinguish between minor problems and those that could significantly affect the integrity of the registration process.

State-Initiated Process

It is difficult to directly observe the registration process when teams of election officials move around the country identifying individuals who are eligible to vote. Instead, political parties and/or civic organizations may attempt to negotiate with the election authorities to ensure that each registration team has a member chosen from a ruling party, one or more from opposition parties and perhaps one from a non-partisan civic organization. These individuals would be seconded from their respective organizations to serve as staff for the identification exercise. Again, it is important that political balance be maintained in the teams.

Representatives of political parties and civic organizations seconded to registration teams should complete forms on the process. As with the individual-



Ability to Verify Voter Registration in Yemen

In 1997, the Arab Democratic Institute (ADI), a Yemeni nongovernmental organization, conducted a comprehensive nonpartisan domestic election monitoring program for Yemen's parliamentary elections. Part of the effort focused on the voters list, which was to be publicly posted. In each of Yemen's 20 governorates (provinces), ADI monitors checked each day and reported on late posting of the list and the almost immediate tearing down of the list, which impeded the claims and objection process. ADI also noted that the ink on the voters list faded quickly, which also hampered the process. In addition, ADI monitors in a number of locations photographed or videotaped images of the lists and analyzed the images, discovering a significant number of duplicate names and under-aged persons on the voters list. Monitors brought these problems to the attention of election authorities, political parties and international observers.

Source: *Final Report on the 1997 Parliamentary Elections in Yemen*, by the Arab Democratic Institute



Voter Registration by Enumeration in Albania

In May 2000, the Government of Albania adopted a comprehensive Electoral Code that required an enumeration effort to identify and register all eligible voters. The law required mayors or heads of communes to establish three-person enumeration teams for each polling unit within the municipality or commune, who went door-to-door to locate all eligible voters. In accordance with the Electoral Code, each team was composed of one representative from the municipality or commune as well as one representative from the largest governing party and one representative from the largest opposition party in the municipal or commune council. The three-member teams were designed to help promote transparency and to build the confidence of political parties that voter registration was conducted properly. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) deployed 23 observers to monitor the enumeration process, who found that "the aim of conducting a transparent and accurate registration process was achieved." However, the OSCE's final report also noted concerns about the start date of the enumeration exercise (which led to enumeration beginning too early in some areas and then having to be repeated), lack of sufficient training of enumeration staff, an inadequate public awareness campaign about the enumeration exercise and lax diligence by enumerators when checking identity cards.

Source: *Republic of Albania Voter Registration for the Local Elections June – July 2000: Final Observation Report*, by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

initiated process, forms should address whether the composition of registration teams and/or their conduct inhibited the principle of universal and equal suffrage and/or whether the team's work was effective. These forms should be collected and analyzed by their political party or civic organization in the same way as those described for the individual-initiated process. By having individuals who represent the interests of the contesting political parties, as well as civic organizations representing the public's interests, confidence and transparency are built into the process.

Such an arrangement may not always be possible. Even if it is, it may still be valuable to attempt to monitor the efforts of a state-initiated identification process by sending monitoring teams to follow and observe registration and to at least spot-check the process. It may also be wise to analyze the resulting voters list for variance in the percentage of the population registered by age, gender or region or province of the country. It may then be possible to identify groups or areas where insufficient effort was made to locate individuals eligible to vote. Field tests can also be conducted on the resulting voters list to assess its accuracy.

State-Created Process (Population Registry)

The monitoring issues for a state-created voter list based on a population registry are very similar to those for a state-initiated identification process. Typically, population registries are maintained on a continuous basis. Government offices are usually open year-round so that people can record births, deaths, marriages and changes in names or addresses. Because the process is ongoing, monitoring is difficult. As discussed above, political parties and civic organizations may attempt to have their members join the staff responsible for the population registry, though this is often not possible, or they may conduct spot checks on the process, particularly just before the election period. Representatives of political parties and civic organizations may also perform field and/or computer tests on the resulting voters list.

QUALITY OF THE VOTERS LIST

There are four general issues that need to be given attention in analyzing the quality of the voters list.

