

Sample-Based Election Observation and Vote Tabulation

MANUAL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN AFRICA



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ACRONYMS

CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CODEO	Coalition for Domestic Election Observers of Ghana
CS	Constituency Supervisors
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EC	Electoral Commission
ECZ	Electoral Commission Zimbabwe
EISA	Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa
ELOG	Election Observation Group of Kenya
EMB	Electoral Management Body
FODEP	Foundation for Democratic Progress of Zambia
FPTP	First Past The Post
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPP	New Patriotic Party
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
RC	Regional Coordinators
SBO	Sample-Based Election Observation and Results Tabulation
SMS	Short Message Service
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZESN	Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network

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Elections are a celebration of fundamental human rights, more specifically civil and political rights, and a pillar of democratic societies. In democratic societies, citizens have the basic right and duty to monitor political and governance processes in their country. One way of putting that right into practice is by observing elections and issuing opinions evaluating the quality of electoral processes. Election observation therefore contributes to the overall promotion and protection of those rights and by playing an important role in enhancing confidence in the electoral process, offers demonstrable support to the democratic process.

The use of statistical methods, such as random sampling, in election observation started in the 1980s as parallel results tabulations emerged as a new tool in electoral observation, especially useful in contexts where election results are regularly disputed. It has been implemented in more than thirty countries around the world including the Philippines, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, Georgia, Chile, Indonesia, Peru and Lebanon. In Africa, SBOs have been conducted in Mozambique (2003, 2004, 2008, and 2009), Zimbabwe (2007), Ghana, Malawi and Zambia (all in 2008), and Kenya (2010).

By bringing statistical soundness to electoral observation, the parallel tabulation of results added a new element to the monitoring of elections and, arguably, has made election observation more effective and incisive.

Traditionally, domestic observation of polling day, particularly the methodology of observer deployment, takes into account political, logistical, and geographical considerations. However, it rarely allows for statements with statistical validity for the whole election. With the introduction of statistical methods, monitoring elections takes on a different dimension, ensuring that the election outcome reflects the will of the voter. This marriage of traditional domestic election observation with statistical methods has given birth to the concept of **Sample-Based Election Observation and Results Tabulation (SBO)**.

SBOs give election observation statistical validity and have the ability to project the findings of a small percentage of polling stations onto the whole of the polling process, including election results, within a small margin of error.

This Manual is aimed at civil society groups in Africa who may want to conduct sample-based observation and/or results tabulation. It provides key information that will assist them in deciding whether to conduct an SBO or not, and if they do, will guide them in putting together the key pieces to implement an effective SBO.

We recognise that there is already sufficient knowledge and capacity in Africa to design, plan, and implement sound and solid SBOs, and every African country that goes through that experience adds an additional layer of lessons and best practices for the next case. Users of the Manual will find useful case descriptions from African countries where SBOs have been conducted, namely Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Malawi, Zambia and Kenya. These case studies provide a variety of experiences and approaches that hopefully will help future SBO initiatives select the most adequate methodology for their context.

This Manual will not preclude the need for focused technical assistance by experts or experienced institutions for those organisations wishing to carry out an SBO activity for the first time. Nonetheless, it provides enough guidance to allow organisations to recognise and identify the internal capacities they already possess and what outside expert assistance they will require.

A Sample-Based Election Observation and Results Tabulation is the observation of polling day events and activities at polling stations and an estimation of final results of an election based on the collection and aggregation of election results obtained at polling station level with a solid level of statistical validity. The observation and collection of data can be complete (all polling stations) or based on a random sample

(randomly selected polling stations). SBOs are conducted in order to increase transparency of, and trust in, the electoral process, especially the election results, as a measure of civil society monitoring of the electoral process, and also as a conflict management tool. SBOs are also referred to as Parallel Vote Tabulations (PVTs).

