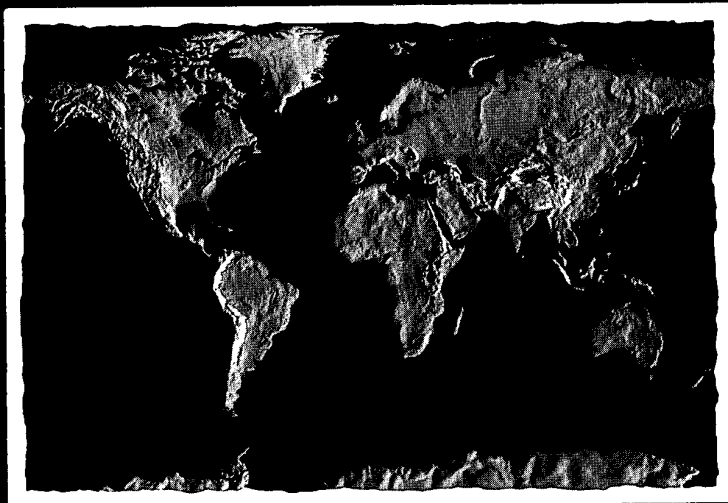


# NDI



## HANDBOOK

# How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections

An A To Z Guide

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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## HANDBOOK

### How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections AN A TO Z GUIDE

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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The pages of the *Handbook* tell the stories and lessons of domestic monitoring efforts around the world. Therefore, NDI wishes to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of the many NDI staff and volunteer consultants who helped conduct, analyze and report on those experiences. Most important, NDI recognizes the commitment, and, in many cases, courage of the thousands of civic activists who have monitored elections in their countries as a means to promote and sustain democratic practices and values.

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## NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**T**he National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) was established in 1983. By working with political parties, civic organizations, parliaments, and other institutions, NDI seeks to promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions in new and emerging democracies. The Institute is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has a staff of 120 with field offices in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union.

NDI has supported the development of democratic institutions in more than 60 countries. Programs focus on six major areas:

**Political Party Training:** NDI conducts multipartisan training seminars in political development with a broad spectrum of democratic parties. NDI draws international experts to forums where party members learn first-hand the techniques of organization, communication and constituent contact.

**Election Processes:** NDI provides technical assistance for political parties, nonpartisan associations and election authorities to conduct voter and civic education campaigns and to develop election monitoring programs. The Institute has also organized more than 25 major international observer delegations.

**Strengthening Legislatures:** NDI organizes seminars focusing on legislative procedures, staffing, research information, constituent services, committee structures and the function and role of party caucuses. NDI programs also promote access to the legislative process by citizen groups and the public at large.

**Local Government:** NDI provides technical assistance on a range of topics related to the processes of local governance, including division of responsibility between mayors and municipal councils, and between local and national authorities. NDI programs also promote enhanced communication between local officials and their constituents.

**Civic Organization:** NDI supports and advises nonpartisan groups and political parties engaged in civic and voter education programs. NDI programs work with civic organizations to enhance their organizational capabilities.

**Civil-Military Relations:** NDI brings together military and political leaders to promote dialogue and establish mechanisms for improving civil-military relations.

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**his *Handbook* is designed to assist domestic civic organizations in monitoring elections. Most of the principles and advice presented in the *Handbook* are also applicable to monitoring efforts that are organized by political parties or, for that matter, by international observers.

Establishing domestic monitoring capabilities provides valuable safeguards for a fair election process. Equally important, the development of such mechanisms contributes to the evolution of a more active civil society.

The *Handbook* draws upon the experiences of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). Since 1986, NDI has conducted 75 election-related programs in more than 30 countries. In observing elections, NDI has trained, worked with and relied upon the findings of various domestic monitoring operations. While the work of domestic election monitors is often overshadowed by international observers, its impact on the process is frequently more profound and longlasting.

The import and relevance of international observers in encouraging electoral participation and safeguarding the credibility of electoral processes have expanded dramatically since 1980. Indeed, international observers are now routinely invited to monitor "first" or "transition" elections, and their presence in many countries has contributed to the peaceful resolution of longstanding conflicts.

The emphasis on international observers, however, may obscure the significant role played by domestic, nonpartisan monitoring groups in guaranteeing electoral fairness. Election monitoring by domestic groups, of course, is not a new phenomenon; election officials and political contestants have long sought to develop and implement mechanisms for ensuring fair elections in their countries. In recent years, however, domestic monitoring has grown more sophisticated and now involves actors other than election officials and contestants.

The implications of this development are twofold. First, enhanced domestic monitoring efforts by nonpartisan groups contribute to more genuine election processes by encouraging fairer campaign practices and a more informed electorate, as well as by reducing the possibility of fraud and irregularities on election day. Second, domestic election monitoring can develop and strengthen institutions essential to the sustainability of a democratic political system. Monitoring efforts help citizens learn organizational skills necessary to participate actively and effectively in the political life of a country between elections. Groups that have formed to monitor elections have often developed into broader-based civic organizations, contributing to the development of civil society. This, in turn, has enhanced the prospects for greater political discourse, citizen involvement in governance and heightened public confidence in government.

Domestic, nonpartisan election monitoring should not supplant election monitoring and pollwatching by political parties and candidates for office. It is in the interest of political contestants to protect their rights and the rights of their supporters, to campaign vigorously, and to guard the integrity of the voting, counting and tabulation processes. Nonpartisan monitoring complements these efforts. NDI conducts programs on election monitoring and pollwatching for political contestants as well as on nonpartisan election monitoring for civic groups. Experience in these areas clearly demonstrates the advantage for the election process when many civic and political organizations participate.

The *Handbook* comprises three sections. The first chapter provides an overview of election monitoring by domestic groups. The second chapter traces the evolution of several nonpartisan, domestic monitoring organizations with which NDI has been associated. The final chapter, which constitutes the bulk of the text, presents practical guidance for developing an effective domestic monitoring operation. Various sample reports and forms are included as appendices, all of which can be tailored to fit the circumstances of a particular election.



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This *Handbook* does not presume to provide the definitive interpretation of every election issue nor to present a complete approach to monitoring those issues. Each country is different, and every new election brings with it slightly different circumstances. Nonetheless, many common issues arise. In producing this *Handbook*, NDI has tried to put into writing some of the lessons it has learned from a decade of working with domestic election monitors. As you respond to the circumstances and issues surrounding elections in your country, we hope that you find the principles, issues, activities, guidelines and illustrations in this *Handbook* useful.

Readers of the *Handbook* are encouraged to contact NDI with any comments, suggestions or requests.

Kenneth D. Wollack  
*President, National Democratic Institute*  
June 1995