1 Only the names of people who are eligible to vote should be on the voters list. Two common problems that occur in this respect are the erroneous inclusion of ineligible or fictitious persons and the failure to remove individuals who have died or ceased to be eligible to vote (for example, because they moved out of the country). Anyone who is ineligible to vote but whose name is on the voters list, either due to human error or manipulation of the process, could be permitted to vote on election day. Someone could illegally vote by impersonating another known to be out of the country or deceased, or by posing as a fictitious person. In addition, signatures of such persons could be forged on the voters list to cover up ballot box stuffing. Scrutinizing the voters list can help identify such names so that they can be removed.

Are there any names on the voters list of people who are not eligible to vote or who do not exist?

2 The names of all people who are eligible to vote and who registered to vote should be included on the voters list. If the name of such a person is missing, either due to human error or manipulation, he or she may not be able to vote on election day. It is not easy to scrutinize the voters list to determine whether names of individuals who are eligible to vote and registered to vote are absent. During verification, people should have an opportunity to ensure that their name is on the voters list. This is typically done by preparing a preliminary voters list and posting it in public places so that people can verify that their names are, in fact, on the list. Missing names can then be identified and steps taken to add them to the voters list.

Are there names missing from the voters list of people who are eligible to vote and who registered?

The voters list can also be published in newspapers for verification and/or made available electronically on the Internet. In some countries, telephone hotlines have been set up for voters to call and verify whether or not their names are on the voters list. Such hotlines have been run by political parties and by civic organizations, as well as by election authorities. In addition, monitors can canvas a random sample of people and check the voters list to determine whether the names of these individuals appear.

3 Information about each person on the voters list needs to be accurate and up to date. Election regulations may require individuals to vote at specific polling stations based on their addresses recorded in the voters list. If the information is incorrect, voters may go to the wrong polling station and may not be permitted to vote. Similarly, people who have changed their surnames after marrying may still be included on the voters list under their old name, and they therefore may not be permitted to vote. The voters list can be examined to identify how many and which individuals have incorrect data. Public inspection and a proper claims and objections period may be the best way to

Is the correct information recorded for every person on the voters list?

identify errors and correct the voters list. A random sample drawn and checked by monitors can also be an effective way to measure the accuracy of entries on the voters list. This technique is discussed below.

4 An election's legitimacy depends in part on the extent to which the public participates. If a large percentage of the population or a particular subsection does not register to vote, then the credibility of the electoral process can be called into question. Comparing the number of names on the voters list with census data and historical registration figures can reveal under-registration nationally, in specific geographic areas or among particular population groups, such as women and youth. This information can be used to improve the process by adding special registration for targeted groups or areas. This can build confidence that everyone has been given an adequate opportunity to register.

What percentage of those people eligible to vote is included in the voters list?

Types of Tests (Audits) of the Voters List

Field and computer tests can be used to assess the quality of the voters list; they provide complementary information. Depending on the particular issues of concern, a field test, a computer test or both tests may be valuable. Field tests tend to be useful to identify fictitious names, people who have died, people who have changed their name or people who have moved. Computer tests are particularly useful to find duplicate names, individuals with missing or partial data and changes in registration trends.

Field Tests of the Voters List

There are two types of field tests:

- ▶ List-to-People Tests; and
- ▶ People-to-List Tests.

In the first case, the exercise seeks to ensure that every name on the voters list is that of an actual person who is eligible to vote and that his/her particulars, such as address, are correct. This is usually done by attempt-



Monitoring the Voter Registration Process in Peru

In 1999, the Peruvian civic organization Transparencia entered into an agreement with the electoral body responsible for producing the voters list (RENEC) to assess the accuracy of the voters list in advance of the April 2000 elections. As part of its program, Transparencia gathered information from volunteers in 75% of Peru's 1,818 electoral districts to verify that the voters list had been posted for public review. In addition, a list-to-people field test was conducted to assess the quality of the voters list. Transparencia selected 1,004 names at random from the voters list and deployed 224 volunteers from December 10 to 29, attempting to locate those individuals. The test showed that 60% of the people selected were located and were living at the address on the voters list. Transparencia, however, raised concerns that a large number of people had incorrect address information recorded in the voters list because they had moved. In part because of the professional work done by Transparencia in 1999, the election authority responsible for the overall conduct of elections (JNE) requested Transparencia to conduct similar activities in advance of the extraordinary April 2001 elections necessitated by the removal of President Fujimori. Transparencia's 2001 monitoring activities indicated that the quality of the voters list had improved, and, Transparencia publicly praised the election authorities for their effort to update the voters list.

Source: *Datos Electorales, No. 18 Newsletter*, by Transparencia

ing to identify and then locate a representative sample of people whose names are selected from the voters list. In a people-to-list test, the objective is to determine if there are people who are eligible to vote and who appear to have attempted to register to vote, but whose names are absent from the voters list. In this case, an effort is made to draw a random sample of eligible individuals in a country who indicate they have registered to vote and to determine whether they are actually included on the voters list.

In either case, field tests are labor, time and financially intensive and require complex organization. However, they provide a wealth of information and serve to build a political party's or civic organization's capacity. Field tests also provide an opportunity to gather information about other aspects of the electoral process from the public. If, for example, people require a national ID card to vote, the field test can be used to determine what percentage of registered voters possess national ID cards. Field tests also provide an opportunity for direct contact with the public.

Timing

Neither type of field test of the voters list can be conducted before the election officials have pro-

duced a preliminary voters list. It is important, however, that field tests occur early enough in the overall electoral process to allow sufficient time for electoral authorities, political parties and civic organizations to take action if deficiencies are identified. Often, field tests are conducted during the period when the voters list is publicly displayed in order to provide individuals with an opportunity to verify their registration.

List-to-People Tests: Drawing a Sample

It is neither necessary nor, in most cases, feasible to attempt to locate all of the individuals whose names are included on the voters list; in most countries this will be millions of people. Instead, by working with a statistician and a demographer, a representative sample of individuals can be drawn at random from the voters list. An effort can be made to locate only those persons included in the representative sample. Based on the findings from this representative sample, it will be possible to use statistics to draw conclusions about the quality of the entire voters list.

It is necessary to obtain a copy of the voters list in order to identify individuals to include in a list-to-people field test. If available, the preliminary voters list should be used for the test so that there will be time to make corrections, if any, based on the findings of the field test. Ideally, the voters list should be in electronic format in order to facilitate the random selection of names. This should not be onerous for the electoral authorities. However, if the voters list is only available in hard copy, it is still possible to draw a sample. In order to draw a sample, the name and address information is required for every individual in the voters list. If possible, the voter number and other information for each individual should be obtained.

Large samples are not required for field tests of the voters list because they need less precision than other statistical exercises (such as election day parallel vote tabulations). The goal is to determine broadly whether there are problems; thus field tests do not need as high a degree of statistical confidence. Depending on the demographics of the country, the size of the sample may vary from a few hundred to a few thousand individuals. Often the sample size will be approximately 500 to 1,000 names. To draw a

sample, every “nth” name could be chosen from the voters list. For example, if 4 million names appear on the voter registry and a sample of 1,000 persons is used, then every 4,000th name on the voter registry would be selected for inclusion. Random numbers can also be generated and used to select names. Often, the sample will be stratified by geographic region to ensure that it is representative of the entire country. This method requires that the voters list first be sorted by geographic region before selecting names.

List-to-People Test: Methodology

A uniform methodology must be developed for monitors to find individuals included in the list-to-people test sample. The methodology for monitors should clearly specify when to attempt to find individuals (dates and times of day) and how many attempts should be made to find each person. Guidance should also be provided about leaving messages, contacting neighbors and following leads for individuals who have changed their residence.

A list-to-people field test involves monitors going to the address listed for each name sampled from the voters list. If a person with a name selected lives at that address and is present at the time, the monitor confirms the individual’s eligibility to vote and verifies his/her information from the voters list. If the person is not home at the time, but lives at the address, the monitor leaves a message and attempts to return to the address another time. If the address does not exist or if the person has moved, the monitor attempts to determine whether the person lives in the area but at another address; if the current address is nearby, the monitor then attempts to find the person at that address. If the current address is far away, the information can be provided to another monitor so that he/she can attempt to find the individual. A form should be developed to assist the monitors. (See the Appendices for sample forms.) Several questions could be included on the form:

- Was the address found?
- Was the individual found at that address?
- Was the individual found at another address?



Test of the Voters List in Azerbaijan

As part of its election monitoring strategy, the Azerbaijan civic organization, For the Sake of Civil Society (FSCS) conducted both a list-to-people and people-to-list field test of the voters list in 2000. This “two-way audit” was designed to provide information about problems concerning removal of voters who were no longer eligible from the list, as well as adding new voters who had recently become eligible. These problems had been identified by opposition parties, nonpartisan domestic monitors and international observers as sources of manipulation in past elections. For the list-to-people field test, approximately 1,500 names were chosen at random from the voters list. Volunteers attempted to locate each selected individual by going to each person’s address as recorded in the voter registry. The field test found that 30% of the individuals selected did not live at the address contained on the voter list, and that two-thirds of those not found had moved away at least two years prior to the field test. In the people-to-list field test, 860 individuals were selected at random off the street. Each monitor was asked to interview five men and five women who had turned 18 years old since the most recent election. The names of almost 13% of those interviewed could not be found on the voters list. The two tests suggested that there were significant problems with the quality of the voters list. Because FSCS took great care in documenting and verifying its information, their results were not challenged. The tests provided key information for international and domestic organizations monitoring the overall election process.

Source: *Voter Registration List Audit Report (Azerbaijan)*, by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

- Has the individual died?
- Has the person otherwise become ineligible?
- Has the individual registered to vote?
- Does the individual have proof of registration?
- What was the individual’s voter ID number?
- Where was the individual assigned to vote?

People-to-List Test: Drawing a Sample and Methodology

In most countries, drawing a sample for a people-to-list field test is much more difficult than drawing a sample for a list-to-people test. In the latter case, monitors simply use the existing voters list as the basis from which to draw the sample. This is not possible for a people-to-list test. A sample for a people-to-list test should ideally be drawn from a list of all persons of voting age living in the country. However, few countries have a list that even closely approximates this ideal.



Tests of the Voter List in Guyana

In Guyana, the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) first conducted field and computer tests to assess the quality of the voters list before general elections in 1991. The EAB determined that over 30% of the names on the preliminary voters list (PVL) could not be found based on a list-to-people field test. A computer test of the PVL discovered that out of the nearly 400,000 names on the PVL, 1,700 sets of names had the same national ID number. From information gathered by monitors during the list-to-people field test, the EAB also calculated that nearly 30,000 registered voters lacked ID cards that were required for voting. After the EAB publicized these concerns, the Guyana Election Commission (GECOM) decided to postpone the elections until the following year to permit time for the PVL to be extensively revised. In 1992, the EAB conducted another set of tests on the new PVL and discovered that the number of errors was greatly reduced. The number of people not found fell to 3.7%, and only 28 sets of names had the same national ID number. However, the EAB continued to express concerns about registered voters who lacked ID cards and urged GECOM to intensify its efforts to produce and distribute ID cards. Since 1992, the EAB has conducted both field and computer tests of the PVL for both the 1997 and 2001 elections.

Source: *The Findings of the Electoral Assistance Bureau on the Preliminary Voters List* by the Electoral Assistance Bureau

The typical first step in drawing a sample for a people-to-list test involves selecting locations within a country at which people will be interviewed. A demographer may be needed to help identify a representative sample of sites within a country. At each of these locations, monitors are then instructed to randomly identify a set number of individuals to interview. Usually there are demographic requirements which the monitors should randomly select. For instance, monitors might be instructed to interview 10 people, of whom 5 are men and 5 are women, who all indicate that they registered to vote. Monitors are often instructed to go to a place where people congregate within a selected locality, such as a market, or to select homes in a neighborhood. Monitors ask the name, identifying information (e.g., address) and whether or not the individual is registered to vote. A form should be developed to assist the monitor. (See the Appendices for sample forms.) Several questions could be included on the form:

- What is the person's name?
- What is the person's age?
- What is the person's address?
- Did the person register to vote?

What is the person's voter ID number (if any)?

Where did the person register to vote?

Where was the person assigned to vote?

When all of the data has been collected, the voters list is checked to see whether the interviewed individuals are indeed registered.

Such sampling and interviewing techniques introduce risks of bias into the monitoring effort. For example, monitors could ignore instructions and only interview young people or people of a particular ethnic group or social class. Training, therefore, should stress avoiding bias and spot checks of monitors should be conducted. However, even if bias enters the sample, the findings may still be meaningful. If a biased sample uncovers a large number of people who indicate they have registered to vote, but whose names are absent from the voters list, the public should still be concerned about the accuracy of the list.

Computer Tests of the Voters List

Computer tests involve using programs to analyze an electronic copy of the voters list for errors and trends. Such tests are often conducted by election authorities or technical consultants. Political parties and civic organizations should also have the right to examine the methodology, conduct and results of such computer tests run by election authorities. Parties and civic organizations should also be allowed to conduct computer tests themselves. (See the Appendices for a sample report on computer tests conducted by a non-partisan civic organization.)

When analyzing a voters list by computer, each name and its corresponding information (such as address and voter ID number) is referred to as a record. A computer test consists of searching all of the records in the voters list for those that meet a defined set of criteria. Computer tests also can be used to compare records from one voters list against a previous voters list or census data.

An electronic copy of the voters list (or access to the computerized voters list at the offices of the electoral authorities) is needed in order to perform a computer

test, and specialists are required to develop appropriate computer programs. To analyze historic trends it is necessary to have an electronic copy of the voters list from previous elections or, though less useful, a hard copy of the summary figures. Historical census data are also useful. When analyzing the voters list, compared to census data, the assistance of a demographer and/or a statistician may be necessary.

Computer Tests for Errors (Internal Tests)

Computer tests can identify certain types of errors in the voters list:

- ▶ Number of records;
- ▶ Records with missing data;
- ▶ Duplicate records;
- ▶ Ineligible records;
- ▶ Wrong constituencies; and
- ▶ Additions, deletions and corrections.

Number of Records – In some cases there is concern that there are more names or fewer names on the voters list than the number reported by the election authorities. A computer program that simply counts the number of records, where each record corresponds to one person, can determine whether there are disparities indicating extra or missing names from the voters list.

Records with Missing Data – Records with missing data may cause problems in the production of the final voters list. Records with a missing surname, voter ID number, or date of birth may be particularly problematic. Missing data reflects poor data collection or poor data entry. A simple computer program that searches the voters list for missing data can identify records that are problematic. Monitors might then call for follow-up registration to locate those individuals whose information is incomplete and to obtain the missing data.

Duplicate Records – Duplicate records are of concern because they inflate the number of registered voters

and may permit individuals to vote more than once. Computer programs can be developed to identify possible duplicate records. It may be necessary to attempt to locate individuals who correspond to duplicate records in order to determine which record is up to date and correct. In countries where the same name is repeated within families and where extended families live together, duplicate searches must include date of birth or a unique identification number.

Ineligible Records – It is possible that the voters list may include the names of some individuals who are not old enough to vote. A computer program can be used to analyze date of birth information and to identify individuals who are not of voting age.

Wrong Constituency – In electoral systems where members of the legislative branch are elected from geographically defined constituencies or where seats are allocated according to sub-national party lists (e.g., at the regional or provincial level) it is critical that people are assigned to the correct constituency or region/province on the voters list. In some cases, it is possible to design a computer program that compares addresses with constituencies or regions/provinces to identify individuals who have been incorrectly assigned.

Additions, Deletions and Corrections – It is also possible to conduct a computer test that compares the preliminary and revised voters lists to determine what records have been added, deleted or updated. This information can be compared with data collected during the claims and objections period to verify that corrections submitted by citizens were, in fact, made.

Computer Tests for Shifts in Trends (External Tests)

Computer programs can also be useful in comparing demographic data from the current voters list with past voters lists and with census data. The usefulness of such tests is, of course, dependent upon the credibility of past voters lists and census data. Not all voters lists will have all of the necessary information to conduct such tests. Such computer tests involve several factors:

- ▶ Number of records, by age;

- ▶ Number of records, by gender;
- ▶ Number of records, by geographic division; and
- ▶ Number of records, by language or ethnic group.

Number of Records by Age – A computer program can be used to count the number of records by age. This data can be compared with data from past voters lists or with census data to identify discrepancies. In general, a large number of very old individuals indicates that names of people who have died are not being removed from the voters list. At the same time, a small number of young individuals suggests that the names of people who are registering for the first time are not being added to the voters list.

Number of Records by Gender – A similar computer program can be used to count the number of records by gender on the voters list. As with age, this data can be compared with past data from voters lists or with census data. If, for example, the percentage of women registered, as compared with men, is significantly lower, additional voter education and registration exercises may be required to ensure the full participation of women in the electoral process.

Number of Records by Geographic Division – Often political support follows geographic lines (sometimes based on ethnicity, language or shared history). A computer test can be used to determine the number of records per geographic unit (such as region or province) in the country. Comparing this data with that from a census or from past voters lists can help identify areas of the country where the number of people registered is lower or higher than expected. Numbers lower than expected may indicate that people in some parts of the country have not been given an opportunity to register, or that their names may not have been entered into the voters list. If numbers are higher than anticipated, this may indicate that individuals registered more than once, or that fictitious or ineligible people may have been registered.

Number of Records by Language or Ethnic Group – Sometimes information on language or ethnic group is included in a voters list: this is more likely when the voters list is state-created from an existing population registry. If such data is available, it is important to determine whether any language or ethnic group has been under- or over-registered. A simple computer test can be designed to determine the number of records per language or ethnic group. As with tests by geographic area, this information can be compared with data from a census or a previous voters list to identify groups that are under- or over-represented.

VERIFICATION OF THE VOTERS LIST

Regardless of the identification process, the verification process typically involves posting the voters list at locations around the country where the public has easy access to it. Opportunities must then be provided for people to file claims or objections for additions, deletions or corrections to be made to the list. Monitoring verification typically involves deploying individuals to observe the process and take notes regarding several factors:

- ▶ Whether the voters list is posted;
- ▶ Whether people have access to the locations where the voters list is posted;
- ▶ How many people file claims and objections and for what reasons; and
- ▶ Whether procedures for filing and processing claims and objections are properly conducted.

Political parties and civic organizations monitoring the verification of the voters list may also seek to record the names of those individuals who file a claim or objection. When the final voters list is published, it will be possible to confirm whether the names of the individuals who filed claims were added to the voters list and whether objections to the inclusion of names were sustained.

Beyond monitoring this process, political parties and civic organizations should actively encourage people to verify their registration. Political parties often

concentrate on mobilizing their supporters to check whether their names appear correctly on the voters list. Parties also establish systems by which they check the voters list on behalf of their supporters.

Civic organizations are likely to track all problems or to assist citizens more generally with the process. These activities could include conducting public education campaigns to make citizens aware of the need to verify their registration. If it is determined that there are insufficient locations where people can go to verify their registration, informal locations could be established where individuals could go to check for their names. If their names were missing, people could then go to the official verification center to file a claim. For example, some civic organizations have set up tables outside registration centers to help citizens with the verification process.

In countries where the voters list has been made available on CD-ROM and telecommunication technology is widespread and reliable, political parties and civic organizations have publicized telephone numbers for citizens to call in order to verify their registration.

PRODUCTION OF THE FINAL VOTERS LIST

Concerns may be raised about the production of the final voters list that is distributed to polling stations and used on election day. It may be possible, either due to human error or manipulation, that the final version that is printed for distribution is not the same as the “final voters list” published after the verification process. It may be possible for names to have been electronically removed from or added to the voters list distributed to polling stations. This could disenfranchise those individuals whose names have erroneously been removed from the list or permit illegal voting by individuals whose names were incorrectly added to the list. In addition, concern may focus on whether corrections requested were actually incorporated into the list used on election day.

These problems can be countered if monitors at polling stations have copies of the relevant part of the final voters list obtained from the election officials by their political parties or civic organizations prior to election

day. Providing a copy of the relevant part of the final voters list to monitors at every polling station can, however, be logistically difficult and can be a financial burden for political parties and civic organizations. Political parties and civic organizations must first obtain a copy of the final voters list, in either electronic or hardcopy format, with polling station information included from the election authorities. The voters list must be received early enough before election day for political or civic organizations to sub-divide the final voters list by polling station and to provide their monitors at each polling station with the relevant portion of the final voters list, unless the list is pre-divided by election authorities.

Party pollwatchers and domestic nonpartisan monitors must be trained specifically on what to do if prospective voters are disenfranchised because their names are not on the voters list. In addition, they should monitor whether prospective voters’ identities are verified against the voters list at the polling station and whether the voters list is marked as a safeguard against multiple voting.

