

from election to election. In some countries, international organizations recruit, train and deploy indigenous individuals who work under the auspices of the international group. In other countries, international organizations may provide financial or technical support to the formation of a domestic monitoring group, which then operates as a fully autonomous entity. The domestic group may or may not choose to coordinate monitoring activities with its international supporters. Finally, some international observers adopt a detached attitude toward domestic monitoring groups. In these situations, the coordination between international and domestic groups may be limited to sharing reports.

You should be aware that in some circumstances coordination may compromise your monitoring group's independence and impartiality. This can occur if any of the organizations with which you are coordinating is too partisan, is not committed to conducting a quality operation, or has a tendency to employ undemocratic procedures to manage its operation.³⁰ In these situations you must take steps to avoid damaging the credibility of your own institution, which may mean withdrawing your participation from the coordinated effort.



Security

Transition elections often occur in volatile environments. A polarized political setting, a tradition of violence or recent armed conflict in the region may heighten concerns about the safety of those participating in the electoral process, including domestic monitors.

For the monitoring group, security issues may raise difficult policy dilemmas. For example, publicizing the presence of monitors and challenging irregularities are activities that help promote confidence in the election process. However, accomplishing these goals may require exposing volunteers to danger. Monitors should be aware that their findings, in some circumstances, could be viewed as embarrassing or even incriminating by individuals and the institutions they represent. In order to prevent monitors from publicizing their findings, individuals or groups may attempt to intimidate or incapacitate the monitors.

There is no simple solution to this dilemma. You can, however, take steps to avoid security problems and to handle these situations prudently when they arise. First, do not pretend the issue does not exist. If you have reason to believe there are potentially dangerous situations that your monitors will face, you should discuss the issue. The discussion must begin in the committee of directors, who should adopt relevant policies and procedures. (*See Examples, at left.*)

You should then communicate and reinforce the policies and procedures that are adopted to all members of your operation. Include a discussion of the relevant information in your training manual, training workshops, and in your conversations with individual monitors. They need to know how to identify a potential problem and how you want them to respond. You may also choose to establish channels of communication between your operation and the local, regional and national offices of the security forces. At a minimum, you should give monitors a telephone number to call in the case of an emergency. (*See Illustration 18.*)

EXAMPLES OF SECURITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- All monitors should report threats of intimidation or violence to the executive director (and/or to the police).
- The executive director should pursue all reports of intimidation or violence with the police.
- Monitors should immediately remove themselves from potentially dangerous environments and call their supervisor for further instruction.
- Where the police or government authorities are the source of the problem, their activities and their enforcement (or lack of enforcement) of complaints should be monitored and reported to the media and international institutions.

³⁰ See Section C., *Approaches to Organizing* and Section E., *Credibility*.

Security issues are also relevant to evaluating the freedom with which candidates campaign, voters vote and election officials administer. How you can monitor the effect of security and intimidation on these activities is discussed more fully in *Sections P–S, U, and V*.



Illustration 18

The Albanian Society for Democratic Culture (SDC) encountered problems with voter intimidation in the 1994 by-elections. SDC monitors documented the incidents in the face of personal threats. Following election day, SDC members received several communications attempting to discourage the group from releasing its findings. SDC carefully considered the potential consequences for individual members and took precautions to protect them (as well as sources of information who wished to remain anonymous). Then, SDC leaders concluded that the importance of releasing the information in a balanced and professional manner outweighed the risks and demonstrated the group's resilience in the face of intimidation and outside pressures. In a preemptive maneuver, SDC also mobilized support from NDI and others to demonstrate international solidarity in support of the safety of SDC members. SDC then held a press conference to release its uncensored statement on the elections.