

THE QUICK COUNT AND ELECTION OBSERVATION



*An NDI Guide for Civic Organizations
and Political Parties*

Melissa Estok, Neil Nevitte and Glenn Cowan

WHAT IS A QUICK COUNT?

A CITIZENS' TOOL FOR ELECTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY

A METHOD FOR SYSTEMATIC ELECTION DAY OBSERVATION

A CRITICAL PART OF MONITORING THE OVERALL ELECTION PROCESS

WHY CONDUCT A QUICK COUNT?

EMPOWER CITIZENS

BUILD LOCAL CAPACITY

PROVIDE RELIABLE AND COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION

VALIDATE OFFICIAL VOTE COUNTS

A quick count is a powerful method for monitoring elections. Observers watch the voting and counting processes at selected polling stations, record key information on standardized forms and report their findings to a central data collection center. Quick count methodology is used to evaluate the overall quality of election day processes and to verify official election results.

This handbook is designed for civic activists, political party representatives and others who are systematically observing elections to protect their rights and to promote transparency and accountability in the process. It provides an overview of how quick counts have been conducted worldwide and gives a step-by-step explanation of how to organize an election observation effort from the planning stages through election day and afterwards. Appendices provide sample materials representing best practices from organizations around the world.

NDI stresses the importance of monitoring the entire election process. Readers interested in related election monitoring issues should also refer to: *NDI's Handbook on How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide*; *Building Confidence in the Voter Registration Process: An NDI Monitoring Guide for Political Parties and Civic Organizations*; *Media Monitoring to Promote Democratic Elections: An NDI Handbook for Citizen Organizations*; and other NDI publications.

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

2030 M Street, N. W., Fifth Floor
Washington, D.C. 20036-3306, USA
Tel +1 202 728 5500,
Fax +1 202 728 5520
E-mail demos@ndi.org
Website <http://www.ndi.org>

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An NDI Handbook for Civic Organizations
and Political Parties

Melissa Estok, Neil Nevitte and Glenn Cowan

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (NDI)

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Estok, Melissa, 1964-

The quick count and election observation : an NDI handbook for civic organizations and political parties / Melissa Estok, Neil Nevitte, and Glenn Cowan.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-880134-31-4

1. Election monitoring. I. Nevitte, Neil. II. Cowan, Glenn, 1947- III. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. IV. Title.

JF1083 .E85 2002

324.6'5--dc21

2002006488

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ABOUT NDI

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. Calling on a global network of volunteer experts, NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices and institutions. NDI works with democrats in every region of the world to build political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

Democracy depends on legislatures that represent citizens and oversee the executive, independent judiciaries that safeguard the rule of law, political parties that are open and accountable, and elections in which voters freely choose their representatives in government. Acting as a catalyst for democratic development, NDI bolsters the institutions and processes that allow democracy to flourish.

Build Political and Civic Organizations: NDI helps build the stable, broad-based and well-organized institutions that form the foundation of a strong civic culture. Democracy depends on these mediating institutions—the voice of an informed citizenry, which link citizens to their government and to one another by providing avenues for participation in public policy.

Safeguard Elections: NDI promotes open and democratic elections. Political parties and governments have asked NDI to study electoral codes and to recommend improvements. The Institute also provides technical assistance for political parties and civic groups to conduct voter education campaigns and to organize election monitoring programs. NDI is a world leader in election monitoring having organized international delegations to monitor elections in dozens of countries, helping to ensure that polling results reflect the will of the people.

Promote Openness and Accountability: NDI responds to requests from leaders of government, parliament, political parties and civic groups seeking advice on matters from legislative procedures to constituent service to the balance of civil-military relations in a democracy. NDI works to build legislatures and local governments that are professional, accountable, open and responsive to their citizens.

International cooperation is key to promoting democracy effectively and efficiently. It also conveys a deeper message to new and emerging democracies that while autocracies are inherently isolated and fearful of the outside world, democracies can count on international allies and an active support system. Headquartered in Washington D.C., with field offices in every region of the world, NDI complements the skills of its staff by enlisting volunteer experts from around the globe, many of whom are veterans of democratic struggles in their own countries and share valuable perspectives on democratic development.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

2030 M STREET, N. W., FIFTH FLOOR
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036-3306, USA
 TEL +1 202 728 5500,
 FAX +1 202 728 5520
 E-MAIL DEMOS@NDI.ORG
 WEBSITE HTTP://WWW.NDI.ORG

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This handbook was prepared by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) to assist those working to ensure electoral accountability around the world. Quick counts at times have played a decisive role by deterring or exposing fraud; at other times they have helped to establish confidence in the election process, leading to acceptance of results that otherwise may have been rejected. At still other times, quick counts have buttressed confidence that election day processes had become regularized and transparent. In every case, quick counts have required extraordinary efforts. These include: mobilizing hundreds, if not thousands, of volunteers; developing reliable and rapid communication structures across a country; precisely analyzing large volumes of data in high pressure circumstances; and exercising wise political judgment about how to present quick count methodology and findings.

In reality, there is no such thing as a “B+” quick count—far too much rides on the exercise to settle for less than excellence—excellence in the professionalism of organization and analysis, and excellence in the impartial political judgment needed for announcing quick count findings. NDI was privileged to see such an effort in its first experience in international election observation through the work of the Philippine-based National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). NAMFREL’s quick count in the 1986 “snap” election exposed the fraud attempted by Ferdinand Marcos’ regime. Excellence was again demonstrated when the Committee for Free Elections (CEL) developed a quick count with NDI’s assistance for the 1988 Chilean plebiscite, which rejected the extension of General Pinochet’s presidency. Over the years since and through numerous elections, NDI has helped groups in more than 25 countries around the world to develop quick counts as part of their broader election monitoring efforts. Many of those organizations have joined NDI in conveying skills and knowledge to democratic activists in other countries. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that these organizations have helped foster and develop a worldwide movement for domestic election monitoring.

NDI is honored by and greatly indebted to political and civic leaders who have invited us to assist them in building their capacities to monitor elections, including through conducting quick counts. Many have faced threats to their personal safety for attempting to hold governments accountable to electoral laws and standards. While recognizing those who have taken up the challenge of conducting quick counts in their own countries, NDI also wishes to acknowledge the many activists who have joined NDI in helping to develop quick counts in other places. It is not possible to mention everyone who engaged in these activities, however, the following individuals frequently joined NDI missions to promote quick counts and broader election monitoring efforts: Marino “Mars” Quesada, Damaso Magbul, Jose Concepcion, Jr., and Telebert Laoc (NAMFREL, the Philippines); Miroslav Sevlievski, Ivailo Partchev, Mariana Drenska, Krassen Krlev and the late Michael Yanakiev (BAFE, Bulgaria); Alina

Inayah, Daniela Diaconu and Adrian Sorescu (PDA, Romania); Monica Jiménez and Eduardo Mimica (CEL/Participa, Chile); Esteban Caballero (CED/SAKA, Paraguay); Feroz Hassan and Tarikul Ghani (FEMA, Bangladesh); Taofiki Amnou (GERDDES-Afrique, Benin); Adamou Kombo (COSUPEL, Niger); Honore Guie (GERDDES-Cote d'Ivoire); Parfait Moukoko (OCDH, Republic of Congo); Martine Galloy (GERDDES-Congo); Tadjoudine Ali-Diabecte (Togo); Crespín Leguede (GERDDES-Togo); Aristide Sokambi (GERDDES-Central African Republic); Feris Al-Sanabani (ADI, Yemen); Sergio Aguayo and Martha Perez (Alianza Cívica, Mexico); Claudia Morales and Isis Duarte (Participación Ciudadana, Dominican Republic); Rafael Roncagliolo, Pepi Patron, Percy Medina and Rudecindo "Rude" Vega (Transparencia, Peru); Irene Perurena and Francisco Fong (Justicia y Paz, Panama); Clarmont Lye and Lawrence Lachmansingh (EAB, Guyana); Suzana "Suzi" Jasic and Vladimir Pran (GONG, Croatia); Olexiy Lychkovakh and Ihor Popov (CVU, Ukraine). Several of these individuals later served as NDI staff members, promoting political participation by civic groups beyond their own countries.

Melissa Estok, Neil Nevitte and Glenn Cowan wrote this handbook. The three of them have amassed great experience around the world in helping democratic activists to construct quick count efforts as tools for electoral accountability. They are the leading experts in the field. Glenn Cowan deserves special mention as perhaps the most active NDI volunteer over the years, from the Philippines in 1986 to Chile in 1988 to dozens of countries and scores of trips for the Institute. Patrick Merloe, NDI Senior Associate and Director of Programs on Election and Political Processes, helped in the conception and development of this handbook and served as editor of the project. His substantive contributions are evident throughout the handbook. Peter Redmond, former NDI field representative involved with quick count efforts in Bangladesh and Nicaragua, made important contributions to the editing of the handbook. Lawrence Lachmansingh, former Deputy Director of NDI's Asia Programs and a former NDI field representative who worked on quick counts and election monitoring in several countries, and Holly Ruthrauff, NDI Program Officer for Election and Political Processes, also contributed to the volume. Linda Patterson, NDI Program Assistant for Election Programs, helped in gathering information and materials for the handbook, and Suanne Buggy also assisted in the handbook's editing and production.

In addition, the experience reflected in this volume is based on a foundation laid by Larry Garber, who was a pioneer of quick counts during his time with NDI (1986-93). Other former and present NDI staff members have contributed to quick count efforts and their experiences are reflected in this handbook. They include: Lisa McLean; Mike Marshall; Santiago Canton; Eric Bjornlund; Tom Melia; Patricia Keefer; Edward McMahon; Mark Feierstein; Steve Griner; Adrian Muunga; Kate Kelsch; Kevin Johnson; Ken Morley; Richard Klein; Katie Fox; Kirk Gregersen; Matt Dippell; Jonas Rolett; Maryam Montague; Makram Ouass; Michael Stoddard; Kevin Johnson; Lynn Heller; and Justice Mensah.

