

- (d) instructions (e.g., about where and when to begin monitoring, how to implement the communication and/or reporting plan, etc.); and
 - (e) a code of conduct.
- [4] supplies for the day (e.g., food and water, paper and pens, flashlights, etc.).



Counting

GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND ISSUES In assessing the counting process, your evaluation should be based upon the degree to which:

- [1] ballots are counted accurately, reflecting the choices expressed by the voters;
- [2] ballots that are ruled invalid (*spoiled*, *void* or *null*) or irregular (sometimes called *challenged* or *tendered*) are properly identified and, ideally, preserved for review;
- [3] the results of the count (also called the *returns*) are transmitted to the appropriate authorities, who tabulate the results accurately and are reported to the political contestants, the election observers and the public as provided by law and in a timely manner; and
- [4] the processes of counting ballots and transmitting and tabulating the results are conducted in a transparent environment such that they are accepted by all competitors and the electorate.

ISSUES TO MONITOR Most of the issues that you monitor during the voting also merit scrutiny during the counting. You should pay attention to the *environment inside of the counting station*, the *conduct of the officials*, the *conduct of the party agents* (i.e., poll-watchers) and the *environment outside of the counting station*. (See generally Section U, *Voting for further discussion*.) For example, inside of the voting station,

you should determine whether the appropriate *arrangement*, *staffing* and *materials* are in place.

SPECIFIC MONITORING TECHNIQUES As a preliminary matter, you must adapt your approach to reflect the particular vote counting system in use. In some elections, the votes are counted in the same location where they were cast, while in others the votes are transported to a centralized counting place. Also, some systems count the votes immediately after voting is terminated, but others wait to count votes on the following day(s).

Where voting and counting are conducted in the same location, monitors should remain at the site until the count is completed and record the results on a form prepared by the monitoring group or, if possible, obtain a copy of the official *tally sheet*. Where ballots are counted centrally, monitors should accompany the ballot box from the polling site to the counting center, at which point monitors assigned to the counting center may assume responsibility for ensuring that the count is conducted properly. Where there is a delay between the voting and counting processes, monitors should take special precautions to ensure the integrity of the votes inside of the ballot box. In some countries, monitors have stayed beside ballot boxes throughout the night so they could be sure nobody tampered with the contents.

When observing the count, monitors should be vigilant for the following possible irregularities:

- [1] violation of the integrity of the ballot box (e.g., broken locks or seals, prematurely opened boxes, etc.);
- [2] improper counting procedures (e.g., tearing or marking ballots to invalidate them; failing to record valid ballots according to the clearly expressed intention of the voters; adding pre-marked or invalid ballots to the contents of the ballot box; substituting, stealing or destroying ballots or entire ballot boxes; etc.)
- [3] intimidation of counting officials or observers;



Opening the ballot box to begin counting.
From *Voter Education Manual for Trainers*,
prepared by Project Vote for the 1994
elections in South Africa.

- 4 errors or omissions in computing or completing official tally sheets;
- 5 improper refusal to allow monitors or others to observe the process or record complaints on the official tally sheet; and
- 6 failure to report results according to prescribed procedures or time periods.

Once the ballots from individual polling sites are counted, the process of collecting and computing (*tabulating*) results from the various sites begins.



Tabulation

The monitor's job is rarely complete when the vote counting is finished. Rather, there remain several extremely important parts of the process to be monitored. Monitoring events such as the resolution of complaints and appeals, the

announcement of results and the investiture of winning contestants is discussed below in *Section X, Post Election Developments*. First, however, this section addresses the issue of monitoring the vote count *tabulation*. (See *Definition 11*.)

This section also provides a detailed, though not exhaustive, discussion on a particularly useful monitoring technique called a *parallel vote tabulation* or *PVT*.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND ISSUES The tabulation process is susceptible to problems. Unscrupulous or careless election officials (or interlopers) can significantly alter the true results simply by changing a few digits with a pen or by reprogramming computer calculations. Therefore, a rapid and thorough independent assessment of the election results may deter election officials or others from attempting to alter the vote counts and enhance the voters' confidence that the official results can be trusted.

Accuracy and *speed* of reporting are two major concerns for the tabulation of election results. Therefore, you should compare election results reported by election officials to those of political party representatives and other observers and attempt to identify improper calculations, inconsistencies or *anomalies*. (See *Definition 12*.)

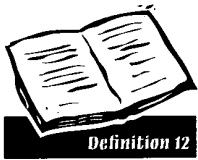
Whenever you identify a serious potential irregularity in the tabulation process, or when the tabulation is finished at the location you are monitoring, you should investigate any questions you have about the process and record your



Definition 11

tab•u•la•tion

Tabulation is used here to describe the processes of: (a) transmitting voting results from the point where they are counted to a central collection point where they are combined with results from other locations; and (b) calculating the overall election results.



a • n o m • a • l y

An *anomaly* is a deviation or departure from the normal order, form or rule. You may find anomalies by comparing election results (e.g., rates of voter partici-

pation, numbers of spoiled ballots, margins of victory, etc.) from a current election with election data from other years or other regions. You can also analyze the results in light of information from other sources, including a census or other demographic study, voter registration list and political party lists.

For example, suppose you analyze voting results and find that approximately 40 percent of the votes were nullified in Election District A. If the results from rest of the country indicate that the average rate of spoiled ballots is 10 percent, then you have identified an anomaly in District A that may deserve further investigation.

observations. These observations should be transmitted to your monitoring headquarters as soon as possible so the organization's leaders may determine what action should be taken, if any, and so they can begin the process of preparing a comprehensive evaluating of the election. If you wait too long to report important findings, you may miss the opportunity to influence the process.⁵⁶

PARALLEL VOTE TABULATION (PVT) A parallel vote tabulation (PVT) is a method for monitoring the tabulation of votes whereby election monitors record results obtained from individual voting stations and compare these findings with official results.⁵⁷ It is a tool for use in monitoring the vote count. PVTs collect actual results that are reported by election officials; they do not rely on the techniques of *exit polling*.⁵⁸

The general purpose of a PVT is to verify the accuracy of the results reported by the electoral authorities as these results are transmitted from the local to central levels of the election's

administration (e.g., from the voting station, to the district level, to the regional capital, to the national headquarters). Properly implemented PVTs can help to:

- 1 deter fraud by increasing the prospect that manipulation during the tabulation process will be discovered;
- 2 suggest a "true" vote count when fraud is attempted; and
- 3 enhance confidence in, and acceptance of, official results if they are consistent with the PVT.

The chart of four successful domestic monitoring efforts on the following page illustrates the degree of precision that can be achieved by a well designed and carefully implemented parallel vote tabulation.

Implementing a PVT requires that you establish a special team dedicated to this purpose and create a special training program and manual for volunteers in the field. You must also appreciate the weight of responsibility that will be upon you once you embark on a PVT. If improperly executed or inexpertly interpreted, the information from your PVT can cause considerable confusion. Thus, it is extremely important that you conduct the PVT with professionalism and care and that, without revealing the exact sites you plan to monitor, you disclose and explain the methodology of your efforts.

In designing a PVT, the advantages and disadvantages of speed and accuracy should be considered at the outset. This usually involves choosing between a *quick count* that relies on random sampling and statistics to project the outcome based on results from a limited number of voting sites, versus a *comprehensive* effort that collects and tabulates the results from all or nearly all of the voting sites.

The strategic choice between speed and comprehensiveness is relatively simple: if it is necessary to obtain accurate, credible election returns quickly, a random sampling is more appropriate. On the other hand, if only a comprehensive voting-site

⁵⁶ See also Section Y, *Post-Election Reporting*.

⁵⁷ See, L. Garber and G. Cowan, "The Virtues of Parallel Vote Tabulations," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol 4, No. 2, (Washington, DC: April 1993), at p95. Reprinted by permission of the Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁵⁸ The technique of surveying voters' preferences, after they vote and as they as they leave the voting area, is referred to as "exit polling."

count will suffice to convince the electorate of the true results, then a more complete, and necessarily slower, system should be employed.

