

Working Group Summaries and Action Items



The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) hosted the 8th Implementation Meeting of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation in Warsaw, Poland, on 17-19 September 2013.

The meeting opened with a high level panel on “The Role of International Election Observation and Recommendations in Policy Making.” Working sessions on September 18-19 focused on the role of election observation in early warning and conflict resolution and follow up to recommendations. Discussions in sub-working groups were dedicated to the observation of use of new voting technologies (NVT), campaign finance, monitoring of gender issues in elections, as well as interaction of international observers with citizen observer groups and academia. The sessions on the 19 September were preceded by a Women’s Power Breakfast dedicated to “Women’s Participation in Elections: Is Election Observation Ready for Gender Mainstreaming?”

Working Group One: Role of Election Observation in Early Warning and Conflict Prevention

- **Moderator:** Richard Atwood, ICG
- Craig Jenness, UN EAD
- Pat Merloe, NDI
- Manfredo Marroquin, Accion Ciudadana on behalf of Acuerdo de Lima and the GNDEM
- Vincent Tohbi Irie, EISA
- Annette Fath-Lihic, International IDEA
- Andy Bruce, ERIS

This session focused on the role of election observation in early warning and conflict prevention. Panelists noted the privileged access that international election observers enjoy in a country during an electoral process, underlining that this can provide for an acute awareness of potential drivers of (electoral) violence. Several participants highlighted the important role that international observers can assume in flagging early warning signs of potential violence and noted new tools and methodological developments in this respect. It was also recognized that more could be done in establishing effective and co-ordinated channels of communication with bodies more directly engaged in conflict mitigation (such as embassies and INGOs), while keeping in mind the sensitivities of such communications.

Panelists also acknowledged the limits of international observers to pro-actively engage in conflict mitigation, highlighting that the causes of electoral violence are often political and context-dependent. While credible reporting on technical aspects of elections can heighten confidence, high expectations of observers' ability to address broader political challenges should be guarded against.

The relationship with citizen observer groups was also explored, particularly in identifying potentials for electoral violence and in supporting local efforts to lower tensions throughout the electoral cycle. In addition, the continued need to assess the possibility of electoral violence in exploratory missions was highlighted, as was the need to consider recommendations that could lower the potential for electoral violence in future elections.

ACTION ITEMS

- Continue to develop effective communication mechanisms between international observers and those actively involved in violence mitigation. Raise certain potentials for electoral violence in public observation reports.
- Maintain context-specific approaches to electoral violence that are cognizant of the underlying causes of the conflict.
- Include assessment of possible electoral violence in the preparation of observation activities and provide recommendations that could lower tensions in future elections.
- Engage with citizen election observers throughout the electoral cycle in identifying potentials for electoral violence and in flagging these issues at an early stage.
- Continue broad discussions on the role of election observers and their mandates with regard to early warning and conflict mitigation.

Sub-Working Group One: Observation of the Use of NVT in Elections

- **Moderator:** Denis Kadima, EISA
- Betilde Munoz-Pogossian, OAS
- Robert Krimmer, OSCE/ODIHR
- Ben Goldsmith, IFES
- Gwada Ogot, Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (via video-link)

Participants shared their experiences in observing the use of NVT and identified opportunities for future co-operation. In addition, participants discussed the need for new set of international obligations/commitments and of updated and uniform standards for the observation of NVT. Recent and upcoming publications were also presented.

Panelists presented some case studies from their areas of observation, showing that the use of NVT and related challenges vary considerably across countries and elections. Recent elections in African countries – where in increased discussion of manipulation of IT systems used in the electoral processes are taking place – highlighted the need for a methodology for observation of NVT. In Grenada, an assessment by OAS contributed to increase public confidence in electronic voter registration. The use of NVT in countries such as Albania once

again demonstrated the importance of a gradual approach to NVT; here, the decision taken by authorities to introduce NVT shortly before elections led to major problems and eventually to the cancellation of the project.

Common challenges for the observation of NVT were also identified. Efforts that are necessary to guarantee the transparency of the process and the secrecy of the vote are much greater than in comparison with traditional voting methods. The timeframe for the preparation of elections is also longer when NVT are involved. In addition, the methodology needs to be updated to match the quick evolution of electronic voting.

As to new publications about NVT, two handbooks were presented: a joint publication by IFES and NDI, as well as the OSCE/ODIHR's then forthcoming Handbook for the Observation of New Voting Technologies. Both handbooks provide guidelines to assess all stages of the electoral process against principles derived from existing commitments and international standards.

Participants further agreed to establish a working group to continue the work on the draft guidelines for observing NVT.

ACTION ITEMS

- Establish a working group, including terms of reference, to agree on a set of guidelines for the use and observation of NVT.
- Distribute new and upcoming publications about NVT within the DoP community in order to share lessons learned and good practices.

Sub-Working Group Two: Observation of Campaign Finance

- **Moderator:** Magnus Ohman, IFES
- Avery Davis-Roberts, TCC
- Alejandro Urizar, OAS
- Richard Lappin, OSCE/ODIHR
- Marcin Walecki, OSCE/ODIHR
- Samer Abdallah, LADE on behalf of GNDEM

This session looked at recent trends and emerging challenges in the observation of campaign finance. Panelists indicated that this area has evolved significantly in the past 15 years, but that work remains in the implementation and enforcement of campaign finance regulations. While there are not many international standards that explicitly relate to campaign finance, it was highlighted that there is a growing consolidation of obligations, standards and good practices that can be applied. Regional variations in the development of campaign finance regulation and observation were recognized by different panelists.

Panelists also noted that there has been a development of methodologies in this field, providing more guidance to observers. It was acknowledged, however, that more could be done in refining the terminology and parameters of effective observation on this issue. The

importance of assessing campaign finance within a broader political finance framework was also noted, as well as the need to be clear on what can be effectively observed during an election observation activity. While most observer efforts focus on the legal framework, for some there may also be the option to monitor the actual spending, particularly by citizen observer groups. It was additionally underscored that observers have to keep in mind the context in which observation takes place, including different socio-economic conditions and different campaign finance systems.

ACTION ITEMS

- Establish a better understanding among international election observation organizations on the key thematic components of campaign finance to be observed.
- Continue to develop methodologies to effectively observe campaign finance and to formulate consistent and implementable recommendations on the issue.
- Encourage greater transparency and more effective and timely oversight by regulators.
- Encourage greater collaboration with citizen observer groups, particularly in the long-term monitoring of political finance.

Women's Power Breakfast: Women's Participation in Elections: Is Election Observation Ready for Gender Mainstreaming?

The event was organized on the margins of the DoP meeting and brought together 25 DoP participants and ODIHR staff working on elections, democratic governance, gender equality and women's political participation. During the event, participants discussed the OSCE/ODIHR's shift towards a gender mainstreaming approach in its election observation activities, as a means of enhancing gender analysis in election observation reporting.

Participants expressed broad support for the gender mainstreaming approach, noting that its success would be dependent upon each core team member accepting responsibility for assessing the impact of electoral processes on women and men and identifying any direct or indirect discrimination against women as voters, candidate and/or electoral stakeholders. Several participants noted the importance of leadership accountability in ensuring that the gender dimensions of electoral processes are properly assessed, particularly if fewer Gender Analysts are deployed, and indicated that there is room for improvement in developing concrete recommendations for follow-up on gender-related issues.

Working Group Two: Follow-up to recommendations

- **Moderator:** Tatyana Bogussevich, OSCE/ODIHR
- Emanuele Giaufret, EEAS
- Betilde Munoz-Pogossian, OAS
- Olufunto Akinduro, EISA
- David Carroll, TCC
- Fiona Hall, European Parliament
- Avery Davis-Roberts, TCC
- Domenico Tuccinardi, International IDEA

This working group focused on challenges for conducting follow-up activities, the ways to foster political will for addressing recommendations, co-ordination between different observer groups, the role of citizen observers in follow-up, as well as the timing of follow-up. The panelists presented experiences of different organizations and their approaches in the conduct of follow-up activities.

The panelists and participants highlighted a number of challenges and lessons in implementing follow-up activities. The importance of clearly-drafted, implementable and prioritized recommendations was underscored. Panelists indicated the importance of proper timing and format of follow-up visits, as well as the need for greater co-ordination not only among international organizations, but also with citizen observer groups.

During the discussion, participants suggested that it could be useful to draft a set of guidelines on conducting follow-up. It was suggested that draft guidelines prepared earlier by TCC could be used as a basis. During the session, an update on the ACE-project recommendations database, as well as details on the foundation of A-WEB were presented to the participants. In addition, participants got an update on the development of an ISO standard on Quality Management Requirement for Electoral Bodies, which was expected to be passed by the end of the year.

ACTION ITEMS

- Maintain efforts of drafting clear, implementable and prioritized recommendations.
- More efforts are needed to co-ordinate follow-up activities among international organizations.
- Revive the guidelines on follow-up drafted by the TCC.
- Co-ordinate with citizen observer groups with a view to building synergies and encouraging national ownership.
- Pilot a mid-term follow-up visit in one of the countries where the co-ordinated follow-up was conducted.
- Co-ordinate the involvement of DoP organizations in the GEO and the A-WEB.

Sub-Working Group Three: Monitoring Gender Issues in Elections

- **Moderator:** Nicola Schmidt, OSCE/ODIHR
- Michael Meyer-Resende, DRI
- Sara Mia Noguera, OAS
- Gilles Saphy, EODS
- Karin Junker, GDI
- Sabra Bano, GCI

This session highlighted the importance of monitoring gender issues in elections, particularly given the continued low-level of women's representation across a wide range of countries. Panelists noted the continued discrimination against women in electoral process, highlighting difficulties faced in voter and candidate registration, media access, and family voting, among other issues. The need to incorporate a gender perspective into emerging issues was also underscored, including campaign finance and NVT.

Discussion and presentations focused on methodological developments in monitoring gender in elections and how relevant international obligations and standards can be more effectively linked to recommendations. There was recognition that reporting could often be clearer and more specific and recommendations more focused and implementable. Particular attention was placed on how 'special temporary measures', as provided by CEDAW, could serve as a basis for a broader range of recommendations on how to enhance women's participation.

In discussing methodologies, panelists also considered the benefits and shortcomings of deploying specialized gender analysts or mainstreaming responsibilities across all core team members. It was recognized that a mainstreaming approach could provide more nuanced, technical assessment from different thematic viewpoints (e.g. candidate registration, media access, campaigning). However, concern was also noted that the overall visibility of women's participation may be diminished. It was additionally underlined that attention should be paid to non-electoral factors that have an impact on gender, particularly the broader political, cultural and socio-economic context.

ACTION ITEMS

- Formulate recommendations with more specific targets and outcomes and strengthen links to international obligations and standards on women's participation.
- Encourage electoral management bodies to collect and publish gender disaggregated data as a means to better monitor women's participation and undertake more effective follow-up.
- Promote gender monitoring across all electoral components, as well as assessing the broader social context / 'enabling environment'.
- Ensure that the monitoring of gender issues in elections retains a high-profile and to continue working on the issue within the DoP group, including in respect of follow-up.

Sub-Working Group Four: Interaction of Election Observation with Academia

- **Moderator:** David Carroll, TCC
- Betilde Munoz-Pogossian, OAS
- Pippa Norris, Harvard University (via video-link)
- Tova Wang, National Democratic Institute
- Carolien van Ham, University of Twente

The purpose of this working group was to continue the exchange of views between practitioners and researchers in the area of election observation following an initial discussion during the 2012 DoP meeting in Washington. This time researchers also participated either in person or via a video-link in the exchange of views and experience in interacting with each other.

Participants discussed how observation can and should be perceived by researchers, including highlighting quality criteria for effective observation as well as having realistic expectations of observation. They stressed the fact that election observation is an independent and credible assessment of elections. Election observation provides information to the public on the conduct of the elections and bases its recommendations on its own observation and assessment. Further examples of interaction with academia were presented, including embedding researchers in EOMs. Presenters also highlighted the advantages of sharing data in the framework of elections and how all stakeholders can benefit from it.