The drafting, production and distribution of this document were made possible by a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and many of the quick count efforts referred to in the text were conducted in large part with grants from USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy. The Center for Democracy and Governance of USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict & Humanitarian Assistance, provided valuable encouragement for this project throughout its development. Readers of this handbook are encouraged to contact NDI with any comments, suggestions or requests.

Kenneth Wollack
President, NDI

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FOREWORD

The will of the people of a country—expressed in genuine, periodic elections—is the basis of authority of any democratic government. This is recognized in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and every major international human rights instrument addressing civil and political rights, thereby creating treaty obligations and international commitments to this principle. The principle is also enshrined in modern constitutions around the world. Yet, realization of this democratic precept too often proves elusive.

There are many countries that conduct democratic elections. Those who control state institutions and resources or organized means of bribery and intimidation, however, too frequently try to manipulate election processes by: denying opponents the right to stand for office; blocking them from organizing themselves to campaign for votes; restricting their access to mass communications media; preventing the electorate from gaining the knowledge needed to make an *informed* political choice; intimidating the electorate from making a *free* political choice; and gerrymandering election districts to deny equal suffrage. When these tactics appear insufficient to ensure victory, such perpetrators of fraud often seek to manipulate election day processes by: blocking access to polling stations; denying qualified electors the right to cast ballots; arranging for illegal voting in their favor; stuffing ballot boxes; manipulating vote counts; rigging vote tabulations; announcing fraudulent results; and blocking proper legal redress. Violence and political retribution also sometimes follow elections, and rightful winners are sometimes prevented from assuming their elected office. Such developments deny government its democratic mandate and set the stage for political instability.

Political parties and candidates therefore must develop skills to monitor the large variety of processes and institutions surrounding elections, and they must learn to mobilize public support and use complaint mechanisms to seek peaceful remedies for their grievances. Civic organizations and others committed to democratic governance also must engage directly in comprehensive monitoring efforts to help ensure electoral integrity. Elections simply cannot be separated from the broader political context of a country, and efforts to ensure electoral integrity must also be cast widely.

Nonetheless, all election processes come to a critical point on election day—and that is where reliable quick counts play a crucial role. A highly accurate and rapid report on the quality of the voting and counting processes from a random statistical sample of polling stations can serve to reassure political competitors and the citizenry alike that they should have confidence in the elections. Identifying irregularities can lead to timely corrections and proper assessments of their potential impact on electoral outcomes. A highly accurate and rapid projection of electoral results collected and reported from a sample of polling stations can deter fraud, calm tensions and allow those who assume office as a result of the elections to do so based on public confidence in their democratic mandate. On the other hand, systematic, impartial and accurate verification of results and the quality of election-day processes can also reveal widespread irregularities and attempts to hijack elections.

As the pages of this handbook reveal, quick counts can be at the center of dramatic, high stakes developments. They have exposed attempts to steal elections, thus helping to set the stage for popular defense of civil and political rights, as happened, for example, in the Philippines in 1986 and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 2000. They have deterred those who were tempted to ignore the people's will, as in the 1988 Chilean plebiscite and in the first round of Peru's 2000 elections; they have allowed electoral competitors to accept surprise electoral losses or losses where opinion surveys showed a virtual tie just before election day, as in Bulgaria's 1990 elections or Nicaragua's 2001 poll; and they have encouraged electoral competitors and citizens to be patient where official tabulations were greatly delayed, as in 1999 in Indonesia. In each of these cases and more, quick counts have prevented conflict. In every case where NDI has assisted quick count efforts around the world, from Bangladesh to Malawi and Ukraine to Paraguay, quick counts have helped significantly to ensure that the people's political will was respected.

As the authors stress, not every election requires a quick count, at least not in its most comprehensive form. Moreover, quick counts only speak to election-day processes and say nothing in and of themselves about whether pre-election or post-election developments uphold or negate the democratic nature of an election. Quick counts are best understood as a critical element of comprehensive election monitoring, but they are unique in their impact and sometimes essential to determining the warranted degree of confidence in election results. NDI is therefore pleased to offer this handbook as part of a series of resource materials for election monitoring.

This handbook reflects the state of the art of conducting quick counts. The methodologies described have evolved considerably over the last 15 years and will undoubtedly develop further. At the same time, the most "high tech" procedures are not needed in every situation. Indeed, restrictions in time or in human and financial resources may preclude using some of the techniques described in these pages. NDI's experience has demonstrated that every election process and every quick count must be developed in light of particular country conditions.

The Institute hopes that this handbook will contribute to those civil society and political party leaders who decide to develop the know-how and organizational structures necessary to use this tool properly. We look forward to learning from other democratic activists about ways to improve quick counts and election monitoring more generally.

Kenneth Wollack
President, NDI

Patrick Merloe
Senior Associate and Director of Programs on
Election and Political Processes, NDI

June 2002

Introduction

This manual describes how to organize and conduct a quick count, also known as a parallel vote tabulation (PVT). A quick count is a powerful method for monitoring election day developments. Groups around the world have undertaken quick counts to promote democratic electoral processes and to detect when election results have been manipulated. The handbook's primary audience is civic organizations that monitor elections, but the principles and advice presented also apply to election monitoring projects conducted by political parties and international organizations.

During a quick count, observers watch the voting and counting processes at specifically selected polling stations, record key information on standardized forms and report their findings (including the polling station's vote count) to a central data collection center. Quick count leaders use this information to evaluate the overall quality of election-day processes and to project, or verify, official election results based on precise analysis of polling station data.

Quick count methodology has become increasingly sophisticated over the last 15 years. A cornerstone of this methodology is its use of the science of statistics. Most quick counts today do not involve collecting information from every polling station; rather, data are gathered from a random statistical sample of polling stations. This allows groups to rapidly assemble and report data that are reliable and accurate within a very small margin of error.

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has worked with civic groups and coalitions in over 65 countries to observe elections, in 25 of these countries civic organizations have conducted quick counts.¹ NDI provides quick count support to its partner organizations based on a joint analysis of the needs of the organization. This may include providing technical experts, training and strategic planning advice. The Institute is particularly interested in helping groups link election observation to other democracy-building activities.

A quick count is a powerful method for monitoring election-day developments... to evaluate the overall quality of election-day processes and to project, or verify, official election results.

¹ See Appendix 1A for a list of organizations that NDI has assisted in conducting quick counts and Appendix 1B for a comprehensive list of nonpartisan domestic election monitoring organizations with which NDI has worked.

The experience of organizing a quick count can strengthen an organization and prepare it for continued work on related democracy projects.

NDI's experience has shown that the quick count can play a vital role in promoting electoral integrity. When sponsored by nonpartisan civic organizations, quick counts can help to:

- *Empower citizens.* A quick count allows civic groups to be involved in elections in a substantive and powerful way by mobilizing citizens to exercise their rights to participate in governmental affairs and to seek and impart information about critical aspects of the election process. When evidence of mistakes or misconduct is present, citizens can hold officials or political leaders accountable. When quick counts help to validate a legitimate process, citizens can feel confident in the results and in the legitimacy of the resulting government.
- *Build local capacity.* Quick count leaders and volunteer observers become very well-versed in election law and procedures while preparing for a quick count. Leaders also build skills in project and budget management, communications and organizing. Moreover, the experience of organizing a quick count can strengthen an organization and prepare it for continued work on related democracy projects. Indeed, many NDI-supported organizations have grown to be strong, enduring civic institutions.
- *Provide reliable and comprehensive information.* Independent civic groups are well-suited to conduct credible quick counts. They typically can recruit and train thousands of observers in a relatively short time to guarantee broad election day coverage. Observers can be assigned to polling stations near their homes where they know the area well and can identify and respond effectively to problematic situations. Domestic observers are also well-positioned to provide necessary follow-up to prolonged vote counting/tabulating or complaint procedures.

NDI also encourages political parties to conduct quick counts. Political parties have much at stake on election day. They have the right to guard the integrity of the voting, counting and tabulation processes and the responsibility of safeguarding their supporters' votes. A growing number of political parties now engage in election observation activities, including quick counts, to build their long-term organizational capacity. Recruiting quick count volunteers at the grassroots and developing a strong communications network enhances constituency outreach and bolsters efforts to get out the vote.

News media and public opinion survey organizations also have conducted quick counts. It is, however, often difficult for them to build the large and reliable volunteer networks and communications systems necessary to achieve the small margins of error and high degree of confidence required for closely contested elections. International organizations conducting quick counts face the same problems.

International organizations usually have relied upon quick counts conducted by credible domestic civic organizations. In some situations, international organizations that are capable of building the necessary volunteer networks and data collection systems to conduct reliable quick counts can make an important contribution to electoral processes. This is particularly true in highly charged political environments, such as those found in immediate post-conflict situations, or where time and resource constraints prevent capable local groups from monitoring the elections.

Where both national and international groups are monitoring elections, NDI encourages cooperation. International observer missions support the credibility and development of civil society when they work with local groups and publicly support their efforts, and international missions should defend the right of domestic groups to observe elections and conduct quick counts.

An important note of caution must be emphasized. If the process is manipulated before the vote tabulation, a verification of the count's accuracy would legitimize the underlying fraud. For example, massive ballot box stuffing that took place in Nigeria's 1999 presidential election, or the likely misrepresentation of votes as officials called out and recorded them in Belarus' 2001 presidential election, would not have been reflected in the tabulation of results recorded from such polling stations. For this reason, quick counts as discussed in this handbook must also examine qualitative aspects of voting and counting processes.

Also, due to the exacting nature of quick counts and the high stakes they address, it is best not to conduct one unless an organization is and remains highly confident that it can execute the exercise successfully. It has been wisely decided in numerous countries not to conduct a quick count for these reasons, and in some cases election monitoring organizations have decided near the end of the pre-election period not to attempt to make numeric projections even though they had hoped to conduct a full quick count.