SBOs require that certain key pre-requisites be in place in the country where they will be conducted. Without these pre-existing requisites, conducting an SBO becomes virtually impossible. Such basic requirements are:

- **Legal framework:**

SBOs are primarily an election observation tool. Therefore, election observation activities must be allowed by law if an SBO is to be implemented by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). In some countries Election Management Bodies (EMBs) interpret the parallel tabulation of results by CSOs as a parallel announcement of results which, by law in those countries, only the EMB is authorised to do. Therefore, the legal status of that component of the SBO is often questioned.

The electoral legislation must provide for the votes to be counted and announced at polling stations level as the SBO depends largely on access to tally sheets at the polling station.

- **Key Information:**

Information on the number and location of polling stations must be available to the CSOs as this is a

vital piece of information for the planning and execution of an SBO.

- **Solid network of domestic observers countrywide**

SBOs require hundreds, if not thousands, of observers and highly complex logistical operations. The recruitment, training, deployment, and supervision of such high numbers of observers can only be accomplished if there is a well-structured organisation on the ground with a significant presence throughout the country.

- **Basic communications infrastructure**

The deployment of observers, wherever the sample dictates they should go, and the collection and transmission of data in a timely manner, requires the existence of basic communications infrastructure, such as roads, cell-phone networks, telephone/fax networks that can be used on their own or in combination with each other.

Before a decision is made on whether to conduct an SBO, a pre-assessment is required to determine the existence of the above-mentioned

basic requirements. In the absence of one or more of those requirements, conducting an SBO may not be viable.

In addition to assessing the existence of the pre-requisites, the pre-assessment must also:

- Analyse the political environment and the electoral history of the country to determine the value-added of conducting an SBO, given that SBOs make more sense in countries with a history of contested or fraudulent election results, and/or in the case of an anticipated close or controversial election.
- Identify potential partners, such as funders and additional CSOs interested in joining in the SBO operation

- Examine the level of local technical capacity and determine the extent to which outside technical assistance will be required, especially in the area of Information Technology.

From a logistical and technical point of view, the pre-assessment is an essential tool to map logistical needs and challenges, and identify data transmission and processing options. Finally, the pre-assessment must make an estimate of the costs involved, and based on all the information above, make a recommendation on whether to conduct the SBO or not.

Should a decision be made to conduct an SBO, activity design should be carried out in close consultation with all implementing partners (domestic election observation network) to ensure buy-in, ownership, knowledge transfer, and future sustainability.

The design of an SBO activity should include:

- 1) Selection of the observation method (complete or sample-based) and whether to include results tabulation.
- 2) Based on the chosen method, the size of the observation operation (number of polling stations to be covered).
- 3) Identification of the required human resources, from coordinators to technical staff to supervisors and to observers, and how and where to recruit them.
- 4) Definition of the method of data transmission (by fax, voice phone call, plain text message, coded text message) and the technical requirements of the selected option, including supporting equipment, such as computers, printers, cell-phones, etc.
- 5) Identification of training needs for support staff, supervisors and observers and definition of training methodology.
- 6) Detailed implementation plan and timeline.
- 7) Detailed budget.

Experience shows that six months is the minimum required period for a successful implementation of an SBO, from design to the production of final results reports. Time allocation for every step of the operation depends on the realities of each country, resources available, and timeline of the electoral process itself.

1. *Implementation chronogram*

The main implementation steps of an SBO operation are:

- a. Setting up of the co-ordination office and team (also known as the SBO Command Centre), which must include a General Coordinator and a Quality Control Expert. Having a specific overall Observer Co-ordinator who liaises between the SBO Centre and the observers on the ground through their regional supervisors is also a good practice.
- b. Setting up of the technical team, which must include an experienced statistician, an IT expert with database and programming knowledge and data entry operators, if required.
- c. Collection of key information, such as a full list and location of all polling stations, and their code numbers, if available. Names and order of appearance in the ballot paper of all candidates are also important.
- d. If using sampling methodology, drawing of the random sample to determine number and location of polling stations. The random sample may be simple or stratified. The General Co-ordinator and her/his team must work together with the statistician to determine what type of sample (simple or stratified) is most appropriate. If geographically stratified, the statistician must have access to the geographical distribution of all polling stations.
- e. Assessment of the accessibility (both physical and in terms of communications) of the randomly-selected sites. It is especially important to have maps of cell-phone coverage, road networks, and natural geographical obstacles, such as rivers, lakes, mountains, desert, etc.
- f. Design of the transmission and communications methodology and technology.
- g. Setting up of the required technical infrastructure, such as the IT structure (equipment, software, programme, database), and if applicable, making the necessary arrangements with service providers to manage transmission of text messages in bulk.
- h. Design and setting up of an observer supervision and communication structure, including reporting lines. The use of a pyramid approach to supervision with a layer of regional/sub-national supervisors between national co-ordination and observers on the ground has proven to be a successful approach.
- i. Development of SBO training materials, training programme and schedule. This includes manuals, forms, "cheat sheets", etc. Training manuals for supervisors should be more comprehensive than the ones for field observers.
- j. Recruitment and training of supervisors and observers. Cascade training has been quite successful in countries where SBOs have been implemented, but attention needs to be paid to consistency of training at all levels. Where feasible, the training of observers should include a test of the text messaging system.
- k. Deployment of supervisors and observers. Observers should be informed of the location of their assigned polling stations very close to

polling day (around 48 hours) and deployed, if possible, only on the day before polling day.

- i. Collection and processing of polling station data. Depending on specific country regulations, observers should collect data from the polling stations using forms specially designed for that purpose (and the forms used to collect results should mirror as much as possible the official tally sheets), or if allowed by law, collect a copy of the official tally sheet.
- m. Verification of data quality and validity. As data from the field is sent by the observers and processed into the database, regular verification by the General Co-ordinator and the Quality Control expert is crucial for the timely detection of problems and their correction.
- n. Production of database-generated SBO results reports. Once all the data has been processed, be it from the reports sent by the observers during the day on several aspects of polling day operations, or be it from the final polling stations results, the General Co-ordinator should request database-generated reports (which could be numeric or graphical) for internal analysis and discussion.
- o. Publication of SBO reports. Most countries have legislation giving the Electoral Management Body the sole mandate of publishing/ announcing the official election results. SBO results, especially the parallel tabulation of results, are not the results of an election in the sense mentioned in the laws. Therefore, releasing SBO results (especially results from the parallel tabulation) publicly is not the same as announcing election results. It is just one more dimension of election observation and at most is a statistical projection of results. However, given the sensitivity of this issue, it is advisable that groups carrying out SBOs share their results with the EMB as soon as they are available, but only make public the results of parallel tabulations once the EMB has announced the official results.

2. Human Resources and Functions

The leadership and supervisory structure of an SBO operation depends on the specificities of each organisation conducting it. However, experience shows that there are key functions

and human resources that need to be present for a successful SBO:

a. Co-ordination

- i. General Co-ordinator
- ii. Observer Supervisor
- iii. Training Supervisor

b. Technical staff:

- i. Quality control supervisor
- ii. Statistician and/or social scientist with solid experience in sampling methodologies
- iii. Political scientist with strong knowledge of electoral processes in the country, including voting patterns
- iv. IT expert, with a focus on programming and database management
- v. Data entry operators

c. Trainers - the number of trainers depends on the training methodology, number of trainees and location/geographical spread of trainees.

d. Observers - the number of observers depends on the number of polling stations included in the SBO. It is advisable to recruit more observers than those actually required in order to compensate for any observers that may withdraw from the exercise before polling day. The observers should reside near the area where they are going to be deployed.

3. Selection of observation method: complete or sample-based

a. For small constituencies like municipalities or single-member constituencies in majority/plurality electoral systems, where a random sample with an acceptable margin of error will require almost as many sample points as the total number of polling stations, a complete observation and results tabulation is advisable. In this case, results will be collected from all polling stations within the constituency and can be easily tabulated locally and results will be almost immediate, i.e in the following six to twelve hours after the closing of the polls.

b. For larger constituencies, such as in national elections for president and single national constituency elections for parliament in

proportional representation electoral systems, SBOs are more common. However, where election results are expected to be very close, within the margin of error, and financial and human resources permitting, a full parallel tabulation of the results of all polling stations may be advisable.

4. Sampling

- a. When a random sample of all polling stations is selected as the observation methodology, the decision on the sampling method and the size of the sample will depend on resources available, both human and financial, and the accuracy of results desired.
- b. A statistician and a political scientist with a strong knowledge of the history of electoral results and voting patterns in the country should assist the organisation/s in charge of conducting the SBO in deciding whether to use a simple random sample or a geographically stratified one, as well as the appropriate margin of error. Once these decisions are made, the statistician should draw the sample.
- c. For example, for a universe of 15,000 polling stations, and a confidence level of 95%, a sample of 2,070 will provide a margin of error of $\pm 2\%$, a sample of 3,323 will result in a margin of error of $\pm 1.5\%$, and a sample of 5,855 will produce a margin of error of $\pm 1\%$.
- d. In order to determine the margin of error of a given sample size, or to determine the size of the sample based on a desired margin of error, several web-based tools can be utilised. Web-based tools can also be used to extract the sample from the total number of polling stations.

5. Methodologies for transmission and processing of data/results

- a. The data transmission and processing methods and related technologies must be chosen based on the availability of technical options, the quality of communication in the country, and the size of the country. Several approaches have been used in Africa, especially concerning the transmission of data from the polling stations to the central tabulation/processing site.
- b. The simplest methodology to collect and transmit polling station data is to copy them

onto a form and have them delivered to the tabulation centre. This method is cost-effective and works well in very small constituencies or in very small countries with good road infra-structures.

- c. For larger territories with less developed road infrastructures, but with reliable telephone or cell-phone networks, a better option is to use these means of communication to transmit data. This can be done in two main ways:

- i. The observers or their direct supervisors “phone in” the data, which are then inserted into a database to be tabulated and produce reports. It is a lengthy, cumbersome process and requires many phone operators to take the calls from the observers and also a number of data entry operators to insert the data into the database.

This option has a larger scope for human error, as data go through several capture and transmission steps.

- ii. Observers send data through cell-phone short messages, written in a coded format (see example in the Mozambique case study). These messages are sent to a special number, received and collected by a central server, and retransmitted through the internet to the SBO Command Centre, where they are decoded using a special programme. This programme needs to be (re)written for every new SBO operation. For the reception of the text messages by a single server, freely available software, such as Frontlines SMS, can be used. This is a more technically sophisticated, and also more technically complex option, but much faster and less demanding in terms of human resources. It also reduces opportunities for human error.

6. Training of supervisors, observers and support staff

- a. Given the complexity of an SBO operation and the number of people involved, consistent training is a crucial component in the implementation process. A training manual for each personnel category (observers,

supervisors, and technical support staff) needs to be developed.

- b. The training of observers, in particular, given their numbers, needs to be very accurate and consistent. Cascade training is the most effective method for training observers, who are scattered around the country, but it requires supervision in order to ensure that all observers receive the same information and instructions. This is done through a Train-the-Trainer approach, where a core group of people are trained in the same methodology and content and in turn train the observers in their locality.
- c. Training of observers should take place very close to election day in order to ensure that information stays fresh in the observers' minds. It is also important to include a test run of the communications systems and of the software to ensure that all components are functional and that the observers and their supervisors understand how the systems work.
- d. The individual deployment plan for observers should only be made known to them the day before they are deployed for security and integrity reasons, and observers should be deployed only on the eve of election day.

7. Data collection and transmission

- a. Data collection and transmission is the most vital component of the SBO process, but it is also the most vulnerable given the hundreds of observers and other staff involved and the potential for human error and technological failure.
- b. Data is collected from the moment polling stations open until the results are posted. Therefore observers must stay at their designated polling stations from the beginning to the end of the voting operations. Observers should collect information about activity in the polling station as with any regular observation activity: opening time, materials availability, polling staff, security forces presence, ballot secrecy, accessibility, voters' roll, closing, and counting, and any incidents and irregularities during voting operations, among others. Lastly, after the counting, observers must accurately collect the final results as posted at the polling station. The final results must include total

number of registered voters, total number of voters, votes for each candidate/party, and number of null votes.

- c. Data must be collected through special forms (see the Ghana and Mozambique case studies) one for voting operations and another for the results. Whatever the data transmission method, these forms must be sent to the SBO Command Centre as soon as possible. It is crucial that observers report any irregularities that may have compromised the integrity of the final results such as legitimate voters prevented from voting, ballot box stuffing, undue nullification of votes, etc.
- d. Results must be transmitted as soon as they are available through the approved method. It is important, however, to have a plan B, especially in case of cell-phone communications failure. Other information must also be relayed to the SBO Command Centre throughout the day to be tabulated and used for the SBO Observer Group to release regular statements throughout the day on the progress of voting operations.

8. Data quality control

- a. Data quality control mechanisms need to be set up regardless of the data transmission method.

The less sophisticated and the more dependent on the human factor the method is, the stricter the quality control mechanisms need to be.

- b. For SBO operations that require the calling in of results by phone call and manual data entry into a database, quality control must include checking of called-in results against the original tally sheets filled in by the observers at the polling station, inclusion of formulae in the database programme to detect and reject partial numbers that do not add up, etc.
- c. Where coded text messages are used, the text message decoding programme must be able to identify wrongly-coded messages and notify the senders.
- d. The data quality supervisor must also constantly analyse the partial reports the database produces as new data are processed in order to detect geographical inconsistencies in voter turnout, percentage of votes for a particular candidate/party, etc.

9. Results Reports and Report Publication

- a. Several types of reports can be produced from an SBO operation:
 - reports on the progress and quality of voting operations (percentage of polling stations that opened on time, percentage of polling stations without sufficient materials, etc.),
 - reports on voter turnout throughout the day,
 - reports on turnout by gender breakdown, and;
 - most importantly the report on the final tabulation of results.The last report should include:
 - number of polling stations covered, margin of error, final voter turnout (%), final results per candidate/party (%), and percentage of null votes.

These reports can be in the format of a table or graph. The tabulation report must also contain an analysis of the results, and

comments on any noteworthy inconsistencies and irregularities detected by the SBO, such as unusually high turnouts in specific polling stations, and unusually high number of votes for a specific candidate inconsistent with the results for the same candidate in the same area, which may be indications of ballot box stuffing.

- b. Some of these reports must be published throughout polling day to provide the public and the authorities with a sound, statistically-valid assessment of how voting day operations are being conducted.
- c. The most important issue with the results tabulation report is when to release it, to whom to release it, and how to handle a report that shows significant differences with the official results, beyond the margin of error. The responses to these questions are both legal and political and should be tackled according to the legal and political context of each country. Organisations carrying out SBOs must be aware of the impact the release of their results may have on politically volatile situations and act accordingly.

7

Monitoring & Evaluation

7

SBOs are very intense and short-term activities, with very strict timelines. Therefore they require constant monitoring to ensure compliance with critical deadlines and milestones. When the SBO work-plan is developed, key milestones must be identified in order to verify whether critical building blocks are in place at every stage to allow the activity to move forward.

The involvement of hundreds of observers often spread out throughout the entire country also requires a well-established and functioning monitoring structure, with a very efficient communication mechanism, to ensure effective implementation and the ability to respond to changes on the ground.

Indicators of success must also be defined to allow an effective evaluation process to take place after activity

completion. Indicators must be both quantitative (output-related), and qualitative (outcome-related). