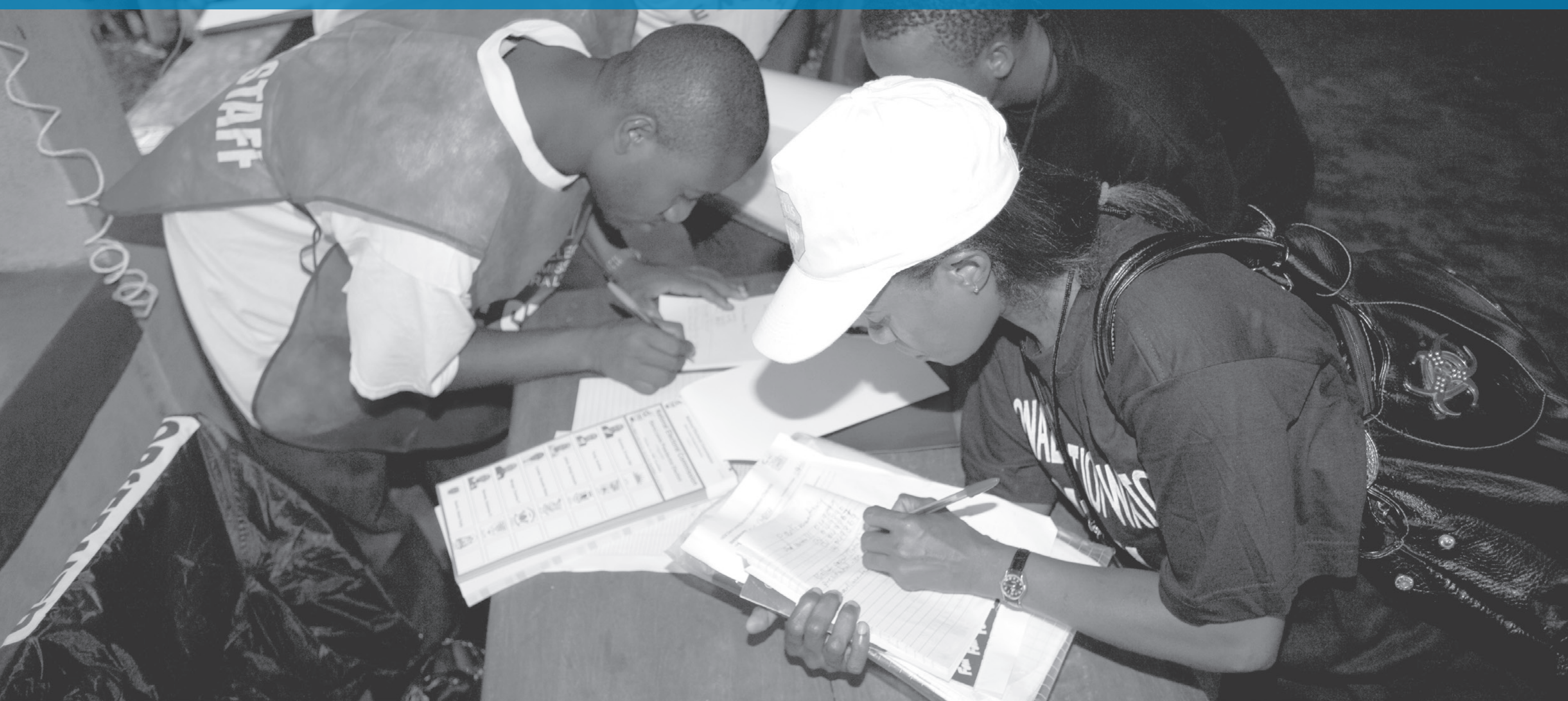
MATERIALS FOR PROFESSIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION: DESIGNING FORMS, MANUALS AND TRAININGS

A Field Guide for the West Africa Election Observers Network



INTRODUCTION TO WAEON FIELD GUIDE SERIES

Nonpartisan citizen observers play an important role during elections by raising public confidence in the election process, deterring electoral malfeasance, exposing irregularities, and providing citizens with important information concerning the integrity of elections. In 2011, with support from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) through a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), citizen observer groups from 11 West African countries formed the West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON) to support nonpartisan election observation in the subregion and increase dialogue and cross-fertilization among observation organizations from different countries. As of March 2013, the following organizations are members of WAEON: Burkina Faso's Mouvement Burkinabé des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples (MBDHP), Ghana's Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), Guinea's Consortium pour l'Observation Domestique des Elections en Guinée (CODE), the Ivorian Convention de la Société Civile Ivoirienne (CSCI), Liberia's Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD), Mali's Appui au Processus Electoral au Mali (APEM), Nigeria's Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Niger's Association Nigérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (ANDDH), Senegal's Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO), Sierra Leone's National Election Watch (NEW), and Togo's Concertation Nationale de la Société Civile (CNSC). WAEON aims to strengthen electoral processes and encourage citizen participation in democratic governance. The network is part of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (www.gndem.org). Since its inception, WAEON has organized a series of training academies for its members on topics such as systematic election observation, communication techniques and strategies to prevent election-related violence, and sustaining electoral and political reforms in the post-election period.

The training academies inspired the network to develop a series of practical field guides as easy-to-use reference tools for citizen election observation groups. To date, three field guides have been published in English and French:

- Systematic Methods for Advancing Election Observation
- Outreach and External Communication
- Materials for Professional Observers: Designing Forms, Manuals and Training Sessions

The field guides complement other reference tools available on domestic election observation, such as NDI's handbooks, How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections and The Quick Count and Election Observation. These and other resources are available on NDI's website www.ndi.org.

For future inquiries on WAEON, please contact the WAEON Secretariat located at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana):

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Understanding Observation Forms

Election observation forms, sometimes referred to as "checklists," allow observers to document their findings in a consistent way. These forms serve as paper records of your observation effort. Since no two election processes are the same, there is no such thing as a universal observation form. For each election cycle, your group must develop forms specific to the process you are observing.

Why Do Observers Use Forms?

Observation forms will provide the basis for your data collection. Observation forms:

- Provide a guide for observers to follow
- Standardize observer responses
- Allow for quick and easy reporting
- Facilitate data entry

The quality of your forms will have a strong influence on your group's ability to quickly and accurately collect, input and analyze observer findings. Observation forms should allow groups to evaluate the extent to which electoral procedures are followed and to identify any weaknesses that may affect the integrity of the outcome.

What Is a "Good" Form?

Forms should allow observer groups to effectively collect complete information on the quality of the electoral process. All forms should be strategic both in their visual design as well as in their question choice and phrasing. In particular, good forms:

- **Are composed of only the "right" questions:** This means that every single question on your form provides helpful information that you plan on using in your overall evaluation. This also means that there are no extraneous or redundant questions.
- **Can be completed accurately and completely by observers:** The design and wording of the form minimizes the potential for human mistakes and does not create confusion. Avoid language and concepts that are not easily understood. Forms should use simple language that is suitable for translation if need be.
- **Are precise:** Questions are clear and unambiguous so that all observers understand them the same way. In addition, questions should be sufficiently limited in scope so conclusions are easily drawn from their answers.
- **Are concise:** Forms are short – no more than one page double-sided. Shorter forms are easier for observers to complete and easier for the data center to collect and analyze.

Developing Observation Forms

2

While groups may want to develop forms early in the planning phase, there are a number of constraints on when exactly forms can be produced. However, groups should start brainstorming well in advance of what they anticipate to be the major challenges to electoral integrity in their country and how these may be captured on a form.

Reviewing Election Laws and Making a Timeline

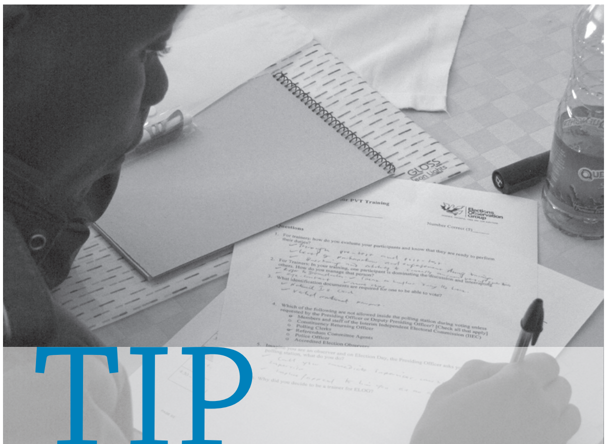
Since forms will track specific election procedures, they cannot be finalized until you have complete and accurate information on the process being observed. This means reviewing the most up-to-date electoral code and any other regulations as they are released. You should be prepared that sometimes detailed procedural information is released late or procedures change at the last minute. The following are important points for planning your form development:

- Forms must be finalized before supervisor and observer trainings. You should develop a realistic timeline as to when you can expect to have all the necessary information on the elections to finalize your forms so you can begin to plan your trainings.
- A small drafting committee should be responsible for developing forms. The committee should determine protocols of how, when and by whom forms will be designed and finalized. The committee should test the forms for clarity.
- Forms take time to print. Be sure to include realistic printing times in your timeline. Never leave printing to the last minute.

Since forms must be finalized after complete and definitive election information is available but before trainings and with enough time for printing, your window for drafting and finalizing forms may be relatively short.

Identify Key Areas of Concern

There are hundreds of questions you could ask on an observation form, but it is neither possible nor practical to ask every question and have useful and timely data. You will therefore need to prioritize what you consider to be the most important issues in the election, including what aspects are most vulnerable to fraud or mismanagement. You should consider what problems could occur based on your knowledge of the electoral context. If your group has observed past elections, it is useful to review your statements (and statements by other observation missions) to see what problems have previously arisen. You should also take



Review Responses From Previous Forms

If your group has observed elections in the past, it is helpful to examine some of the old forms used. Were there any questions that observers did not understand? What questions did observers leave blank? Why? Of the questions asked, which topics were actually highlighted in your overall assessment of the elections? Were there any questions (or answers) that made data entry and analysis difficult? This review will help you understand what kinds of questions and language "work" and "do not work" with your observers.

into consideration what concerns the public and political contestants have expressed.

Do Not Underestimate Importance of Design

How forms look visually can have a big impact on how easy they are to fill out. For instance, forms that use tiny font, jumble too much text together or do not follow a clear pattern may create confusion for observers. Forms that are pleasing to the eye and follow linear cues will be more usable and minimize observer mistakes. Well-designed forms should link question sections clearly and logically with the corresponding answer section and should itemize questions in a way that observers can follow them. Often forms will use numbers (1...2...3) to label questions. If you are collecting a large amount of quantitative information, however, you may consider labeling questions with letters (A...B...C...) so as to not confuse observers.