The order of the chapters in this handbook reflect the chronology of a typical quick count project. Chapter One defines the quick count, reviews quick count goals and lists prerequisites to success to determine if such a project is appropriate and feasible. Chapters Two through Eight describe the nuts and bolts—the specific details of how to set up, organize and implement a quick count. Chapter Two helps groups establish an effective team, plan the project and secure financing. Chapter Three underscores the importance of promoting the quick count to establish credibility and garner support. Chapter Four provides useful advice for building and training a volunteer network. Chapter Five discusses the statistical principles used in quick count methodology and the process for constructing a sample. Basic guidelines for the qualitative component of the quick count are provided in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven describes

International observer missions support the credibility and development of civil society when they work with local groups and publicly support their efforts.

Quick counts are politically neutral—but those conducting quick counts must take careful account of the political environment.

how to collect and analyze quick count data, and Chapter Eight offers advice on how to most effectively use the data on election day.

Quick counts are politically neutral—but those conducting quick counts must take careful account of the political environment. Throughout the handbook, the authors discuss how the local political context either facilitates, or impedes, quick count preparations and how political considerations must come into play so that the impartiality and accuracy of the quick count remain beyond question.

The authors do not presume to provide the definitive approach to quick counts in this handbook. Each country's history, culture and geography provide opportunities and constraints that influence a quick count's final organization. Resource and time constraints may force compromises. Some groups may utilize statistical sampling and analysis techniques described here but de-emphasize speed during data collection. Others may follow the advice on how to build a volunteer network and collect and use data, but they may not have the capability to organize around a random sample of polling stations. Nonetheless, the techniques discussed in this handbook should help any election monitoring group improve its capacity to speak to what happened on election day on a national basis and in a timely manner.

This handbook provides the basis for organizing and conducting quick counts, but these techniques will almost certainly continue to evolve. New methods may be discovered for managing data; observer forms may be refined to address emerging issues. Cooperation among observer organizations, both domestic and international, will likely improve. NDI looks forward to supporting organizations that use their skill, talent and creativity to add to the rich legacy of those that pioneered and developed this innovative and powerful tool.

CHAPTER ONE

Background on Quick Counts

"Democracy is based on the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people."
Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969)

Independent quick counts conducted by civil society organizations are remarkable and complex projects. They are often conceived by extraordinary leaders and conducted by courageous, ordinary citizens. Quick counts require expertise in political dynamics and grassroots organizing, a grasp of random sampling theory and some capacity with information technology. Hundreds or thousands of volunteers participate in a quick count and, in doing so, safeguard one of democracy's foundations—the vote.

Quick counts can project or verify official results, detect and report irregularities or expose fraud. In the majority of cases, quick counts build confidence in the work of election officials and the legitimacy of the electoral process.

QUICK COUNT DEFINED

A quick count is the process of collecting information gathered by hundreds, or thousands, of volunteers. All information, or data, comes from the direct observation of the election process. Observers watch the electoral authorities as they administer the voting process and count the ballots. They record information, including the actual vote count, on standardized forms and communicate their findings to a central collection point.

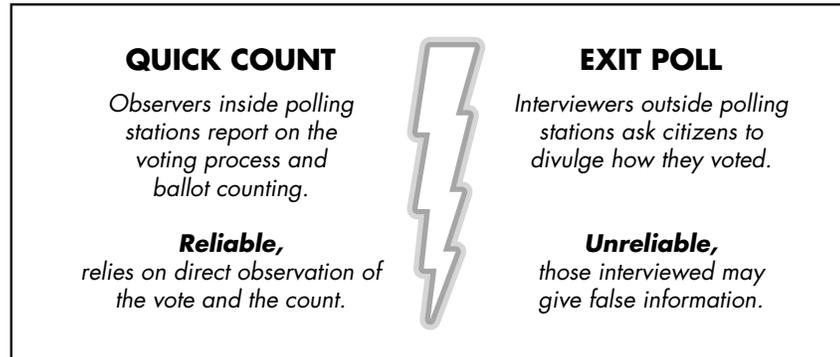
A quick count IS NOT the same as political opinion research, or exit polling. Quick counts do not rely on asking voters, or anyone else, how they might vote or require that voters divulge how they did vote. No opinions are expressed and none are requested from anyone.

Groups that try to collect data from every polling station attempt a comprehensive quick count. Comprehensive counts are designed to mirror the official vote count. Alternatively, and more commonly, groups collect information from a scientific random selection of polling stations to derive a reliable projection of results.¹ Such quick counts require fewer volunteers, although even

Quick counts require expertise in political dynamics and grassroots organizing, a grasp of random sampling theory and some capacity with information technology.

¹ See Chapter Five, *Statistical Principles and Quick Counts*, for a more detailed explanation of random sampling theory.

FIGURE 1-1:
DISTINGUISHING A QUICK COUNT
FROM AN EXIT POLL



groups that conduct quick counts using a random sample of polling stations often place observers in many more polling stations than those included in the quick count’s random sample. This engenders wider accountability, provides a greater deterrent against manipulation and enhances citizen participation in the election process.

Most quick counts now have two components:
1) an independent check on the official vote totals and
2) a systematic analysis of the qualitative aspects of voting and counting processes.

Most quick counts now have two components: 1) an independent check on the official vote totals and 2) a systematic analysis of the qualitative aspects of an electoral process. Quick counts are used to monitor the vote as a reasonably straightforward arithmetic exercise. Was the counting process proper or manipulated? Were the votes added correctly from the precinct to the national (or district) total? Were voter preferences reflected in the results announced by electoral or other governmental authorities? These questions can be answered at the most basic level—by analyzing quick count polling station observations and comparing the recorded vote count with official polling station results, or by comparing quick count national figures against official national results.

In many instances there is no other independent assessment of the official vote count. In a political environment in which large segments of society lack trust in the electoral process, the quick count can promote confidence in official results.

The same volunteer and communications network used to report information on the vote count is also used to collect information on the qualitative aspects of an electoral process. Qualitative questions that commonly appear on observer forms include, for example:

- **When did the polling station open?** (Observers circle the correct answer; e.g., between 6:00 and 7:00a.m., between 7:00 and 8:00a.m., between 8:00 and 9:00a.m., or after 9:00a.m.)
- **Were required electoral materials provided?** (Observers check off materials provided, which may include the voter list, ballots, indelible ink, ballot boxes, voting booths and tally sheets.)
- **When did voting begin?** (Observers circle the correct answer; e.g., between 7:00 and 8:00a.m., between 8:00 and 9:00a.m., between 9:00 and 10:00a.m., or after 10:00a.m.)

- **Were any irregularities observed during the voting process?** (The form provides a list of potential problems to be checked off that address issues such as disenfranchisement of qualified voters, illegal voting, ballot box stuffing and compromises in ballot secrecy.)
- **Which political parties had representatives inside the polling station?** (The parties are listed on the form; observers check off those present.)
- **Did party pollwatchers challenge the results at the polling station?** (The form may provide a list of legal reasons for complaints to be checked off.)
- **Were the tally sheets completed accurately?**²

Groups can use this information to investigate and report on occurrences at specific polling stations. However, these data are most potent in their aggregate form; this can allow groups to comment on the quality of the process as a whole, and to identify precisely irregularities that could have affected the election's outcome.

Quick Count History—The NAMFREL Example

The Philippines, 1986:

The election results reported by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos in 1984 were viewed with considerable distrust. When Marcos called a “snap” election for President in 1986, the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) initiated “Operation Quick Count” as a comprehensive attempt to mirror the official count of all 90,000 polling stations. Unlike most subsequent quick counts, which collect information from a random statistical sample of polling stations, NAMFREL performed a remarkable task in collecting data on a majority of the polling stations. The organization was instrumental in helping uncover the massive vote counting fraud attempted by Marcos supporters.

NAMFREL organizers are widely recognized as the pioneers of the quick count in emerging democracies. In the years since their first experience, quick counts have evolved, been thoroughly tested and now constitute a best practice for civil society oversight of the voting and tabulating processes.

NATIONAL CITIZEN'S MOVEMENT
FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)



QUICK COUNT GOALS

A successful quick count begins with a clear understanding and statement of the project's goals. Quick count leaders should identify their goals to facilitate both a strategic approach and a tactical plan. Potential goals include:

- deterring fraud;
- detecting fraud;
- offering a timely forecast of the results;
- instilling confidence in the electoral process and official results;
- reporting on the quality of the process;

² Chapter Six, *The Qualitative Component of the Quick Count*, outlines considerations for developing the questions that appear on quick count reporting forms. The chapter discusses the optimal length for forms and types of questions to avoid (e.g., open-ended questions). It also recommends that questions be tested for usefulness, validity, reliability, exhaustive and exclusive response categories and overall efficiency.

- encouraging citizen participation;
- extending organizational reach and skills building; and
- setting the stage for future activities.

Deterring Fraud

The most basic reason to undertake a quick count is to deter fraud. A quick count that is widely publicized and implemented by a credible organization or political party can deter or derail a fraudulent vote count.

To fulfill that deterrent function, a quick count must be well publicized and conducted in a transparent manner. The project must be promoted to raise awareness that electoral misconduct will be detected. The project's methodology should be understood and trusted. Plans should be publicized and open for scrutiny and debate, and written materials such as observer training manuals and forms should be distributed.

Example: Chile, 1988

In the plebiscite³ determining whether to continue General Pinochet's presidency, the Committee for Free Elections (CEL) used a statistically-based quick count to forecast the results from Chile's 22,000 polling stations. Based on a sample of 10 percent of the polling sites, CEL accurately forecasted the victory for anti-Pinochet forces. The quick count led to a statement by a member of the ruling Junta conceding defeat. Experts speculate it was highly likely that the Pinochet regime would have manipulated the vote count to declare victory had there not been this independent verification of the count.