From the side of academia, an outline of the election integrity project was presented, which detailed how the assessment of country performance in elections is conducted. Further, professional partnerships between election observation organizations and academic associations such as IPSA and APSA were proposed.

Researchers also highlighted the interest in data generated by election observation missions, including analyzing the publicly available reports from EOMs. Some participants cautioned against the use of reports from earlier years of election observation due to the evolution of the election observation methodology and the resulting different levels of detail, depth and scope of analysis.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Establish a list of research topics, which academia might be interested in and the research of which would also be useful for election observation practitioners;
- Continue exchange of views between researchers and practitioners of election observation.

Sub-Working Group Five: Interaction of citizen observer groups with international observers

- **Moderator:** Ryan Whelan, ANFREL
- Meghan Fenzel, NDI
- Morton Halperin, Open Society Foundations
- Roman Udot, GOLOS NGO on behalf of EPDE
- Stefanie Schiffer, European Exchange on behalf of EPDE
- Manfredo Marroquin, Accion Ciudadana on behalf of Acuerdo de Lima and GNDEM
- Samer Abdallah, LADE on behalf of GNDEM

The session focused on the interaction between citizen and international observers and, in particular, sought to determine ways of enhancing the contacts and synergies between the two groups. Participants underscored that there are numerous areas for interaction where co-operation and concerted action could yield better and more tangible results. Importance of citizen observation was highlighted as one of the most effective ways of analyzing processes and influencing policy making locally owing to citizen organizations' long-term presence, experience, and nuanced understanding. Yet, it was underscored that synergies and co-operation with international observers, which provide a valuable, but only a snapshot of an observed electoral process, facilitate and considerably enhance the impact of both groups' activities.

In analyzing possible ways of improving interaction, it was noted that there is a need to develop a more clear set of principles and new innovative approaches to co-operation as mere sharing of information is not always sufficient. Participants also suggested that increased fora need to be created for the interaction between the two groups outside election observation activities. The opportunity to share experiences in the framework of DoP and GNDEM events was seen as very useful.

Discussions demonstrated that, in general, there is a need for greater support of domestic organizations and their activities, both in terms of substance and resources. It was suggested that consideration be given to better reflecting the findings and conclusions of citizen observers in international observers' reports; providing more capacity building opportunities, including through training and engagement in international election observation; more advocacy and public recognition of efforts by citizen observers; and more systematic co-operation reaching beyond election day, including on follow-up. A number of funding-related recommendations were made, including a suggestion that calls for project proposals by donor organizations should be better linked to election cycles to allow for long-term planning and sustainability of activities of citizen observer groups beyond election day.

ACTION ITEMS

- Continue to maintain close co-operation with citizen observer groups to ensure greater synergies and greater impact of activities of both groups;
- Consider ways of involving citizen observers in international election observation with a view to helping build experience and capacity;

- Better integrate input and information provided by citizen observers in observation and other reports;
- Work closer with citizen observer groups outside of election observation, including in connection with follow-up activities;
- Encourage donor organizations to conduct more comprehensive analysis of needs when designing support projects and ensure that calls for project proposals are better linked to election cycles to allow for long-term planning and sustainability of activities of citizen observer groups beyond election day.

Closing Remarks and Next Steps

Moderator: Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz, OSCE/ODIHR

A short summary of key points of discussion and agreement that emerged from the 8th Implementation Meeting were presented. A number of topics discussed during the meeting, in particular those related to follow-up, the role of election observation in early warning and conflict prevention, the interaction between citizen and international observers, as well as with academia, appeared to remain pertinent and worth being including in the agenda of future meetings.

It was agreed to continue the practice of co-ordination conference calls on subjects and/or countries of interest to the DoP community, in particular with regard to follow-up activities. Following the Implementation Meeting, the next such conference call between Convening Committee members took place ahead of the 14-17 October 6th GEO conference in Seoul and the launch of A-WEB. Another co-ordination conference call in regard to Afghanistan took place on 19 November.

The potential host of the 9th DoP Implementation Meeting is ANFREL; final confirmation is pending.