In most circumstances, a quick count will meet the criteria of accuracy, credibility and speed, and can be accomplished by tabulating results from several hundred randomly selected voting sites. The first step in initiating a quick count is to determine the size of the sample. Because relevant electoral history is often limited in transition situations, the tendency has been to use rather large samples (often constituting at least 10 percent of the voting sites) and to rely on a high degree of randomness. Where the demographic data is extensive, the voting population is very high, or the society is relatively homogeneous, a smaller sample may be adequate. In the United States, for example, where all three of these factors are in effect, public opinion polls require fewer than 2,000 randomly selected respondents for an accurate projection of what the other 250 million residents believe.

Stratification is an advanced technique that you can use in order to further reduce a sample's overall margin of error and to permit early projections where only some of the sample points have reported. Voting sites may be stratified according to administrative region, demographic characteristics (e.g., urban, semiurban, rural, etc.), socio-economic status and gender, for example.

A monitoring group should subdivide the PVT operation into the following tasks:

- 1 general administration and organization;
- 2 sample design and computer programming;
- 3 data processing;
- 4 statistical analysis;
- 5 volunteer recruitment, training and deployment;
- 6 communications and logistics; and
- 7 public relations.

Recruiting volunteers with expertise in specialized areas such as demographics, statistics,

computer programming and communications will contribute enormously to the success of the operation.

The following information is important in order to plan the operation:

- 1 a list of all the voting sites and their locations;
- 2 the total number of people on the registration list at each voting site;
- 3 the total number of registered voters in each district or constituency; and
- 4 demographic information useful for sampling and stratification purposes.

Do not underestimate the potential difficulty of obtaining basic information needed for your PVT. National election commissions in several countries have been unable or unwilling to relate with precision the authorized number of voting sites or the total number of registered voters prior to election day.

In the case of a quick count, you will also need a computer and trained computer operator.

COMPARISON OF PVT RESULTS TO OFFICIAL RESULTS

Election	Contestant	PVT (%)	Official Results (%)
1988 Chile	Yes	43.01	44.00
	No	54.71	53.30
1990 Bulgaria	Party A	46.99	47.15
	Party B	36.13	36.20
	Party C	8.19	8.19
	Party D	6.31	6.31
1991 Zambia	Party A	74.10	76.00
	Party B	23.00	24.00
1993 Paraguay	Party A	40.14	40.90
	Party B	32.83	32.83
	Party C	24.97	23.40

Computer capabilities can be used to draw (*extract*) the sample, to record the results and to calculate the projected outcome, particularly in cases where all sampling points have not reported. You will also need a statistician and perhaps a person familiar with the demographics of the region in the likely event that you do not receive results from 100 percent of your sample. In very well supplied organizations, computers can be distributed to different locations throughout the country to expedite collecting the results. From the field, information can then be transmitted to the central headquarters by modem or computer disk. In the alternative, you can use traditional, albeit slower, methods of communication and transportation.

Before election day, the following data fields should be entered on the base record:

- 1 name of the voting station;
- 2 location of the voting station;
- 3 identifying numerical code of the voting station (either as denominated by the central authorities or as established by the monitoring group);
- 4 name of the district or constituency in which the voting station is located; and
- 5 number of registered voters in the voting station.

Each monitor assigned to retrieve actual results should be at the site where counting occurs before the ballot box is opened. The monitor should follow the counting process, observe and record any irregularities, and collect the results of the count. The monitor should complete a checklist (*see Appendix III*) that includes the following information:

- 1 name of the reporting monitor;
- 2 time of reporting;
- 3 total votes cast;
- 4 votes received by contestants (e.g., candidates, political parties or referendum issues); and

- 5 the reporting monitor's subjective evaluation of the integrity of the process at his or her individual voting/counting site.

Monitors should attempt to communicate their findings to the PVT headquarters as soon as possible.

The statistics team should take responsibility for designing the sample and analyzing data as it becomes available on election night. The sample design and the size of the sample are affected by the choice of sample points (e.g., voting stations or individual voters), the desired degree of accuracy and confidence interval, and the vote counting methodology adopted by the government. The statistics team also will need to formulate a strategy for dealing with replacement sample points where personnel or logistics problems prevent the use of the original sample points.