THE COMMITTEE FOR
FREE ELECTIONS (CEL)



Detecting Fraud

In cases where the quick count has been unable to deter fraud, the data should at a minimum be able to detect vote-counting fraud.⁴ This may be based on identifying inconsistencies in polling station-to-polling station comparisons, where official results do not mirror observer reports. More often, fraud is revealed when the results of the official tabulation process differ from a quick count's comprehensive results or statistical forecasts.

Example: Panama, 1989

When it became apparent to Panamanian President Manuel Noriega that his proxy in the presidential contest was losing the vote, the government suspended the the tabulation of results at the regional level and attempted to announce a fraudulent outcome. A Catholic Church organization, the Archdiocese Commission for the Coordination of Laity (a predecessor to the Commission for Justice and Peace), used its quick count (corroborated with a

THE COMMISSION FOR
JUSTICE AND PEACE



³ A plebiscite is a vote by which the people of an entire country or electoral district vote for or against a proposal, often on a proposed national constitution or issue of governance.

⁴ As discussed in Chapter Six, *The Qualitative Component of the Quick Count*, quick counts can also help to identify irregularities and characterize their impact on electoral outcomes.

comprehensive count done by the political opposition) to forecast what the vote would have been had the ballots been properly and completely counted. This independent result demonstrated that Noriega's candidate, in fact, lost the election, which was a major factor in the weakening of the Noriega regime.

Offering a Timely Forecast of the Results

In transitional democracies, the official vote count often can take days, even weeks, to be publicly announced. Extended time lags between the completion of voting and the announcement of an official result may produce an uncertain political climate or a political vacuum that threatens stability. An accurate, credible quick count can forecast returns in a timely fashion, help reduce post-election tensions and increase citizens' confidence in the election outcome.

Example: Indonesia, 1999

In the first truly free elections in Indonesia's history, the quick count conducted by the Indonesian Rector's Forum proved crucial. Indonesia's daunting physical geography and limited rural infrastructure resulted in a near collapse of the government's vote counting mechanisms. The only credible election results available for several weeks were those provided by the Rector's Forum quick count. The publication of those quick count results held rumor in check and helped prevent the onset of civil unrest.

THE INDONESIAN RECTORS FORUM



Instilling Confidence in the Electoral Process

When voters distrust the government, the operation of reliable quick counts by credible civic organizations and/or political parties can reduce the chances that the results will be manipulated and thereby increase citizen confidence in the outcome. Often, a quick count is the only verification method available when official results are called into question.

In countries where electoral authorities have not built a reservoir of trust, political tensions can create an atmosphere that undermines the stability of political institutions. In these instances, a quick count can be used to bolster the reputation of electoral authorities and verify official results.

Example: Bulgaria, 1990

In the first post-communist election, the combined opposition forces (UDF) were certain of victory against the Socialist (formerly Communist) Party. It was inconceivable to them that they could lose a free and fair election. When official results indicated a Socialist victory, tensions rose dramatically at a large (60,000) UDF rally in downtown Sofia, and a heavy contingent of government security forces was deployed. The Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights (BAFE-CR), a nonpartisan organization trusted by the opposition, had implemented a quick count. BAFE-CR's results proved to the opposition that it had lost but had not been cheated. The demonstrators went home peacefully.

BULGARIAN ASSOCIATION FOR FAIR
ELECTIONS AND CIVIL RIGHTS
(BAFE-CR)



Reporting on the Quality of the Process

Most challenges to electoral processes are based on anecdotes. For example, one party may allege that its supporters were prevented from voting; in another instance a party may present witnesses who claim that they were paid to vote for a certain candidate. Without documentation and analysis of the impact of such problems it is very difficult to obtain redress.

A quick count is designed to collect systematic and reliable information about qualitative aspects of the process. Opposition political parties and independent monitors can rely on statistical methods used by quick counts to supply reliable and valid evidence about the voting and counting processes.⁵ A quick count goes beyond anecdotes to characterize the magnitude and severity of problems in the electoral process. Information on the quality of the process can determine whether a quantitative assessment of the vote tabulation process is relevant.

Example: Dominican Republic, 1996

The deliberate disenfranchisement of tens-of-thousands of opposition political party supporters in the Dominican Republic's 1994 elections allowed Joaquin Balaguer to fraudulently claim the presidency. A political crisis was triggered; Balaguer's term was halved as a consequence, and a new election was scheduled in 1996. A Dominican nonpartisan civic organization, Citizen Participation (PC), formed to monitor the election. During the pre-election period, a political party raised serious concerns about the potential for illegal voting by non-citizens. This raised tensions and heightened suspicions that either illegal voting or disenfranchisement from over zealous application of procedures could mar the election. However, PC election-day reports about the relatively trouble-free voting process helped to allay concerns in both rounds of the election. Similar reports by the domestic observer group during the 2000 presidential election also helped to calm skeptics and clarify the situation for that country.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (PC)



Encouraging Citizen Participation

Quick count organizers mobilize hundreds, thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of citizens. These are often individuals who are not interested in participating in partisan politics but still want to actively support the development of a democratic political system. They serve as quick count trainers, observers, data processors and in other supporting roles. They become well versed in the country's electoral process and often stay involved in similar projects following elections.

Example: Ukraine, 1999

The Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU) was founded jointly by a student organization, a human rights group and a trade union in 1994. CVU was interested in monitoring the country's first parliamentary elections organized after

⁵ See also Chapter Six, *The Qualitative Component of the Quick Count*, for further discussion of qualitative analysis.

Ukraine gained independence. CVU mobilized more than 4,000 observers for that election, more than 17,000 observers for the 1998 parliamentary elections and 16,000 for the 1999 presidential elections, for which it conducted a quick count. Through its 160 chapters around the country, CVU held over 200 meetings on the election law in 1998, which involved more than 10,000 people, and over 700 meetings, reaching many more for the 1999 elections. CVU has set up “public consulting centers” around the country to augment its election monitoring activities with civic education initiatives, monitoring the activities of members of parliament, promoting electoral law reform and helping citizens to formulate letters of appeal and develop approaches for direct contact between citizens and governmental bodies. The skills and organizational structures developed by CVU through its quick count and broader election monitoring activities have helped it to become a major center for promoting citizen participation in governmental and public affairs.

COMMITTEE OF VOTERS OF
UKRAINE (CVU)



Extending Organizational Reach and Skills Building

The planning and operation of a quick count requires considerable management skill and organizational discipline. An exercise of this complexity can act as the glue that binds a new civic organization together during an initial election-related project. It also can provide a significant organization building experience for political parties. Quick counts extend organizational reach by bringing large numbers of volunteers into the process and building the capacity of civic groups or political parties to manage long-term projects.

Example: Kenya, 1997

Kenyan civil society demonstrated its strength by mobilizing more than 28,000 volunteers to observe the pre-election period and election day voting and counting procedures. National observers covered more than 14,000 polling stations, in addition to many counting centers. The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (working in a “joint-venture” for national monitoring along with the National Council of Churches of Kenya and the Institute for Education in Democracy) conducted a quick count. The data were collected slowly and were used to confirm that confidence in the official tabulation was justified. This approach was followed largely so that the Commission and its partner organizations could be in a position to use the methodology in future elections.

CATHOLIC JUSTICE AND
PEACE COMMISSION



Setting the Stage for Future Activities

Quick counts can set the stage for sponsoring groups to undertake non-electoral democracy-building activities. Successful quick counts set a precedent for citizens affecting the political process. Civic organizations emerge from quick count experiences with reputations for honesty and effectiveness, and citizens want and expect them to continue similar work. These organizations are equipped to do so because organizing a quick count builds skills that can be employed in a wide variety of activities. In fact, many organizations for

which a quick count was their first project have subsequently taken on programs to promote accountability and transparency in government, to educate citizens on the principles behind, and mechanics of, democracy and to advocate for democratic reforms or specific policies.

Example: GONG, 2000

Before Croatia's 1997 elections, a number of organizations from around the country started GONG (Citizens Organized to Monitor Elections). The electoral authorities did not permit domestic observers to enter the polling stations; so, GONG presented voters with questionnaires as they left the stations and compiled a report on the election process. In 1998, GONG, together with the Croatian Helsinki Committee, obtained an order from the Croatian Constitutional Court recommending that electoral authorities allow nonpartisan election observation. In 1999, GONG succeeded in lobbying Parliament to pass an amendment to the election law providing for nonpartisan election observation. The campaign included widespread citizen education and mobilization that involved distribution of hundreds of thousands of flyers, airing clips on radio and television and conducting meetings around the country. Besides monitoring elections—including through quick counts—advocacy and civic education activities have become two of GONG's hallmarks. Beginning in 2000, GONG developed a high profile "Open Parliament" program through

CITIZENS ORGANIZED TO
MONITOR ELECTIONS



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Should groups prioritize quick count projects over other types of election observation?

As important a tactic as quick counts may be, this methodology is not a substitute for more comprehensive election monitoring. A quick count is one of numerous tools available to election monitors. By definition, a quick count focuses on the task of verifying that the ballots that go into a ballot box are counted accurately in the first instance and that these votes remain part of the final electoral tally. If a ballot is placed in the box illegally, a quick count will count it as surely as a legal vote (unless ballot box stuffing is also detected.) If voters have been paid for their votes, the quick count will count these like any other vote. If voters have been intimidated into staying away from the polls or supporting a party or candidate, the quick count will not report that problem. Thus, a quick count cannot act as a substitute for other more qualitative aspects of election monitoring. Crucial to comprehensive monitoring of an electoral process are 1) oversight and commentary on the election law adoption process and 2) observation and verification of: voter registration; qualification of candidates and parties for the ballot; access to and treatment of election contestants in the media; the conduct of the campaign; problems that take place away from the polls; and the post-election transition.⁶

⁶ See NDI *Handbook: How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide (1995)* and other NDI publications on monitoring voter registries, media monitoring and other topics.

which the first citizens visited parliamentary sessions, the first citizen tours of parliament were organized and access to legislative proposals was provided to citizens. GONG published a booklet about parliament's procedures and began "Citizens' Hour," where citizens meet their elected representatives on local and national levels through panel discussions in communities and via talk radio shows. GONG has adapted its parliament program to open a number of county, city and municipal councils to Croatian citizens.

QUICK COUNT PREREQUISITES

Before a group commits to undertaking a quick count, it must determine whether one is feasible. In some cases, even if feasible, the requirements for a successful quick count are absent. Three basic conditions must be met:

- observers must have access to polling stations and to counting centers;
- the group must be credible (i.e., it has to be trusted by most key audiences on election day); and
- the project needs to be supported by adequate resources.

Access to data

Quick counts are based on actual observation of events. At the very least, observers must have free access to the voting and counting processes. Free access throughout the day from opening until close of the polls is indispensable if the observer group is to evaluate qualitative aspects of the process. Ideally, quick count groups should solicit and receive a document from election authorities guaranteeing observers free access to the polling station and the counting process at all levels.⁷

Credibility with Audiences

A civic group planning a quick count must be prepared to cultivate credibility with audiences it deems crucial to accomplishing its particular goals. For example, if the main goal is to deter fraud, electoral authorities and political parties are key audiences. If the goal is to instill public confidence in the process, it is important to build credibility with the general electorate.⁸

Two main components of credibility are competence and independence. To promote an image of competence, groups themselves have to behave in a transparent manner. They should make public items such as charters, bylaws and financial statements. They should publicize their plans and methods, which should be sensible and feasible. Key audiences must also see a quick count sponsor as independent. To ensure this, groups may require that every individual leader, staff member and volunteer have no partisan political involvement.

A civic group planning a quick count must be prepared to cultivate credibility with audiences it deems crucial to accomplishing its particular goals.

⁷ See Chapter Three, *Promoting the Quick Count*, for a detailed discussion of methods for guaranteeing observers' rights to enter polling stations and counting centers.

⁸ See Chapter Three, *Promoting the Quick Count*, for more comprehensive information on building credibility with key audiences and mounting a publicity campaign.

Studying quick count techniques will greatly assist in designing the election-day observation effort.

If this is not possible, the alternative is to create an organization that is politically representative and balanced.^{9,10}

Adequate Resources

Significant human, technical and financial resources are required to conduct a quick count. Groups must tap into, or create, a nationwide network of volunteers; they must develop a large-scale data collection system. Funding is required to build and support the observer network and technical system. Typically, this funding is obtained from sources such as international donor agencies or non-governmental organizations.¹¹

Nearly every decision about the structure of a quick count has far reaching resource implications. Speed requires telephones and computers to collect and synthesize information. Accuracy demands more sophisticated systems to process data and complete reports. Comprehensiveness means more volunteers, more training and higher election-day costs.

MOVING FORWARD

This chapter provides background information on quick counts, how they are utilized and what is required for success. Given this information, some groups will eliminate the quick count as a potential activity. They may decide that financial and time constraints prohibit success, or they may focus exclusively on pre-election activities such as monitoring voter registration, auditing the voter registry, scrutinizing ballot qualification processes, monitoring political violence or evaluating the role of the media.

Even in cases where a quick count is ruled out, monitoring the quality of election-day processes requires being able to speak relatively quickly about the national picture. This demands a rapid communication system that reports on a cross-section of the country. While statistical samples with very low margins of error may not be required for this, studying quick count techniques will greatly assist in designing the election-day observation effort.

Many groups will decide to proceed with a quick count. They have choices between any one of three approaches:

- *Taking on a quick count in addition to one or more complementary pre-election projects and broad election-day monitoring*—A comprehensive approach to election monitoring begins with an analysis of the legal framework for elections and the broad political environment, including past and anticipated problems. Pre-election projects that complement a quick count

⁹ See Chapter Two, *Getting Started*, for further discussion of strategies for composing a leadership team to ensure an organization's independence. Chapter Four, *Building the Volunteer Network*, offers methods for ensuring the neutrality of volunteers.

¹⁰ Political parties must also be concerned with establishing the validity and reliability of their quick counts. They may elect not to publicize their results, but it is still in their interest to demonstrate that the methodology was sound and properly implemented. They may do this, for example, by inviting a highly respected and impartial appraisal team to evaluate the quick count.

¹¹ See Chapter Two, *Getting Started*, for more information on budgets and fundraising.

can be as simple as collecting and reporting complaints lodged by citizens or political parties or as complex as sponsoring a national civic education project. Organizations with sufficient time, organizational strength and financial resources may monitor several pre-election processes in addition to organizing a quick count and broad election-day observation. Many groups have managed such a comprehensive monitoring effort well; however, experience has shown that it is easy to underestimate the human and financial resources needed for a successful quick count, and leaders should be prepared to shift resources to that project as the election approaches.

- *Simultaneously organizing a quick count and general election-day observation program*—In these cases, all volunteers are trained as general observers. Once a sample is drawn, volunteers that live closest to polling stations in the sample are identified and trained as quick count volunteers. The Nicaraguan group Ethics and Transparency, for example, recruited and trained more than 4,000 volunteers to observe the 2001 national elections but only about 1,000 of these participated directly in the quick count. This approach maximizes the deterrent effect of a quick count, accommodates large numbers of volunteers and strengthens the volunteer network for future activities.
- *Focusing all available resources on a quick count*—This may happen particularly in countries with a history of fraud during the counting processes, and where resources available for election-related work are limited and best streamlined.

Quick counts, whether organized alone or as one component of an overall observation effort, are large and complex undertakings. The chapters that follow will help organizers approach the project logically, step-by-step. Chapter Two begins this process by describing how to establish an office, develop a strategic plan and secure adequate funding.

**REMINDER****Nonpartisan organizations are advised to take three steps before committing to a quick count project:**

1. Develop a thorough understanding of quick count methodology.
2. Develop a statement of goals based on an analysis of the local political context.
3. Consider whether the group possesses the prerequisites for success, including credibility, access to data and adequate funding.

Those that decide to move forward with a quick count should proceed to develop a strategic plan as described in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO

Getting Started

The success of a quick count hinges on groundwork laid early in the project. This chapter discusses the work that needs to be done in the first weeks of a quick count project. The key building block tasks are:

- recruiting leaders and staff;
- developing strategic plans; and
- designing budgets and fundraising.

The tasks for quick count staffing, planning and fundraising are the same for newly formed and established groups. Established groups have the advantage of being able to shift experienced staff to the quick count project. However, because quick counts are very time-consuming, particularly in the four to six months leading up to an election, it is generally a bad idea to ask staff members to divide time between the quick count and other projects.

While in crisis situations quick counts have been organized in very short timeframes, nonpartisan organizations conducting quick counts are advised to begin planning and fundraising about one year before an election.¹ Volunteer recruiting should start approximately eight months before the election, particularly for groups that do not have, or cannot tap into, existing networks. Planners must assume that they will need volunteers in every region of the country, regardless of how remote or difficult to access. The work of the technical team should start soon thereafter since it can take several months to procure equipment and to put into place the necessary computer software and hardware and communications system.

Nonpartisan organizations conducting quick counts are advised to begin planning and fundraising about one year before an election.

¹ The 1989 Panamanian quick count was organized in five weeks but had the pre-existing resources and organizational structure of the Catholic Church upon which to rely. The quick count in Bulgaria was organized by BAFECR in approximately two months, but there was an unexpected democratic breakthrough in the country, which brought a great deal of enthusiasm domestically and attention from the international community. Most quick counts take six months to one year to organize in the first instance. Even six months has proven in several countries to be insufficient; for example, quick counts were dropped from monitoring plans by groups in Azerbaijan and Ghana due to a lack of adequate preparation time.

Ignoring the political repercussions of decisions about how to organize, who to employ and other matters can seriously harm a quick count's credibility.

It is crucial to structure leadership, staff and volunteers so that all sectors of the public, not just political elites, perceive the effort as credible.

This chapter stresses the importance of keeping politics in mind because organizing a quick count can draw support and/or opposition from political factions. It is never too early to think about this, as ignoring the political repercussions of decisions about how to organize, who to employ and other matters can seriously harm a quick count's credibility. Common mistakes of this type include hiring individuals with partisan reputations or controversial pasts, and accepting donations from individuals or groups perceived to have political agendas.² Even seemingly innocuous decisions can have a political impact, as the Nicaraguan organization *Ethics and Transparency* discovered when its observers were accused of partisan ties because their forms were printed with ink that was the same color as a political party's propaganda. Moreover, the quick count can be seen as provocative or threatening to some political groups, particularly by those in government. Every effort, therefore, must be made to analyze the changing political landscape and ensure that the project is both impartial and widely perceived as impartial.

LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

The leadership and senior staff form a group that becomes the public face of the organization. This group, as a whole, must be viewed as credible. As discussed in Chapter One, credibility has two components: independence and competence. In order to be seen as independent, groups almost always exclude individuals with partisan political backgrounds. In addition, groups may seek to include representatives of various social groups to ensure actual and perceived political neutrality. It is crucial to structure leadership, staff and volunteers so that all sectors of the public, not just political elites, perceive the effort as credible. This means that women must be brought into key leadership, staff and volunteer roles. Appropriate inclusion of ethnic, linguistic, religious and other groups may also be important. To demonstrate competence, groups fill staff positions with individuals who are well-respected and who have reputations for being effective at what they do.