The design will also impact how long your forms are. By dedicating attention to design, you may be able to reduce a multiple page form to a single page.

Asking the Right Questions

3

The more questions you ask, the more burden you place on data collection, analysis, and statement drafting. Focus on quality not quantity: observer groups should strive for short, simple forms that are rich in content.

Ask Only the Most Useful and Necessary Questions

Based on your assessment of key areas of concern, you should have identified priority issues in your particular elections. Your group should focus primarily on these issues and remove extraneous questions. This includes working backwards from what you want to be able to talk about in your public statements. For each proposed question on your form, you should have an idea about how you would use the data you receive.

Use Clear and Unambiguous Language

Questions should be worded in a way that all observers will understand. Groups should avoid using technical language or jargon. Questions should also be clear and targeted so that they can only be interpreted in one way. Groups should avoid using double-negatives or any kind of complex wording that could confuse observers in their responses.

Train Observers to the Form

Observation forms should be developed before observers are trained so that their content can be fully explained at the training session. Each observer should be familiar with the election procedures s/he is observing, the rationale for why the question is being asked, and how to record findings. You should consider using simulations that require observers to fill out a sample form during trainings.

TIP

Test Forms For Usability

Before finalizing your forms, you should test them on a colleague to see if they understand fully all the questions. This will give you a stronger idea of what language may need to be altered for better understanding. It is always helpful to get the opinion of people outside the drafting process who may read and interpret questions differently than you had assumed.

4 Avoiding Common Mistakes

Poorly worded or confusing questions yield useless data. Here are some of the most common mistakes made by observer groups when developing observation questions:

Make Sure the Question Matches the Answer Choices

There are many different ways to gain standard responses from observers: **yes/no** questions, **multiple choice** questions or **gradated** questions (for instance: "None," "Some," "Few" or "Many"). Depending on which answer choices you are using, make sure that the corresponding questions you draft match the model. If you are using gradated responses, the question you ask must allow for multiple answers (for instance, asking "How many voters were turned away for not being on the voters list") instead of asking a yes/no question (for instance, "Were voters turned away for not being on the voters list?"). For gradated questions, set a distinct numerical range (i.e. none = 0, few = 1-10, some = 11-20, many = 21+, etc.) for what constitutes each answer choice to avoid subjective responses by observers.

Long Forms/Too Many Questions

Sometimes groups may find it difficult to narrow down the information they would like to collect and create forms that are too long with too many questions. Long forms can be problematic for many reasons: 1) Multi-page forms can get separated and lost during the deployment and reporting period; 2) Too many questions can exhaust observers and decrease their likelihood of giving the same attention to each question; and 3) Too many questions can seriously hinder how fast observer information can be reported, entered and analyzed. Try to use a single checklist that encompasses no more than 30 questions in total on all aspects of the process.

Overly Demanding or Time Consuming Questions

Make sure that all the questions you ask can be answered by your observers without distracting them from the rest of the process. For instance, asking observers to count turnout manually could prevent them from observing other critical aspects of the polling process.

Open-Ended Questions

Some groups may include open-ended questions on their forms, leaving a blank space for observers to write at length about what happened. This type of question provides you with a wide range of responses that are very difficult to analyze, particularly in large amounts. Election day checklists are tools to ensure observer answers are standardized for quick and easy analysis, which means using answer options like yes/no or multiple choice. Open-ended questions are more appropriate for long term observation.

Two-in-One Questions

It is important to not include two questions in one. A question like: "Were there security forces present and did they intimidate voters?" is not a good question. It is possible that security forces were present, but they did not intimidate voters, but this question does not allow observers to provide such a response.

Subjective or Opinion Questions

Groups should avoid using any questions that ask for observers' opinions or use words that could be open to interpretation. For instance, asking "Did the opening process go well?" relies too much on your observer's definition of "well." Refrain from any sentence that starts with "Do you think..." or "Do you feel..." since you are then asking for an observer's personal opinion as opposed to their objective assessment.

Redundant Questions

Sometimes two different questions may yield the same information. For instance, "Did any bribery occur?" gets you the same information as asking "Were there any instances of vote-buying?" Always go through your questions to make sure they are not redundant. Taking out repetitive questions will save you space and may give you a chance to add a new, more meaningful question to the form.

Overly Procedural Questions

Knowledge and respect of election procedures are important, but the forms should not simply restate the electoral law in question form. This becomes too lengthy and confusing for observers to follow, and it does not add much to the level of analysis you can provide in the statement. In many cases, simply asking if the polling officials followed procedures is sufficient. Particularly important steps that directly reflect the credibility or transparency of the process – such as publicly posting the vote tallies – merit their own questions.

5 Election Day Checklists

Observation forms that are used by observers on election day are commonly referred to as "election day checklists." Election day checklists generally guide observer data collection efforts on the following aspects of the process:

- Opening and setup of polling stations
- Voting process
- Closing of polling stations
- Counting of votes and ballot reconciliation

What to Look For

Your questions should help you collect data to determine the extent to which the election process is credible and transparent. The broad areas that you should be considering when developing questions to assess the polling process include:

- Professionalism & Impartiality of Polling Officials
- Consistency in Application of Election Procedures
- Quality of the Voters List
- Secrecy of the Ballot
- Transparency and Accessibility of the Process
- Accuracy of Vote Counting
- Conduciveness of the Electoral Environment
- Compliance with International Election Standards

If there are certain areas in particular where you anticipate problems, those should be prioritized when determining your questions.

Put Questions in Chronological Order

Questions should be formulated to reflect the real order of events as they are expected to unfold on election day. The procedures set by the electoral authorities, in accordance with the law, should guide what will happen from the opening of polls through the counting of votes.

Cluster Questions into Categories

You should cluster questions about opening and set up, voting, closing, and counting processes into separate and logical categories. This will make it easy for the observer to know when s/he is expected to provide answers. It can also be useful for facilitating data collection on each category.

Consider the Methods and Tools of Data Transmission and Entry

No observation form can be developed in isolation from your group's data reporting plan. For instance, if observers are being asked to send in their responses via coded SMS messages, then that may influence whether you want to use yes/no or multiple choice questions. If data clerks will be manually entering data into a database then you want to ensure that your question-and-answer model encourages fast and easy data entry.

Include Instructions for Observers

Forms should contain brief instructions for observers on when to record data and transmit findings. This should include any phone numbers they will need to call or text and times for reporting their information.

Pre-Print Unique Identifiers

Consider having forms pre-printed with the polling station name, location and ID number on them so that observers assigned to that station already have the correct information on their forms. This will help ensure the correct link between form data and polling station necessary for information reporting and analysis. Pre-printing the forms can also encourage observers to go to the correct polling station assigned to them.

Protocol Information is Clear and Easy to Understand

Election day checklists should collect the electoral results, including items such as turnout, vote share, number of valid and invalid ballots, number of unused ballots and number of spoilt ballots. It may be helpful to know in advance how these results are listed on the official protocol/tally sheet/procès verbal at polling stations, as observers are likely to copy the information down from them. Groups should strive to use the same terminology and order as the protocol to prevent confusion. In many cases, the election authorities will have sample ballots and tally sheets for use in their own trainings, and it is possible to request copies to guide your observer trainings.

Case Study: Sierra Leone

SMS Reporting of Observation Forms

For the 2007 general elections in Sierra Leone, the National Election Watch (NEW) developed a streamlined and informative election day checklist that observers transmitted to the data center via SMS. The checklist used multiple choice answers so that NEW's information center would receive standardized but descriptive responses from observers. The form was designed to closely reflect NEW's data collection strategy and differed from standard call-in forms: priority questions were to be reported via SMS using a specialized coding system. Observers practiced the coding system during observer trainings, reporting instructions for observers were included on the form, and a small mobile phone symbol was placed next to the priority questions to remind them to transmit this information via SMS.

See ANNEX 1: NEW 2007 Observation Form

6 Critical Incident Forms

Sometimes severe incidents occur during the electoral process that could impact the election outcome. While your election day checklist is designed to track large-scale electoral data you anticipate to be relevant everywhere, there are a number of electoral offenses such as ballot box stuffing, voting disruptions or acts of violence that are not expected to be commonplace but negatively impact the process. Because multiple incidents may occur at a single polling station, observers should be deployed with multiple copies of a critical incident form.

The Goal of Critical Incident Forms

Critical incident forms will help you capture detailed information on violations that may otherwise not be highlighted in your checklists. In addition, critical incident forms allow observers to report incidents as they happen, instead of waiting until after they have completed their election day checklists.

Critical incident forms should be simple forms that enable observers to record violations or offenses by ticking a box next to a specific incident. Common violations or offenses that you might include in your critical incident form may include:

- Violence
- Intimidation
- Ballot or Ballot Box Stuffing / Stealing
- Disenfranchisement
- Vote Buying
- Polling Station Closures
- Denied Access to Observers / Candidate Agents

Compile a List of Violations

Violations that you would include on your critical incident form may be stipulated as "electoral offenses" in the legal framework governing the election process. It is useful to review previous election reports and note what violations and offenses may have occurred in the past. In general, offenses that could affect the vote count – like bribery or ballot box stuffing – or that could disenfranchise voters or suppress turnout – like violence or polling station closures – should always be considered critical incidents.

Collect Targeted Information on the Nature of the Incident

Critical incident forms should not only ask observers to check what "type" of incident occurred, but should also collect the time, place, whether there were any witness(es), and a brief description of the incident. If possible, observers should identify ages, genders and any political affiliations of the offenders and the targets in the description. This information helps you verify the incident and understand the context that led to the violation. Groups should always try to verify critical incidents with a second source, such as another observation mission.

Consider Your Reporting Strategy

Collecting data on critical incidents can be time consuming and may require follow-up to gather more details. It can be burdensome on individuals collecting and reviewing checklist data to also deal with critical incident reporting. There should be a separate critical incident hotline for observers to call immediately following a violation on election day. Consider assigning specific data collection clerks to collect, review and clean critical incident data. You may also consider tasking field coordinators with following up with observers under their supervision to gather additional information.

Provide Two-Way Communication when Observers May Be at Risk

In the event of violence or large protests, the data center should have a communication plan to inform supervisors and observers of the risks. In some cases, this may be simply a localized incident that will not impact observers in other areas, so the data center would only need to contact supervisors and observers in a certain region. In other cases, systematic efforts to undermine the process may target observers or pose a danger to any individual who happens upon the event. Generally, this communication should pass through the supervisor, which also allows the supervisor to check in and ensure the security of each of his/her observers.

TIP

Provide Examples During Trainings

Some critical incident categories may be too ambiguous for observers. For instance, "Intimidation and Coercion" may be interpreted differently by different observers. Therefore, be sure to train observers on what constitutes a violation. Providing examples during trainings will reduce confusion and ensure observers all understand the critical incident form the same way.

7 Different Forms for Different Electoral Analysis

Not only will each election be different, but what you observe during the entire electoral process will vary. If you plan on observing multiple parts of the electoral cycle, and not just election day, you will need to use different forms for each aspect you monitor. This is because you will be collecting different kinds of information and in different amounts for each process.

When Limited, Structured Forms Are Necessary

Short, structured forms in which observers select standard answers (for instance, yes/no or multiple choice) or track quantitative data (for instance, vote counts, media coverage minutes or campaign donations) will likely be used for most of your monitoring efforts. This is because for most observations you will be collecting large amounts of information and need to process that information quickly. Observer groups should plan on using short, standardized forms for at the very least:

- Election day observation
- Voter registration observation
- Media monitoring
- Campaign finance monitoring

Depending on your observation strategy, there may be other large-scale deployments that would require this kind of form, like campaign monitoring.

When More Narrative Forms May be Considered

For monitoring that examines smaller flows of information over longer periods of time, groups may consider refining forms to allow for more descriptive answers. These forms should still have instructions and standardized questions but may allow observers to give a greater narrative on a process for which yes/no answers may not be appropriate. Some types of monitoring that may utilize these kinds of forms would include:

- Candidate/party registration
- Violence monitoring
- Campaign environment monitoring
- Monitoring the participation of women and minorities
- Monitoring of the complaint and appeals process

Sometimes these forms may not represent one single event, but rather be used to track a situation over a periodic time frame. The goal of the narrative format is to provide deeper context and analysis on more complex themes in the electoral environment.

When Observation Forms May Not be Necessary

Often, groups will conduct additional election research that is based on indirect observation. This usually involves centralized analysis that is more dependent on a pre-existing body of information rather than direct observer reports. This may include analysis of:

- The legal framework
- Boundary delimitation
- Ballot qualification
- Computer audits of the voters list

In these cases, it is likely that only one or a few experts will be working on the analysis and therefore observer forms may not be necessary.

Developing Observer Manuals

8

An observer manual is a condensed version of all the information that observers receive during their training. Observers benefit from having a written resource that can be consulted and revisited after the training and while they are observing. Distributing manuals during trainings also helps to ensure that all observers receive uniform information across the country, especially if a cascade training approach is used.

A clearly and concisely written manual should outline the role, duties, and responsibilities of election observers. Special observer manuals may be developed for election day, pre-, and post-election observation activities.

Planning and Timing

Like observer forms, monitoring manuals should be made after a group finalizes its deployment and data reporting plan. Since monitoring manuals will review items to look for during the election process, you must have complete and specific information available on the electoral procedures before finalizing your manual. However, all manuals must be finalized before observer trainings begin.

You should take into consideration the amount of time needed to produce training materials, including drafting, printing, and distribution. Many groups underestimate the length of time required to complete this process, which may delay their trainings and disrupt their activities plan.

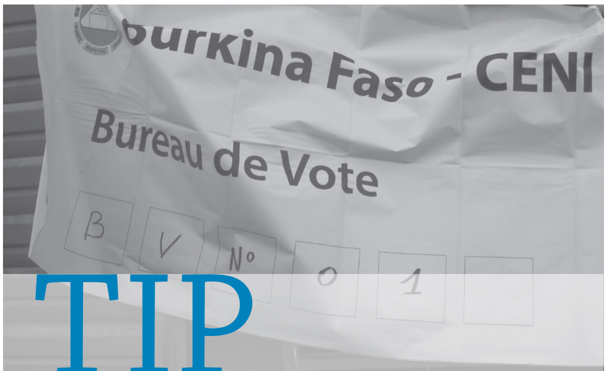
Key Components of Observer Manuals

Observer manuals can help reinforce the key messages of your observer trainings. All observer manuals should include:

- A welcome note thanking observers for their dedication and introducing your organization, including goals and activities as well as an explanation of non-partisan election observation
- The rights and responsibilities of nonpartisan election observers
- A pledge of nonpartisanship or code of conduct
- Step-by-step instructions on the duties of an observer, including:
- How to perform observer duties (i.e. where to go, when to arrive, what to bring, etc.)
- How to record observation findings
- How to transmit observation findings
- An overview of the election procedures relevant to the observation mission
- Instructions and contact information in the event that problems occur

Keep Manuals Concise

Observer manuals should be clear and only include information observers absolutely need. Manuals that are manageable in size are more likely to be used, especially out in the field on election day. For instance, while it is important for observers to know your organization and your



TIP

Provide Definitions For Election Terminology

When describing electoral procedures, you may have to use some jargon observers may not be familiar with. Consider creating a glossary or textboxes that highlight the definitions for technical election words. That way, observers will have a quick reference as to what a "Spoilt Ballot" or "Protocol" is, for instance.

organization's role in the electoral process, you do not need to include in-depth information on the structure of your organization or details about your observation methodology. In fact, too much extraneous information may confuse observers.