An important part of the PVT effort includes running *simulation* exercises prior to election day. A partial or full-scale simulation may help you to train staff, generate publicity, work out problems in the system or demonstrate the credibility of the operation.

You should emphasize the issue of communications in the development of your PVT plan.⁹⁹ The availability of a large and secure nationwide telephone network is ideal. Alternatives to reliance on the telephone include radios or the physical delivery of results to regional and national headquarters. Always develop contingency plans to report PVT information in case of communication problems resulting from such impediments as sabotaged telephone lines or bad weather.

You should also make sure the PVT plan is adequately explained, at the earliest opportunity, to the government and election officials, the news media and political party leaders. The cooperation of election officials is often necessary to ensure that a PVT is feasible. For example, a special regulation may be required to permit PVT volunteers access to the vote-counting process or to obtain an official tally sheet. If such

⁹⁹ See also Section M., Logistics.

permission is not forthcoming, alternative arrangements may have to be made with one or more political parties whose agents have access to the voting sites.

Do not expect the idea of a PVT to receive immediate support. Election officials may view such an effort as an infringement of their responsibilities and as a potential source of confusion to voters. A serious attempt must be made to convince election officials, and in most instances the ruling party, that implementation of a credible PVT is in everyone's interest.

Announcing the findings of your PVT is an important component of a credible PVT. You should take care to issue your report in a manner that ensures maximum trust from all interested parties. Thus it would be wise to select a neutral site for the announcement, to maintain any publicized schedule (in order to avoid the appearance that you are falsifying calculations) and to be prepared to explain or defend every aspect of your operation. You must be prepared to resist pressures to rush your report in a race with other sources or to delay your report if its results seem unpopular. (See *Illustration 22*.)

It is important to remember that a PVT only addresses problems that may take place in the tabulation process. Correct tabulations of the counts may mean little if there are basic flaws in the voting process or there are other serious problems on election day. The PVT, therefore, should be treated as part of a larger election monitoring effort. One way to reinforce this is to include assessment of *qualitative* aspects of the process within the PVT operation.⁶¹ A first report can be made by PVT monitors from polling stations several hours after the polls are scheduled to open. This report can address several central questions for the voting process.⁶² The report of the vote count can also include answers to several qualitative questions relevant to the voting and counting processes. These reports can be calculated by computer and can augment the ballot count aspect of the PVT. Moreover, the PVT itself should

be supplemented by reports from observers at polling stations that were not part of the PVT sample to produce an overall evaluation of election day events. (See *Illustration 23*.)

Following a possible press conference in the middle of the election day on qualitative issues and a press conference to release the PVT's calcu-



Illustration 22

The importance of the quick-count was demonstrated on the night of the October 1988 Chilean plebiscite when the Interior Ministry delayed announcement of the official vote tabulation, despite promises that results would be released immediately upon receipt. Some feared wholesale manipulation or even nullification of the

results. The release of two separate PVT results by opposition parties and a nonpartisan group helped convince key Pinochet supporters, including pro-regime party leaders and members of the ruling *junta*, to acknowledge that the "No" campaign was victorious. The Interior Ministry ultimately released the results at 2 a.m., six hours after the polls closed.⁶⁰



Illustration 23

In Peru's April 1995 elections, Transparencia mobilized a monitoring effort for thousands of voting stations. Within the overall effort, a number of stations were included in the PVT. All PVT monitors made three reports. The first report, transmitted in the late morning, covered questions about the voting

station arrangements, such as whether the stations were in the proper location, had adequate staff and materials, provided secret voting facilities, etc. Transparencia conducted an early afternoon press conference to report on these matters, which helped to establish the organization's visibility and to distinguish it from exit polling efforts. A second report was made upon conclusion of the count and a third, more comprehensive report, was made the day after the election.

W

⁶⁰ See L. Garber and G. Cowan, "The Virtues of Parallel Vote Tabulations," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol 4, No. 2, (Washington, DC: April 1993). Reprinted by permission of the Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁶¹ See below, *Section Y, Post-Election Reporting*, for further definition and explanation of qualitative assessments.

