TOWARD MORE SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION AND PVT

Systematic Election Observation and Preconditions for Conducting a PVT

WAEON Academy: Monrovia, Liberia
April 23 – 27, 2012
Presenter: Michael McNulty, NDI
Overview

• Advantages of systematic observation
• Challenges of systematic observation
• Designing forms for systematic observation
• Collecting and analyzing observer data
• Statements
• Preconditions for conducting a PVT
Systematic Observation

- Proportional and strategic deployment based on % of polling stations in each region as % of all polling stations

- Rapid data collection from all observers and effective data analysis
## Proportional Deployment Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Polling Stations</th>
<th>% of All Polling Stations</th>
<th>Observers (800)</th>
<th>% of All Observers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bishkek City</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osh City</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chui</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naryn</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osh oblast</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batken</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalal-Abad</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talas</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issyk-Kul</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>800</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advantages of Systematic Observation

• More credible, reliable and objective findings
• Improved national perspective
• Detect fraud more effectively
• Long-term organizational capacity building
  • Builds a nationwide network of well-trained observers
  • Institutionalizes the use of rapid response mechanisms and data collection
  • Improved quality of data collected: quality over quantity
  • Builds capacity for conducting PVT
Organizational Preparation

Central Office Data Management

• Need to have communication systems for more rapid observer reporting
• Need more data clerks at the central level
• Need central data collection center and staffing for back-up network of data collection
• Establish centralized database of all observers
Organizational Preparation

- More regional/county coordinators
  - Ratio of 20 observers to 1 regional coordinator is recommended
- Capacity to train each observer effectively
- More observers must report on election day/night
- This requires a lot more data clerks, more phones, more computers
- Fundraising early on
Observer Forms – Simpler the Better

• Each question adds more work and time for observers, data collection and analysis
  • Fewer questions on forms means fewer errors
  • Succinct forms means easier reporting
  • Clear and consistent data means easier and better analysis

• Only include questions that are absolutely necessary
  • What are the top electoral problems you want to capture?
  • How can you collect other qualitative information that isn’t on the form?
Designing Forms

Criteria for each question:

✓ Why is this question critical?
✓ Does it accurately measure the underlying concept?
✓ Is it clearly worded to avoid different responses or confusion?
✓ Do the response categories cover all possible range of responses; and do they not overlap with each other?

• Allow for scale and scope (how many or how much, not just did it happen); but keep response categories to the minimum necessary
• No open-ended questions
• Include detailed explanation of each question in manual
Forms: Example 1

Did the polling station open on time on election morning?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
Forms: Example 2

When did the first voter cast a ballot at the polling station?

- Before 7:00
- Between 7:00 and 8:00
- After 8:00
- Did not open
Observer Form -- Samples

- Review example form
- Remember the “do’s and don’ts” criteria
- What would you change?
Collecting Data - Communication

- Develop plan as early as possible
- Maximize speed, efficiency and accuracy
- Minimize layers of reporting between observer and central office
- Design plan based on estimated peak times of information flow
- Train observers on importance of reporting back and give them clear, simple instructions
- Develop back-up communication plans
Collecting Data

✓ Consider how quickly each type of information is needed

Needed Immediately (emergency calls)
- Are observers in polling stations (blocked?)
- Critical incidents (violence, closure)

Needed Quickly (scheduled calls)
- Form data: turnout, processes, violation data

Needed After E-Day (later calls or hard-copy)
- Stories and details of violations and incidents
Collecting Data – Sample Flow Chart

Training and Coordination

- Central Office Core Team
- Regional Coordinators
- Local Coordinators
- Election Observers

Data Collection
Collecting Data: Methods

Identify the most appropriate methods for rapid transmission of findings

- SMS
- Hand delivery of forms
- Phone call (mobile or landline)
- Fax
- Scan/Email or Web-based forms

Telephone Systems

- Cascade system
- One number/one line system
Managing Data

- One central call center
- Assign one large team of call receivers (data clerks) and a second smaller team of people making follow-up calls to receive incident reports and to follow-up on missing forms
- Be prepared for peak call times
- How to estimate number of call receivers needed?

\[
\text{# of Observers} \times \text{Minutes per call} = \text{# of Call Receivers Needed}
\]

\[
\text{Target # of minutes for processing all calls}
\]
Analyzing Data

• Get data from all observers
• Emphasize numbers over single incidents
• Focus on broad trends
• Look at subnational trends
Analyzing Data

Which finding is more significant?

• 95% of polling stations observed opened on time

• 3 polling stations opened two hours late
Analyzing Data

Which finding is more significant?

- Ballot box stuffing was observed in 100 polling stations
- Ballot box stuffing occurred in 5% of polling stations observed, but in 40% of stations observed in Lofa county
Framing Findings in Public Statements for Systematic (but not PVT) Observation

• **What we can’t say:**
  • We cannot say that we are deploying observers to a statistically-sound sample.
  • We cannot say that findings are representative of the country or any region (i.e., don’t say that 30% of polling stations in Liberia opened late)
  • We cannot project voting results.

• **What we can say:**
  • Observers are deployed in a geographically proportionate way (more credibility than ad-hoc deployment)
  • Only give findings as a percentage of “polling stations observed” (i.e., 30% of all polling stations observed opened late).
PVT Definition

- The use of rapidly transmitted quantitative and qualitative observer data from a statistically-based, representative random sample of polling stations to produce a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the election day process and to project results.

- Other names: Statistically-based Observation (SBO); Quick Count; Swift Count
- PVT is not just method of projecting election results
PVT Preconditions - External

- **Election System**
  - Single, nationwide constituency

- **Top Electoral Concerns**
  - Tabulation and e-day process?

- **Access to All Aspects of Process**
  - Especially polling station-level results

- **Political Situation**
  - Perception of group; hostile environment?

- **List of Polling Stations**
  - Accurate and released in advance
PVT Preconditions - Internal

Geographic Coverage
- Must be able to cover any polling station in the country
- Must be confident that all observers will go to assigned station

Organization and Leadership
- Top leadership must understand and commit to PVT
- Network of groups can be challenging
- Need to reduce not increase number of observers and levels of organization
- Need statistician and IT specialists
- Need more time to prepare

Access to Technical Assistance
- Especially the first time, assistance needed well in advance

Adequate Funding – more expensive
PVT Alternatives

Conduct only a PVT

Develop representative deployment plan

Combine PVT with traditional observation

- Assign PVTs to a random sample, and remaining observers to “problem areas”
- SBO provides sound analysis; traditional observers provide more details and context about incidents
Merci!
Thank you!