Keep Manuals Clear and Simple

Always use language that all observers will understand. Pictures, graphics and illustrations can help make the text easier to understand. You may be able to acquire polling station lay-out figures or other illustrations from the election commission.

Developing Supervisor Manuals

9

Supervisors and coordinators will require additional information that observers do not need. Therefore, supervisor manuals should serve as a supplement in addition to the observer manual. Supervisors should be given both the observer manual and the supervisor manual, so they understand their responsibilities as well as what instructions observers receive.

Planning and Timing

Supervisors will play a critical role in carrying out your deployment and data reporting plans so those must be finalized prior to developing this manual. Since supervisors should receive both a supervisor manual as well as an observer manual, you should ensure both of these are finalized and printed in time for your supervisor training. Keep in mind that supervisor training should occur in advance of observer training.

Key Components for Supervisor Manuals

Supervisor manuals will summarize all of the key responsibilities of your supervisors, coordinators, etc. While observers only require very specific information about their duties, it is more important for supervisors to understand the scope and methodology behind the observation process. Their manuals should include:

- Welcome and thank you note
- Review of the overall observation methodology
- Key roles and responsibilities of supervisors, including a management timeline
- Detailed information on the observation deployment strategy
- Detailed information about supervisors' role in the data reporting strategy, including both checklists and critical incident forms
- Guidelines on conducting observer trainings
- Observer logistics, including what observers must have while deployed
- Financial logistics, including distributing stipends/allowances and collecting receipts as necessary
- Instructions and contact information in the event that problems occur
- Overview of any monitoring forms supervisors may fill out, such as critical incident forms

In some cases, you may engage supervisors early in the pre-electoral period to assist with long term observation and election day observer recruitment. During such early workshops, you should provide supervisors with a clear outline of their roles and responsibilities, as well as guidelines on observer recruitment, in accordance with your deployment strategy. By the time of election day supervisor training, recruitment will have already taken place, so it is not necessary to include those guidelines in the supervisor manual. Supervisors should be expected to sign the same pledge of nonpartisanship or code of conduct as their observers.

SAMPLE

Table of Contents: Project 2011 Swift Count – Election Day Observation Supervisor's Manual (Nigeria)

Designing Effective Training-of-Trainers (ToT) Seminars

10

Training of Trainers (ToT) trainings, sometimes called "cascade" or "pyramid" trainings, provide an efficient way to train a large number of observers in a short period of time. ToTs allow a small number of "master trainers" to train other trainers who will then be responsible for training observers. This dispersion of trainers gives observer groups substantial coverage in a short period of time, but also diffuses the information groups impart on their observers. The more you standardize and regulate your ToT and step-down trainings, the more consistent and high-quality training your observers will receive.

Planning and Timing

Your ToT training plan should be dictated by 1) your observer deployment plan, 2) your number of observers, and 3) the length of the training. Observers should be trained as close to election day as possible, but ToTs can only begin after your deployment plan, reporting plan, forms and manuals are finalized. Groups should think seriously about how many observers they need to train, and how many trainers are required to train that number of observers in the time allotted and in reasonable amounts. Depending on your deployment plan, you will likely be in a position where some high-population regions will need significantly more trainings (and trainers) than lower-population areas, so try to avoid assigning the same amount of trainers and trainings to each state or county.

Identifying Master Trainers

Master trainers should be identified and recruited well in advance. Good master trainers:

- Are competent and talented and are not already responsible for a central planning component that may be occurring simultaneously, such as data center organization
- Are committed to the principles of your organization
- Are reliable and trustworthy
- Are good public speakers
- Understand the details of your observation methodology, including deployment and reporting plans and best practices of observation

Use Post-Training Tests For Quality Control

Your step-down trainers will serve as the gate-keepers for all the information your observers receive. Therefore it is critical that your step-down trainers have a strong grasp of all the essential information about your observation effort. Having master trainers conduct a test, or quiz, after their ToT will demonstrate how much knowledge your second-tier trainers have garnered from the ToT. The test should focus on information you think is essential for successful observers, such as how to use the observation form, when to report findings, what to do in case of problems and the roles and responsibilities of observers. Participants that cannot correctly answer those questions at the end of the training should be considered unqualified to become a trainer.

Key Components of ToTs

ToTs need to convey all the critical information for trainers, supervisors/coordinators, and observers for the entire monitoring effort. Therefore ToTs will need to be at least two days long. Often times the first day of training will cover the agenda and aspects of the observer training, and the second day will cover how to organize a training and all the critical logistics, including deployment, reporting, management and finances. In general, all ToTs should include the following:

- Expectations and responsibilities of trainers
- Training dates and locations
- A full review of the observer training, with a step-by-step breakdown about what each session should cover, including rights and responsibilities of observers, codes of conduct, review of the checklists, overview of the polling process and reporting plan
- How to run an observation simulation
- Reporting and deployment strategy for observers
- Logistics and finances for observers
- Tips for organizing trainings and training techniques
- How to conduct an evaluation of the training

Encourage a Variety of Training Techniques

Training adults requires active participation and the employment of multiple training styles. Trainers should be instructed on a wide-variety of training techniques, including lectures, visuals, participant-based discussion and simulations. Trainings will not be effective if your trainers do not understand how to engage their participants.