The Board of Directors

It is almost always advantageous to establish an oversight body, such as a board of directors, for a quick count project, whether the quick count is organized by a single organization or a coalition. Each organization should analyze the makeup and functions of the board of directors (also commonly referred to as the executive council or steering committee) before undertaking a quick count. The ideal board will:

- comprise several well-known and respected individuals;
- represent a cross-section of society, including civic activists, professionals, academics, businesspeople and religious leaders;

² As noted above, political parties also must establish the credibility of their quick count efforts, if the results are to be perceived as reliable. Those who conduct the quick count operations for a party must do so on the strict basis of gaining accurate results. Employing outside, politically neutral experts to help design the quick count and review its implementation can help to establish credibility. The party can maintain control of findings, as with opinion poll data. Reliable quick counts allow the party to accurately assess election-day processes, which is important for making judgments about characterizing election results and about pursuing complaints.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What if quick count sponsors cannot find leaders and staff who are completely neutral?

It is sometimes helpful to strive for balance and independence rather than neutrality. It is difficult, in some countries, to identify individuals with no history of political involvement. Particularly in countries that have experienced internal conflict, virtually everyone has participated in partisan activities or been obliged to pledge allegiance to one party or another. In these cases, domestic observer organizations may decide to recruit leaders who represent the country's full political spectrum. They may distinguish between having a partisan history and current party activism, requiring that leaders and staff refrain from the latter while participating on the quick count project. The goal is to convince political parties, electoral authorities, donors and the public that the group will behave independently regardless of the election results.

- possess geographic, racial, ethnic and gender balance; and
- be perceived as credible, independent and impartial by the majority of citizens and political players.

The duties of a board of directors vary among organizations implementing quick counts. If the staff is particularly experienced, the board may play a hands-off, advisory role. During a first election observation experience, an organization may prefer that the board participate more directly in day-to-day

A Successful Board of Directors—The Nicaraguan Example

In 1995 a group of local activists were eager for Nicaraguans to take a more prominent role in consolidating the country's fragile democracy and safeguarding the integrity of its elections. They formed the nonpartisan civic group Ethics and Transparency (ET) to observe the 1996 national elections. Former leaders on the political left and right, the heads of the three major human rights groups, Catholic and Evangelical church officials, members of the business community and well-known academics were among the group's leadership. They forged affiliations with a broad range of non-governmental organizations involved in grassroots community development projects and recruited 4,200 volunteers to observe the electoral process and conduct a quick count. The quick count data proved crucial in confirming for the Nicaraguan public and the international community that Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC) candidate Arnoldo Aleman had defeated FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega. ET was heralded in the international press as "the real winner" in Nicaragua, "a useful foundation on which greater civic participation can now be built."³ ET is still a strong organization; it was asked by the government to take a lead role in a post-election national dialogue. It subsequently monitored local elections and it ran a remarkably successful quick count in the 2001 national elections.

ETHICS AND TRANSPARENCY (ET)



³ *Washington Post* editorial page, October 24, 1996. *The Economist* and the *New York Times* also mentioned ET's role.

operations. The members of the board of directors usually take on several or all of the following:

- serve as a decision-making body on matters of project goals, policy and implementation;
- recruit and hire an executive director to oversee day-to-day project operations and advise on the hiring of additional personnel to carry out organizing and implementation;
- direct the organization’s external relations—build and maintain relationships with electoral authorities, government, political parties, the business community, civil society, donors and the international community;
- manage or assist the executive director with fundraising;
- Serve as spokespersons and represent the group at public functions, press conferences and other media events;
- form committees to study important emerging issues, such as pre-election problems or legal rights of election observers; and
- authorize or approve public statements.

Key Personnel

Groups should consider a number of factors when recruiting individuals for leadership or paid positions. These include:

- technical skill and experience;
- the quick count goals; and
- potential political implications.

The technical skills required for a successful quick count are similar for every country; they are included below in job descriptions. The goals of each quick count influence the general approach to staffing (e.g., a strong media campaign effectively publicizes the quick count, which helps to deter fraud). The political considerations for staffing are the same as those that apply to a board

FIGURE 2-1:
FUNCTIONAL TEAMS

FUNCTIONAL TEAM	PRINCIPAL STAFF POSITIONS
Administration:	Executive Director Accountant
Media:	Media/Communications Specialist
Technical:	Statistician (Part-time) Computer Specialist Database Manager
Volunteer Coordination:	Volunteer Coordinator Lead Trainer Logistics Specialist Regional Coordinators

of directors. Groups may require political neutrality or seek political balance, and they may seek to represent various cultural, ethnic or regional groups. Personnel are commonly organized into functional teams, as shown below:⁴

A typical quick count organizational chart is shown below:

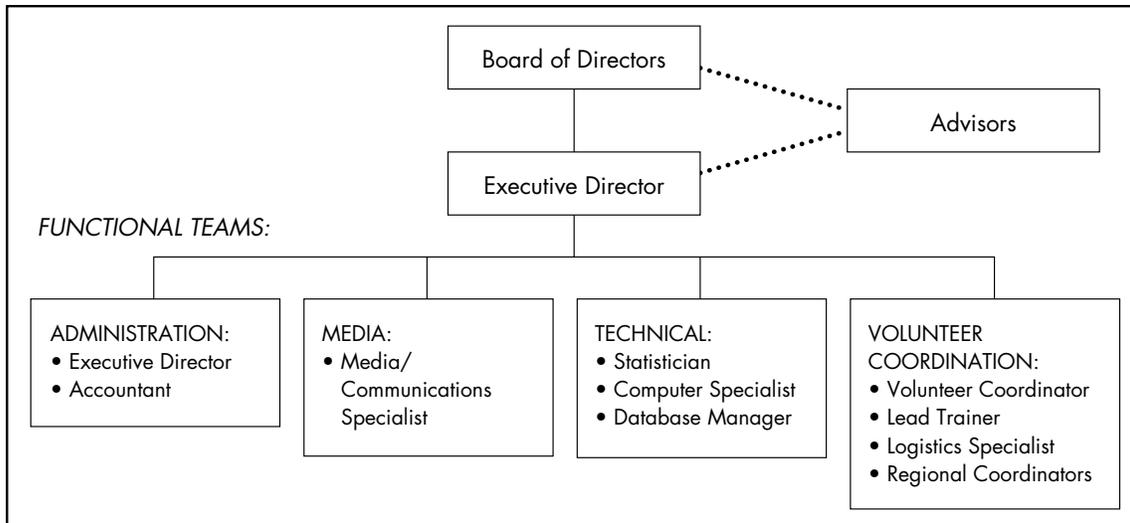


FIGURE 2-2:
QUICK COUNT ORGANIZATION

Typically, the most experienced staff member from each functional team serves as a team leader. This facilitates decision-making and streamlines communications between teams.

The executive director and functional team jobs almost always require significant time commitments and/or specific technical skills and are, therefore, paid. Regional coordinators are usually not paid but take on the position with the understanding that all expenses will be reimbursed.

Financial considerations usually limit an organization's ability to hire full-time people, particularly early in the project. Early in the planning and organizing process, each team may combine positions, delegate tasks to volunteers or enlist the help of members of the board of directors. Some examples of creative work assignments are:

- an accountant takes on office management responsibilities;
- a volunteer manages the reception area;
- the statistician consults part-time;
- the computer specialist also designs the database system; and
- volunteer lawyers or professors design observer manuals and forms.

⁴ The work of the administration team is discussed in this chapter. Chapter Three discusses media work; Chapter Four outlines the responsibilities of the volunteer coordination team; Chapters Five, Six and Seven detail technical work.

A number of factors, such as funding delays or secondary projects, can upset tight schedules and create significantly more work—and anxiety—in the months before an election. Some of the most common ways to increase productivity as elections draw near include:

- adding staff, which could include logistics specialists to procure telecommunications and computer equipment, or database managers to continuously update information on volunteers and produce credentials;
- forming mobile teams of trainers to complete or reinforce the training of quick count observers; and
- utilizing volunteers to assist with important projects, such as distributing press packets or supplies to the volunteer network.

Below are model job descriptions of the most important staff positions with corresponding duties and qualifications:

Executive Director

Duties:

- Directs and executes the quick count plan.
- Recruits personnel and supervises the work of the functional teams, ensuring the efficiency and quality of the work.
- Manages the budget and assists the board with proposal writing and other fundraising activities.
- Monitors and analyzes all political issues affecting quick count implementation.
- Directs efforts to solicit and acquire accreditation for monitors to legally observe the voting, counting and tabulation processes.
- Advises the board of directors on external relations, provides the board with frequent progress reports on internal operations and alerts the board to potential problems.
- Represents the organization, with board members and staff as appropriate, at public and press events.

Qualifications:

- A proven manager, preferably of a large volunteer organization.
- Unequivocal commitment to ensuring electoral integrity; election-related experience preferred.
- Reputation for professionalism and ability to be politically impartial.
- Maintains extensive contacts in the political and/or electoral communities.
- Possesses some experience with information technology.
- Willingness to work long hours in an extremely high-stress environment (project-driven).
- Shares in long-term vision of organization.
- Excellent organizational skills.
- Excellent communication skills.

Accountant

Duties:

- Responsible for general accounting, budget and subgrant activities.
- Maintains accounting oversight in accordance with donor agency regulations and standards.
- Serves as liaison between election monitoring organization and funding agencies on accounting-related matters.
- Periodically evaluates and informs executive director of the project's financial status.
- Assists and advises the executive director and board of directors on proposal writing.

Qualifications:

- A certified public accountant with experience working with large budgets.
- Experience working with a broad range of international funding agencies.
- A working knowledge of PC-based word processing, spreadsheet applications, accounting and finance-related software.