⁶² See Appendix III for a sample reporting form on qualitative issues.

lation of election results, your organization may choose to turn to developing a post-election statement, perhaps an interim statement, and then a final report of the election. These activities are discussed below in *Section Y, Post-Election Reporting*.



Post-Election Developments

The days following an election are often filled with uncertainty, which may be caused by delays in the release of election results, incomplete information about election results, unresolved challenges pending in the complaint system, rumors about what will happen after the results are announced (i.e., riots or oppression), etc. In a post-election environment, uncertainty raises the level of tension and in severe situations can result in serious breaches of election procedures or even violence.

You can minimize uncertainty and levels of tension by monitoring post-election developments in addition to the tabulation process. As indicated above, specific activities that deserve monitors' attention include:

- 1 the process of filing and resolving complaints or other disputes;
- 2 the announcement of provisional and final results;
- 3 the general reaction to the results by key institutions such as the government, the military, the media and the defeated political parties/candidates; and
- 4 the installation of elected officials and the implementation of successful referendum issues.

You should be vigilant for various specific threats to a fair process, including:

- 1 failure to comply with laws and procedures that control reviewing complaints, tabulating results, announcing results and installing elected officials (e.g., by missing deadlines, by

employing irregular decisionmaking procedures, or by improperly excluding or including individuals from monitoring or participating in hearings or rulings, etc.);

- 2 reprisals or threats directed at citizens for having participated in the election or for having voted for a particular electoral contestant;
- 3 pressure placed on the election officials to alter the true election results; and
- 4 media bias that tends to indicate the media is producing news coverage that facilitates public acceptance of a fraudulent result.

You should concentrate on problems (whether merely rumored, reported in the media, or officially filed through a complaint mechanism) that appear to be "significant" (i.e., those that indicate a systematic pattern of intentional manipulation or that are likely to materially affect the outcome of the election). Your plan for monitoring the post-election period should include making a list of priority issues you wish to investigate and preparing special teams to conduct the investigations.⁶³

You should pay close attention to the *conduct of election officials* during this period. As with the functions of the pre-election period, election officials that are engaged in reviewing complaints and disputes, announcing provisional and official results, and installing victorious candidates have a duty to comply with the election law. This means they must treat all complaints fairly and objectively. They must also exercise diligence in completing their duties in a timely manner. For example, allegations of serious voting irregularities should not be allowed to languish in the complaints process until the election results have already been determined. Complying with the laws also means these officials must certify and announce the official results and install the winning candidates into office, notwithstanding any personal preferences to the contrary.

Official rulings may also deserve special monitoring. Evaluate any nullification of results, alterations to preliminary results, major delays in making rulings and, in extreme cases, a call for new or complementary elections.

⁶³ See *Section S, Election Campaign on Enforcement and the Review Process* and on *Specific Monitoring Techniques*, for discussions relevant to such investigations.

Finally, keep a close watch on the level of transparency afforded by election officials. During this extremely sensitive phase of the election process, you should note whether officials have changed or restricted, without justification, the access of monitors to various activities.

You should also consider monitoring the *conduct of other institutions*, including political parties, military and paramilitary factions, and the media. You should actively seek information from these institutions regarding the election. It is useful to know how they viewed the process and how they intend to react to expected results. For example, you might ask representatives of the military whether they would accept election results that declared an opposition candidate the winner.

Also, these institutions probably recorded events during the process that would complement your own findings. For example, they may possess information about an alleged irregularity that occurred in

an area where you had no monitors. You should ask them for any documentation they may have, the names of individuals who were involved or witnesses and relevant the dates and places.

During the post-election period, your monitoring organization may find itself in a position to *mediate disputes*. By virtue of having collected credible information about the quality of the election and the election results, and/or because you are perceived by contesting parties as impartial, professional and fair, you may be in a position to help resolve disputes and reduce the incidence of violence. You should be aware that anyone involved in mediation begins to cross the line between independent, detached observing and active participation in the process. On the other hand, you may decide that mediating disputes is an appropriate use of your organization's information and position, and that it will not impede your ability to achieve your future goals.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ See Section Z, *Final Considerations*.