Develop Trainer Kits

At the ToT, trainers should receive a well-organized packet or kit with all the relevant materials they will need for their step-down trainings. This kit may include:

- Schedule of step-down trainings
- Participant lists and contact information for their assigned trainings, if applicable
- Training tips
- A copy of the election observer manual
- A copy of the supervisor/coordinator manual
- A copy of your observation forms
- Any materials needed for a simulation

Track and Evaluate Step-Down Trainings

In order to provide stronger quality control of your step-down trainings, you should do as much follow-up as possible. Master trainers should be required to submit reports regarding each training they conduct, identifying any problems that may have arisen or points that need clarification. You should also consider sending out staff to randomly "spot check" trainings to make sure the right information is being passed on. The closer you monitor your step-down trainings, the more consistent and informative they will be.

11 Designing Effective Observer Trainings

Observer trainings are the basis of your observation effort. All observers, including replacement observers, must attend a training.

Planning and Timing

Observer trainings can only occur after all observation strategies, including the deployment plan and data reporting plan, and all observation materials, such as observation forms and manuals, are finalized. The following are key considerations when planning observer trainings:

- Keep Training Sizes Small: Trainings lose effectiveness once they get too big. Try to keep your trainings below 25-30 people each.

The Importance Of Simulations

You should incorporate simulations into your trainings that allow observers to role play the election process. Simulations help observers better understand what they can expect when they are deployed and gives them practice in filling out forms. These simulations reenact scenarios observers may find themselves in, including noting flaws in the process and interaction with a multitude of electoral actors. Simulations are also a good way to see if there is a particular concept that observers do not appear to understand that should be reviewed, or if procedures have recently changed.

- Train Observers Close to Election Day: Observer trainings should occur as close to election day as possible. Volunteers are more likely to retain critical observation information and not misplace deployment kits the closer they are to the actual deployment day.
- Plan for at Least One Full Day of Training: Observer trainings should last at least one full day. There is a lot of information to cover and you may lose some important concepts if you try to condense it into just a few hours. Plan for ample breaks and coffees to make sure observers stay engaged, however.

Key Components for Observer Training

To ensure the best possible election day information, observers must thoroughly understand their role, their responsibilities and how to record and report observation findings. Observer trainings should follow relatively the same outline as your observer manual. The following are components that should be included in every election observer training:

- Introduction to Your Organization
- Rights and Responsibilities of Election Observers
- Overview of the Polling Process
- Review of Observation Checklist and Critical Incident Form
- Simulation of Election Day Procedures and Challenges
- Communication and Data Reporting Plan
- Review of Nonpartisan Pledge or Code of Conduct
- Logistics and Finances (if applicable)

Develop Observer Deployment Kits

There are a number of critical materials observers should receive at their trainings. They may include:

- Observation forms

- Observation manual
- Observer vest/t-shirt/cap/arm band
- Observation credentials
- Deployment materials such as flash lights, pens, notepad

To make sure observers have all of these important items on election day, it is best to organize them in single packets or bags so observers do not lose any pieces.

Case Study: Togo

Training Agendas for Cascade Trainings

Since 2010 was the first time nationwide independent observation was possible in Togo, the Convention Nationale de la Société Civile (CNSC) wanted to educate both the public and its volunteer network on the importance of election observation. The CNSC designed a public launch for the morning of the first day of training, inviting members of the election commission, the press and foreign diplomats. The following day and a half focused on training supervisors on international standards for election observation, election day procedures, observation forms, reporting guidelines, logistical considerations and the organization of observer trainings.

NEW 2007 Observation Form (page 1)

SMS ☐

*NEW Sierra Leone **Presidential Run-Off** Election Observation Checklist*

Observer Information

Name: ______________________________ Accreditation Number: ______________

Member Organization: ____

Location information

PC. Polling Centre Number: ______________ Polling Station Number: ______ Constituency: ______

District:______________________________ Chiefdom: ______________________

For **Polling Station**: Number of registered voters ________ Number of blank ballots received: ________

ST. Did the Polling Station **open on time?** Yes No

Voting Observation

A. Were there problems with the Polling Station setup? (*circle all that apply*)
1. No problems with the Polling Station setup
2. Did not guarantee secrecy of voting
3. Did not provide NEC staff sufficient oversight
4. Limited the presence of observers and observation of the process
5. Ballot box was not empty, visible or sealed
6. Other problems with the Polling Station setup (*explain*)

B. Were there problems with the equipment and voting materials? (*circle all that apply*)
1. No problems with the Polling Station equipment or voting materials
2. Not enough ballots
3. Not enough voting booths/screens
4. Not enough indelible ink
5. No copy of the voters list
6. Other voting material missing (*explain*)

C. Were voters properly verified at the Polling Station? (*circle all that apply*)
1. Yes - voters were properly verified
2. Voters not appearing on the Voters List were permitted to vote
3. Voters with no Voter ID card and no other ID were permitted to vote
4. Voters were on the Voters List and presented valid ID, but were not allowed to vote
5. Voters not checked for ink on left little finger
6. Verification procedures were not respected (*explain*)

D. Were inking and punching properly conducted at the Polling Station? (*circle all that apply*)
1. Yes - voters were properly inked and ID cards were properly punched
2. Voters were not marked with ink at all
3. Voters were not marked with ink correctly (should be the left hand little finger)
4. Voter cards were not properly punched (should be bottom right corner of card and should be punched twice if there is no punch from the August 11th election.) (*explain*)