In all cases, training for pollwatchers and domestic nonpartisan monitors should cover what remedies can be taken immediately to solve the problem on the spot. In addition, training should cover how to document and quantify the problem, and how to report it so that electoral complaints can be pursued and effective remedies obtained.



Voter Registration for Local Government Elections in Cambodia

In 2002, Cambodia will hold local government elections for the first time. Building upon their experience observing voter registration for the 1998 National Assembly elections, three Cambodian umbrella organizations (COMFREL, COFFEL, and NICFEC) deployed monitors in July and August 2001. Their volunteers visited over 10,000 of the approximately 12,000 registration centers. No significant problems were observed at 65% of the registration centers. However, at 34%, monitors discovered technical irregularities. In a press release, the groups raised concerns about inadequate training of registration officials and lack of materials at registration centers. In addition, they argued that more needed to be done to educate the population about the process and the importance of local government elections. When the preliminary voters list was posted across the country, these organizations deployed monitors to interview people who came forward to verify their registration. Both of the exercises were planned as part of preparations for monitoring on election day.

Source: *Joint Statement on the Voter Registration for Commune Council Elections* (Unofficial Translation) by COMFREL, COFFEL and NICFEC



Discrepancies in the Dominican Republic's Final Voters List

Early on election day in 1994, party pollwatchers in the Dominican Republic detected eligible voters being turned away from polling stations by election officials without being permitted to vote. It became apparent that the names of many individuals with newly issued voter ID cards were absent from the voters list used by election officials at polling stations. However, shortly before election day pollwatchers had been provided by their parties a copy of the final voters list produced by the election authorities. The names of those people with new voter ID cards who were not permitted to vote, because they did not appear on the voters list used by the election officials, did appear on the copy of the final voters list provided to pollwatchers. International observers, including NDI and the Organization of American States, publicly confirmed that this manipulation of the voters list disproportionately affected opposition supporters and that the number of opposition supporters who were wrongly turned away could have changed the outcome of the election. Investigations confirmed that voters list fraud changed the outcome of the presidential election. A political crisis followed that resulted in changes to the Constitution that ended the declared winner's term after two years and that prevent future presidents from serving two consecutive terms. In addition, changes were made to the voter registration process: photographs, as well as fingerprints, were added to the voters list and ID cards to limit the possibilities for fraud.

Source: *Interim Report: The May 16, 1994 Elections in the Dominican Republic*, by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

SELECTING AND TRAINING REGISTRATION OFFICIALS

The selection and training of registration officials should be scrutinized by political parties and by civic organizations to ensure that the staff recruited have the necessary skills and are unbiased or politically balanced. In reviewing the process for recruiting registration officials, the following questions should be considered:

- Is the recruitment process transparent?
- Does the recruitment process provide supporters of any political party an unfair advantage?
- Is the recruitment process likely to produce people with the necessary skills and qualifications to serve as registration officials?

The criteria for selecting registration officials should be reviewed to ensure the registration process is politically impartial and does not disproportionately favor or disadvantage any political party, or candidate, nor any particular population group based on

ethnicity, language, religion or other status. The actual selection process should be monitored. Names of registration officials should be made public. Parties and civic organizations should make good faith efforts to review them.

Sound training of officials is critical to the proper implementation of voter registration procedures. Parties and civic organizations should therefore seek to monitor the training process by reviewing training materials and by observing training sessions. Gaining access to such materials and sessions may require advocating for inclusion of related transparency provisions in the election law and/or regulations.

A form should be developed for monitoring the training of registration officials. (See the Appendices for sample forms.) Several questions could be included on the form:

- Were adequate training materials provided to the registration officials?
- Was adequate time provided for the training?
- Was attendance by registration officials high?
- Were any unauthorized individuals at the training? Did they attempt to disrupt or influence the training?
- Were the trainers knowledgeable?
- Were the date, time and venue for the training appropriate?
- Did the training accurately cover registration procedures and respect for the rights of voters, pollwatchers and monitors?
- Were the registration officials attentive?
- Did the registration officials seem knowledgeable by the end of the training?
- Overall, was the training adequate?