Media/Communications Specialist

Duties:

- Together with the board and executive director, develops the "message" of the overall project and for specific points as the project progresses.
- Develops a media strategy to generate publicity and promote an image of credibility and neutrality.
- Develops and maintains relationships with national/international media outlets, identifying opportunities to inform media of the organization's work.
- If necessary, educates local and international journalists about quick counts.
- Creates and directs individual public relations approaches for key audiences.
- Provides advice and guidelines to the board, executive director, functional teams and regional coordinators for speaking with the media.
- Organizes press conferences for the pre-election period, the simulation, election day and the post-election period; designs, produces and provides press packets for all events.
- Provides information through press releases, newsletters and other materials to the media and everyone involved with the project (which promotes staff morale and helps keep everyone "on message").

Qualifications:

- Significant experience in public relations or as a journalist.
- Knowledge of local and international media outlets.
- Exceptional analytical, oral and written communication skills.
- Ability to communicate in front of TV cameras or radio microphones (and to coach spokespersons).

Volunteer Coordinator

Duties:

- Designs a structure for a national volunteer network, recruiting regional coordinators and establishing regional offices (and, if necessary, local offices).
- Motivates regional and local leaders and assists with volunteer recruitment.
- Takes the lead on designing observer forms; coordinates with trainer, electoral law specialist and quick count software designer and vets forms with board of directors and executive director.
- Works in conjunction with regional coordinators and the computer engineer to design a structure for the election-day communications system.
- Serves as a liaison between the organization's leaders and the grassroots network.
- Working with the logistics specialist, ensures that regional and local leaders receive needed resources such as training materials, observer checklists, observer identification cards and small budgets (when possible).

Qualifications:

- Experience recruiting and organizing volunteers.
- Enthusiastic and energetic personality; willing to work long hours.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Experience with election-related work and sound political judgement.
- Familiarity with regions of the country outside the capital.

Lead Trainer

Duties:

- Assists the volunteer coordinator to design observer forms.
- Designs all training materials, including manuals, visual aids, videos, handouts, etc.
- Designs a train-the-trainers program (or, if possible, schedules and delivers workshops) to ensure uniform and effective observer training.
- Assists database manager in developing a training program for telephone operators/data processors.
- If necessary, assists media specialist in designing a training program for journalists.

Qualifications:

- Experience teaching and training adults.
- Enthusiastic and energetic personality; willing to work long hours and to travel.
- Experience designing educational materials.
- Experience with election-related work.
- Familiarity with regions of the country outside the capital.

Logistics Specialist

Duties:

- Coordinates and provides logistical support for headquarters staff travel.
- Creates systems and procedures for supporting the volunteer network.
- Procures and distributes all supplies to the volunteer network. Supplies include items such as money, training packets, observer identification cards and legal credentials, observer checklists, reports and updates.
- Coordinates all logistical aspects of conferences and special events held in the capital city, including securing program sites, accommodations and transportation.
- Provides relevant information to the computer engineer for possible improvements in the election-day communications system, based on communicating with the volunteer network.
- Coordinates logistics demand with organization budget (accountant).

Qualifications:

- Experience working on logistics or event planning with broad-based civic organizations.
- Excellent organizational abilities and attention to detail.
- Working knowledge of PC-based word processing and spreadsheet applications.

Regional Coordinator

Duties:

- Establishes a regional office.
- Recruits quick count observers within geographical area of responsibility.
- May organize volunteers to divide responsibilities in a manner similar to headquarters: coordinator, accountant, volunteer recruitment and training, data collection and communications.
- Supervises regional observer recruitment and training in conjunction with national volunteer coordinator.
- Facilitates communication between headquarters and local volunteers.
- Assists national volunteer coordinator and computer engineer to design the regional piece of the election-day communications system.
- Responsible for deploying election-day observers around the region.
- Requests and distributes necessary material, supplies and information from headquarters. Collects and sends necessary materials and information to headquarters.
- Informs local electoral authorities, political players and the public of the organization's activities (per guidelines from national headquarters).
- Represents the observer organization at regional public events.

Qualifications:

- Respected regional leader with good contacts in civil society, business, politics and the media.
- Reputation for professionalism and ability to be politically impartial.
- Willingness to dedicate significant amounts of time to the quick count project.
- Experience recruiting and training volunteers.
- Excellent motivator.

Database Manager

Duties:

- Advises the volunteer coordinator and trainer on designing observer forms to ensure each question is designed to facilitate data processing.
- Designs or acquires computer software to process information collected on quick count volunteer checklists.
- Designs or acquires computer software necessary to establish a database containing information on the hundreds or thousands of volunteers in the monitoring network and on polling stations contained in the sample.
- Creates and implements tools for data security (such as volunteer codes).
- Responsible for testing all software used to input, analyze and report election-day data.
- Works with the volunteer coordinator and computer engineer to recruit and train those who will receive and input quick count data (telephone operators/data processors).
- Coordinates activities with the statistician and election-day data analysts.

Qualifications:

- A specialist in management information systems and computer science.
- Ability to define problems, collect data and draw conclusions.
- Experience in teaching and managing students or volunteers.

Computer Specialist

Duties:

- Advises the volunteer coordinator and trainer on designing observer forms. Provides insight into the organization's election-day ability to process certain volumes of information within desired time frames.
- Oversees the design and construction of a telephone and computer network to input, analyze and report election-day data.

Qualifications:

- A specialist in management information systems and computer science.
- Ability to detect problems related to computer hardware systems and make adjustments.
- Experience in teaching and managing students or volunteers.

Statistician

Duties:

- Designs and draws a statistical sample of polling stations for the quick count.
- Provides explanations of sample design to executive director, functional teams and board of directors, as well as periodically at outside meetings.
- Provides input into strategies for analyzing and reporting election-day data.
- Communicates with the volunteer coordinator regarding strategies for recruiting and training volunteers in sufficient numbers, and in regions affected by the sample.
- Participates in a simulation to test the quick count communication, data processing and reporting systems, preferably two weeks before election day.
- Represents the organization at media events as appropriate, including

media education events, a simulation day press conference and election-day press conferences.

Qualifications:

- Must be a well-regarded, formally trained statistician and social scientist.
- Experience with database management systems.
- Knowledge of relevant demographic data and trends.
- Ability to work, in coordination with international experts, in extremely high-stress environments.
- History of political neutrality.

PROJECT PLANNING

Project planning skills are essential for quick count success. The most complex, time sensitive tasks are best planned in reverse order working backward from key dates. This forces a focus on the importance of meeting deadlines. It also encourages organizers to tailor activities to achieve objectives. This backward planning approach is described below in three steps—developing a “to do” list, creating a timeline and assigning responsibilities.

Step One: Creating a List of Important Events, Activities and Milestones

The first step to backward planning is to envision a successful election day. Then list important dates, milestones and activities that should precede this day.

Step Two: Plotting Activities on a Timeline

The next step in backward planning is to plot all activities on a master timeline. The master chart contains all major deadlines, events and activities leading up to and including the immediate post-election period and provides a powerful visual of the work ahead. Each functional team should develop its own timeline chart which is coordinated precisely with the master timeline chart. The charts should be the focal point for discussion at periodic all-staff meetings so that everyone at headquarters is aware of important events and any schedule changes.⁵

Step Three: Assigning Work

In addition to the master timeline, the executive director should work in conjunction with staff to divide up the work required to conduct each activity. It is crucial to delegate tasks wisely. Each activity requires tasks from more than one, sometimes all, technical teams. Figure 2-3, which assigns tasks entailed in recruiting volunteers, illustrates this point.

Considerations for Strategic Timeline Planning

These timelines are invaluable tools, allowing organizations to approach a very complex project one activity at a time, while keeping end goals in mind. Investing time up front to plan allows groups to work more efficiently than if

The most complex, time sensitive tasks are best planned in reverse order working backward from key dates.

⁵ Appendix 2A contains a work plan/timeline developed for a quick count in Nicaragua; appendix 2B shows a work plan developed in Indonesia.

FIGURE 2-3:
TASK ASSIGNMENTS UNDER
RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

ACTIVITY: RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS	
TASK –	ASSIGNED TO –
Solicit cooperation from outside organizations with access to volunteers:	Executive Director
Develop a recruiting message and materials:	Volunteer Coordinator and Media Specialist
Identify target numbers and target geographical areas:	Statistician
Create regional committees:	Volunteer Coordinator with assistance from Board Members and Regional Coordinators
Create municipal committees:	Volunteer Coordinator with assistance from Regional Coordinators
Make arrangements for recruiting trips:	Logistics Specialist
Set up recruiting meetings:	Regional Coordinators
Facilitate recruiting meetings:	Regional Coordinators with assistance from the Volunteer Coordinator
Compile a database of volunteers:	Database Manager

Investing time up front to plan allows groups to work more efficiently than if operating on a reactive, ad hoc basis.

operating on a reactive, ad hoc basis and this reduces the risk of crises and failure. There are several things to keep in mind when using this technique:

- *Remember the simulation*—Most groups conduct a simulation of the entire quick count operation approximately two weeks before election day. It is important to keep this in mind while designing budgets, and while developing activity timelines and task lists. In effect, planners should treat the simulation as if it were election day. All activities to prepare for election day should be completed by simulation day, instead of by election day. (See the Frequently Asked Questions box below for more information.)
- *Allow for miscalculations*—Initial calculations of the time and resources needed to implement individual tasks are often optimistic. Significant time must be built into the timeline to allow for margins of error.

- *Periodically review and simplify*—The root word of logistics is logic. Quick count planning should be a logical process. Simplify all the elements of these activities to as rudimentary and functional a level as possible. Any system design that sounds too complex probably is.
- *Remember the complexity/time/budget algorithm*—As tactical elements increase in complexity they generally take longer (even if the complexity was supposed to shorten a process), and they cost more. Simple tends to be faster and almost always cheaper.
- *Coordinate*—The key to achieving maximum organizational capacity is coordination. Divided tasks have to be regularly coordinated because the work of some functional groups cannot begin until the work assigned to other functional groups has been completed.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a simulation, and is it essential to a quick count's success?

A simulation tests virtually every aspect of the quick count operation. Observers report fictitious data to the central and backup data collection centers. The information is processed and analyzed as it would be on election day. This exercise exposes weaknesses in the quick count plan, the volunteer network and the communications and data processing systems. The simulation is held approximately two weeks before election day to allow sufficient time for organizers to rectify problems.

The simulation has become standard practice for several reasons. As described above, it can reduce election day error and increase the efficiency with which data are retrieved. It provides leaders with an opportunity to discuss possible election day scenarios and refine data use protocols, which can reduce the likelihood that there will be internal disagreement on election day. The simulation also can inspire volunteers, staff and leadership. It provides the first concrete evidence that the quick count will be a success. Moreover, a successful simulation can build the quick count's credibility. Organizers can publicize the number of volunteers participating, the percentage of calls received and the capacity of the communication/data collection system to receive and quickly process data. Donors, media representatives, electoral officials and any affiliated non-governmental organizations can observe the process if the security situation allows.

Motivating Staff

Successful executive directors motivate board members and staff by involving them in the planning process. Board members and staff that feel ownership in the project are more likely to take initiative in their respective areas, and

An organization operating under tight deadlines needs to focus heavily and immediately on fundraising.

Three design factors—speed, comprehensiveness and accuracy—directly impact cost.

their morale is more likely to remain high even in stressful situations. There also are practical benefits to a democratic planning approach. Consulting staff is crucial to ensuring the feasibility of work plans. Engaged board members and staff understand and accept, in advance, the commitment required. Individuals familiar with the entire quick count operation can fill a wider variety of roles in the event of an organizational or political crisis.

Successful executive directors take every opportunity to praise staff for work well done. This may include certificates of appreciation, direct praise from board members, informal celebrations for reaching important milestones, even bonuses. Every effort to thank and otherwise support a staff that typically works long hours in a stressful environment is appreciated, and it is a practical investment in the project's success.

BUDGETS AND FUNDRAISING

Developing budgets and fundraising for a quick count project pose significant challenges. An organization operating under tight deadlines needs to focus heavily and immediately on fundraising. After funding to cover estimated costs is secured, an unexpected event may force changes and increases. Two examples of events forcing groups to augment budgets are:

- Electoral authorities release a last-minute addendum to the list of polling stations. Quick count organizers, therefore, are forced to increase the size of the sample, which in turn requires recruiting and training additional volunteers.
- The volunteer coordinator reaches target numbers for recruits well before the election, and receives repeated pleas from local organizers to allow additional applicants to participate in quick count or general election-day observation. Leaders decide to appeal to donors for additional support to accommodate a larger-than-expected number of observers.

Cost

The cost of conducting a quick count varies greatly. The most obvious determining factors are the size and infrastructure of a country. A quick count in a small country with a well-developed infrastructure costs less than one in a large country with poor infrastructure for transportation and communication. In addition, three design factors—speed, comprehensiveness and accuracy—directly impact cost:

- *Speed*—What are the goals for collecting and reporting data? If an organization needs the information fast, it must acquire more communication and data processing equipment.
- *Comprehensiveness*—How many polling sites will be covered? Greater coverage entails more volunteers, more training, higher election-day costs and more computers to process greater quantities of data.

- *Accuracy*—Given the political context, how accurate does the quick count need to be? If indications are that the race between two or more candidates will be very tight, the design should include more sophisticated communication and database systems. Smaller margins of error demand better, and more costly, systems.

The timing of drawing the random sample of polling stations directly impacts cost. The earlier the sample is drawn, the more organizers can potentially save on cost. Having the sample facilitates analysis of the location of the data points (polling stations) and streamlining of volunteer recruiting and training programs. The absence of key information, such as a final list of polling stations, precludes the drawing of the sample, and this forces groups to launch a less targeted, more comprehensive and more costly recruiting campaign.

Budget Expenditures

Unless a group starts out with significant funding, a budget is the centerpiece of its proposals to potential donors. A reasonable budget balances quick count objectives with realistic expectations for funding. The initial budget may reflect plans to meet objectives without regard for funding limitations, the “perfect world” scenario. Leaders may need to modify or significantly alter these plans if the prospects for adequate total funding are dim. Leaders should approach prospective backers as early as possible to gather information about their interests and expectations. Funders should also be made aware of what are the trade-offs for modest, or generous, financial support.

Beyond its basic use for raising funds, the budget becomes an important point of reference for staff. It allocates funds to specific tasks. Anticipated categories for line items include:

1. Paid Personnel (salaries and benefits)
2. Office Expenses (fixed and recurring, for national and regional headquarters)
3. Volunteer Recruitment (travel expenses and per diem for national and regional recruiters and meeting expenses)
4. Volunteer Training (production of training materials, observer manuals and quick count forms; travel expenses and per diem for trainers and volunteer observers; and other meeting expenses)
5. Communications/Database Management Systems (telephones, computers, printers)
6. Election Day (transportation, per diem and telephone calls for observers; and transportation and per diem for national and regional headquarters volunteers, such as operators and data processors)
7. Publicity/Advertising
8. Contractual Services (e.g., legal fees or advisors/consultants)
9. Budget Management and Accounting

A budget is the centerpiece of proposals to potential donors. A reasonable budget balances quick count objectives with realistic expectations for funding.

It is a good practice to draft several budgets based on high and low projections.

It is prudent to draft several budgets based on high and low projections. The size and scope of a quick count project can change during the run-up to elections. For example, an organization may change its policy on how many volunteers to recruit. Initially, it decides to cap the number of volunteers to equal or slightly surpass the estimated sample size. Then, more volunteers sign up than expected, and the group elects to include them. Larger objectives may also change as the election nears. For example, a group's original intent might be to observe only in the number of polling stations needed to provide a margin of error of ± 3 percent for the quick count. As the election draws near, however, it looks like the race might end in a virtual tie. As a result, the number of polling stations observed must be substantially increased to reduce the margin of error to ± 1 percent or less.

One budget should reflect the cost of supporting the minimum number of volunteers required for the quick count and the least expensive communications and data processing systems. Second and subsequent versions should support larger numbers of volunteers, wider coverage and more communications and data processing equipment.



KEYS TO SUCCESS

Budget Management

Helpful hints for managing a quick count budget include:

- Ensure sufficient staffing. The accounting for a quick count is a large and complex job, particularly if the organization receives funding from various sources. One accountant for a quick count organization was forced to manage 12 different bank accounts. Groups that cannot afford to hire staff should consider recruiting qualified volunteers.
- Work with the executive director to establish clear policies for activities such as staff travel and reimbursement and the procurement of goods and services. (Various donor agencies may require different procedures.)
- Dedicate sufficient time to build good relations with donors. Domestic observer groups and donors often need to work closely together under tight deadlines and trying political conditions.
- Become knowledgeable about and respect donor reporting requirements and deadlines, as well as all other pertinent accounting regulations.
- Prepare in advance for times when expenditures will be greatest, such as during a large-scale training activity or on election day. Groups receiving money in installments should ensure that the schedule allows for large cash expenditures for training and election day and the immediate post-election period.

Fundraising

Once an organization designs a realistic quick count budget, it can initiate a fundraising campaign. Fundraising approaches commonly used by election observer organizations include:

- Writing and submitting proposals to foundations and other donor institutions;
- Directly soliciting contributions of money, goods and services by mail, telephone, through the media or in person;
- Selling goods or services for profit, such as paraphernalia from the organization (t-shirts, buttons, posters); and
- Sponsoring entertainment events, such as a formal dinner or musical concert at which you charge an entrance fee or request voluntary donations.

Leaders should seek financial support from politically neutral sources, or ensure that backers are politically diverse and balanced.

PERUVIAN ASSISTANCE

Telefonica Peru (Peru Telephone)—*telephone costs*
 Aerocontinente—*airfare*
 Peruvian NGOs—*office space, furniture, computer equipment, etc.*
 Individual Contributors—*food for observers*

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Association for Cooperation and Development International (ACDI)—*Canada*
 German Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ)—*Germany*
 Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDI)—*Sweden*
 Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)—*Switzerland*
 United States Agency for International Development (USAID)—*USA*
 (USAID has provided substantial assistance to Transparencia since 1995.)

Government of Denmark
 Government of Finland
 Government of Great Britain (Department for International Development—DFID)
 Government of Holland

European Union

Open Society Institute—*USA*
 Broederlijk Delen (Brotherly Sharing)—*Belgium*

FIGURE 2-4:
 FUNDING SOURCES FOR PERUVIAN
 ELECTION OBSERVER ORGANIZA-
 TION, TRANSPARENCIA, 2001
 NATIONAL ELECTIONS

A fundraising approach can help build an organization's credibility and a reputation for independence. Consider the following:

- *Efficiency*—An efficient fundraising and accounting operation reflects well on the credibility of the organization and may increase the likelihood of gaining financial support.
- *Neutrality or Balance*—It is a good idea to consider the reputation and political history of every potential backer, whether an individual, local or

international organization. Leaders should seek financial support from politically neutral sources, or ensure that backers are politically diverse and balanced.

- *Transparency*—Publicizing funding sources can prevent suspicion and deny critics the opportunity to make unfounded allegations or start rumors about politically-motivated backers.
- *Local v. International*—Again, diversification is important, particularly for the long run. Local donors may have more of a stake in the success of a quick count. A local funding source may be more stable and reliable for groups planning to continue work after the elections. Receiving support from sources within the country may enhance the organization's credibility among local political players and the international community. However, international institutions, including embassies, government aid organizations and nongovernmental organizations and foundations potentially offer larger sums of money. This is particularly true for institutions from countries that have significant economic, geographical or other ties to the country holding an election.

**REMINDER**

The first weeks of work on a quick count project are critical to its eventual success. Leaders must:

- Evaluate the composition and duties of a board of directors;
- Hire qualified and dedicated staff;
- Invest significant time in strategic planning;
- Design realistic budgets; and
- Solicit funds using a variety of methods from a variety of sources.