

# PART 5

## Post-Election Activities

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### Post-Election Reporting

Sharing information is a practice common to any successful monitoring activity in the post-election period. As noted in the previous section, a major source of tension in the post-election period is *uncertainty*, which is largely the result of incomplete or inaccurate information. Therefore, your efforts to collect and report accurate, balanced information can serve an important first step to combat uncertainty and enhance prospects for a peaceful and legitimate election. Your reporting may also contribute to the acceptance of legitimate election results or, in the case of a significantly flawed process, discourage approval of the results.

Your methodology for collecting information should include interviewing officials, political party representatives, independent observers and witnesses who are related to the issue or event in any way. It is particularly important that you seek to establish evidence or testimony that substantiates or discredits reports. If you fail to scrutinize your own observations or other reports on which

you plan to base your analysis, you may find that your reports and future activities (discussed in the following section) are given little credence.

Sharing information is a two-way process. Whereas the previous sections have described collecting and analyzing information, this section concerns whether and how the information should be disseminated.<sup>65</sup>

**TYPES OF REPORTS** After the voting and counting processes, you can distribute information that you have collected in a variety of forms and at different times. (See *sample reports in Appendix IV*)

A *post-election statement* is a short (no more than a few pages) written summary of your activities and, if you choose to include them, your findings and evaluations. In some cases, recommendations about how to remedy disputes or reform the process may be added. You should issue a post-election statement soon after the votes have been counted (usually within 48 hours) in order to help the voters and political parties evaluate the process and to ensure that your information does not lose its newsworthy

<sup>65</sup> See also Section L., Public Information.

quality by the passing of too much time. It is especially useful in order to make an immediate and forceful point about a particular electoral event or issue. Monitoring groups commonly issue the preliminary statement before official results have been certified.

An *interim statement*, which is generally longer than the post-election statement, serves to provide more detailed explanations about your findings or conclusions or about continuing events (e.g., unsettled disputes, resolution of certain problems, fears of impending improprieties, etc.). It typically is published after the post-election statement but before the more comprehensive (and time consuming) final report.

When issuing either a post-election or interim statement, you should emphasize that the contents are preliminary. By expressly acknowledging that these reports are not definitive or complete, you can release valuable information in a timely manner while preserving your right to amend your findings at a later date, if necessary. This practice helps protect your credibility in the event your findings prove to be premature or inaccurate.

You can correct any initial inaccuracies and provide further details regarding previously incomplete information in your *final report* (or *comprehensive report*). This report, which you may release weeks or even months after an election, should provide all information that is relevant to understanding the election and your activities, including any final reflections or recommendations you believe appropriate.

*Verbal reports*<sup>66</sup> typically provide a strong complement to written reports, although they need not be delivered together. Verbal reports, which can be prepared in less time than their written counterparts, are particularly useful when you need to convey an immediate message or reaction to current events. Also, the immediacy and interactive nature of verbal reports enable you to emphasize important points and answer questions from your audience.

### ANALYZING INFORMATION AND ISSUING REPORTS

A post-election report represents a high-profile opportunity to enhance the credibility and influence of your organization but only if the information you present is accurate, objective and verifiable. Therefore you should take precautions to distinguish between facts and impressions based on impartial judgments. This does not mean, however, that impressions cannot influence your overall evaluation of an election.

The *quantitative indicators* such as vote tallies, preliminary vote counts and participation rates do not, by themselves, provide enough information to evaluate the process or assure the integrity of the election results. Therefore, you should try to provide a qualitative component to your reports.

To make a *qualitative assessment*, first you must attempt to evaluate, somewhat subjectively, the nature of a given process. (See Definition 13.) For example, at the end of an election-day checklist for a particular voting station, monitors often record their overall assessment of the voting process. To do so, they might be asked to characterize the process as having: (a) no problems; (b) minor, insignificant problems; (c) significant problems of indeterminate effect; or (d) serious problems that invalidate the local voting.

Second, and more important, you must try to determine the cumulative effect of your quantitative and qualitative analyses when considered together. This determination requires that you evaluate the effect of individual findings or analy-



Definition 13

### qual•i•ta•tive as•sess•ment

A *qualitative assessment* results from an analysis that uses both subjective and relative considerations.

<sup>66</sup> See also Section L., *Public Information* regarding personal contacts.

ses relative to each other as well as to the overall political context in which the election transpired. (See *Illustration 24*.)

You must also decide to whom you will distribute your reports.<sup>67</sup> Potential recipients include government officials, members of independent review authorities (such as judges), political party leaders, other election observers and the media. Next you must determine what medium you will employ to communicate your message.

You might choose to send a letter to responsible authorities and provide a copy to interested individuals and the media. This method may be used for all three types of reports described above. The publicity you receive may be enhanced if you release the information at a press conference. A press conference underscores your findings in a very public venue and provides an opportunity for the media to take photographs or videotape and to ask specific questions.

If you choose to issue a public statement, the timing is a critical issue. For example, if you release a premature statement on election day that identifies procedural irregularities, you may discourage citizens from voting. On the other

hand, if you make no statement, despite your knowledge of serious irregularities, you may encourage election officials or partisans to continue acting with impunity.

Once the polls close, you may receive pressure to make a definitive statement as quickly as possible, regardless of whether you have completed your data collection and analysis. If you issue a statement based on incomplete information, you must emphasize the preliminary nature of the report and you should announce your intention to release subsequent statements. The better practice is to collect information from a significant portion of the country, however long this may take, before issuing a statement evaluating election-day activities.



## Final Considerations

Once a successful monitoring operation has been conducted, you may want to consider whether to continue functioning, perhaps with a different mandate, or whether to disband, having accomplished the purpose for which the group or coalition was established.



**Illustration 24**

Suppose that intimidation marred election day proceedings in one town where you monitored the voting. How will you analyze this problem?

1. Attempt to *quantify*, objectively, how many votes were affected. Was it 10 votes or 1,000 votes that were affected?
2. Note the degree to which the intimidation affected the election relative to (or compared to) any other problems you observed (such as fraud or voter confusion). Did voters disregard the intimidation so that it had no effect, or were they completely terrified such that the effect (e.g., voters refrained from voting) was significant?
3. Consider how important the problem is in the context of the prevailing political, historical and economic environment. Was this intimidation extremely unusual (as it might be in a long-established and peaceful democracy) or commonplace (as might be the case in a country that recently concluded a civil war)?
4. Determine the degree to which this problem may have affected the results within the constituency. Did this intimidation *materially affect the outcome of the election*? If the voters had not been intimidated, might a different candidate have won?

<sup>67</sup> See also Section L., *Public Information*.

The following factors may be relevant to your decision:

- 1 An election does not, by itself, guarantee the conditions required to secure a democratic political system or to establish the processes of a free society in the consciousness and behavior of the citizenry; nor does it end the transition period;
- 2 Nonpartisan groups are necessary to invigorate civil society, to establish mediating institutions that mobilize and articulate the people's will and to promote good government and respect for human rights; and
- 3 The networks of people that were established to monitor an election can be transformed to accomplish other goals essential to strengthening the democratic system.
- 4 evaluating the performance of legislators;
- 5 monitoring civil and human rights matters;
- 6 enhancing the participation of under-represented or minority sectors, such as women or ethnic groups, in the political process;
- 7 monitoring media fairness concerning treatment of political parties and contemporary policy issues;
- 8 promoting responsible and honest government; or
- 9 promoting dialogue between citizens at the local and national levels.

The challenges also are significant. Without an election on the horizon, funds to pay for support staff and office space may disappear. The willingness of individuals to volunteer their time and energy also may dissipate. Thus, to survive, an organization must choose a mandate that will respond to an established need, take advantage of available resources and inspire the continued association of volunteers with the effort.

To find a focus for post-election activities your organization may look to other activities, such as:

- 1 analyzing or advocating reform of the election law or other laws and policies, including those concerning citizen participation and transparency in government;
- 2 conducting education programs on civic responsibility and democratic processes;
- 3 furnishing technical assistance to legislators (and their staff) and government officials;

There remains to be discussed the question about what monitoring personnel do when election monitoring is finished. Some may want to participate in government. All countries need talented and honest public servants, particularly during a period of major transition. Members of your monitoring group who have demonstrated these virtues in the course of their monitoring efforts may be welcomed in official government positions and in public life. In order to protect your organization's reputation for impartiality, it is prudent to develop a policy that determines whether these personnel should relinquish their official connections to the organization.

On the other hand, as noted above, you should not forget that independent, impartial civic organizations can and should play an important role in the life of a democracy. Therefore, while some leaders and members of your organization contemplate working directly for the government or political parties, they should remember that assistance will also be needed to support newly elected democratic institutions and to prepare for future elections.