E. Were voting procedures properly conducted at the Polling Station? (*circle all that apply*)
1. Yes - officials administered voting properly
2. Officials did not provide secrecy of voting
3. Officials did not stamp ballots properly--no stamp used or old stamp (from the Presidential poll) used
4. Officials were not neutral or appeared to be biased (*explain*)
5. Officials did not manage the voting process properly (*explain*)

NEW 2007 Observation Form (page 2)

NEW Sierra Leone **Presidential Run-Off** Election Observation Checklist continued

F. Was there campaigning in or around the Polling Station? (*circle all that apply*)
1. No campaigning or campaign materials at or near the Polling Station
2. Campaign materials were within 400 yards of the Polling Station (*explain*)
3. Campaign materials were inside the Polling Station (*explain*)
4. There was active campaigning at the Polling Station (*explain*)

G. Was voting conducted in an orderly way? (*circle all that apply*)
1. Voters voted in an orderly way and without interruptions
2. Polling station was somewhat overcrowded but officials maintained order
3. There was confusion with voting at the station
4. Officials lost control over order at the polling station

H. How many **security staff** were present? *(write "0" for none)* _______

J. Was the security presence adequate?	Yes	No
K. Did security staff **interfere** with the voting process?	Yes	No

Political Party Agents: (check all that apply)

M. Were present at the Polling Station?	APC	SLPP
N. Disrupted the voting process?	APC	SLPP
P. Refused to sign the count?	APC	SLPP

Q. How many **other observers** were present at the Polling Station? _______

Counting Observation

R. Were counting procedures properly conducted at the Polling Station? (*circle all that apply*)
1. Yes - officials conducted counting properly and accurately
2. Officials counted ballots that did not have a proper stamp
3. Officials improperly rejected votes that should have been counted *(explain)*
4. Officials improperly counted votes that should have been rejected *(explain)*
5. Officials counted votes toward the wrong candidate *(explain)*
6. Other problems with the counting procedures *(explain)*

S. Was counting conducted in an orderly way? (*circle all that apply*)
1. Ballots were counted in an orderly way and without interruptions or interference
2. Counting process was somewhat confused but officials maintained order
3. Political party agents interfered during counting at the polling station *(explain)*
4. Officials lost control over order *(explain)*

Record the number of votes received by each candidate.

T. APC Ernest Bai Koroma _________

U. SLPP Soloman E Berewa _________

Was counting **open and observable**?	Yes	No
Were you able to **sign the count**?	Yes	No

For your assigned polling station only:

Number of **unused** ballots**:**	______
Number of **spoiled** ballots:	______
Total ballots in ballot box:	______
Number of **valid** ballots:	______
Number of **invalid or rejected** ballots:	______

Please provide explanations for all necessary questions. Use additional pages if necessary.
Indicate both Polling Centre and Polling Station number on all pages.

National Civil Society Dialogue

Training of Trainers in Election Observation

FIRST DAY

Wednesday 24

Moderator: CNSC

8:30- 9:00	**Arrival of participants** Introductory remarks CNSC/ NDI / Embassy Presentation of agenda / CNSC Practical information / NDI
9:00-9:30	**Dialogue Panel Presentation** / CNSC Why should civil society observe elections?
9:30-10:30	**Ethics of an electoral observer**, NDI Director Rights and responsibilities of observers
10:30-11:00	**Discussion**
11:00-11:15	**Coffee Break**
11:15-12:30	**Mission and structure of the CENI** / Théophile Amouzou, Program Manager, NDI What is the mission of the CENI? Who is a member of the CENI? Who is a member of the CELI? Who works in a polling center?
12:30-13:00	**Discussion**
13:00-14:00	**Lunch**
14:00-15:30	**Activities on and Organization of Election Day** / NDI Expert Allaoua Chelbi What should be observed on Election Day? Organization of polling center Voting operations Surroundings of voting center Tallying
15:30-16:30	**Communication chain and reporting** / CNSC Observer - supervisor Supervisor – national coordinator Analysis / publication
16:30-17:00	**Discussion**

CNSC Training Agenda (page 2)

SECOND DAY

Moderator: CNSC

Thursday, 25 February

9.00-10.30	**Observation Forms** / CNSC How does one fill out the various forms? Means and obstacles of sending reports
10.30-11.15	**Voting Day Simulation** / NDI Expert Allaoua Chelbi / CNSC Why simulate the voting day? What equipment should be used for a simulation? What are the goals of the simulation?
11.15-11.30	**Discussion**
11.30-11.45	**Coffee Break**
11.45- 13.30	**Adult Training Techniques** / NDI Expert Allaoua Chelbi What are the techniques of adult trainings? Designing the training Preparing materials Workshop facilitation
13:30-14:30	**Lunch**
14:30-15:30	**Simulation/ Adult Trainings** / NDI Expert Allaoua Chelbi & CNSC
15:30-16:30	**Logistics & Administration** / CNSC / NDI Financial Officer Observer training Checklist
16:30- 17:00	**Discussion**
17:00	**Concluding remarks** / CNSC & NDI

This guide was written for the West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON) by Julia Brothers with support from Anastasia Soeryadinata Wibawa and Meghan Fenzel.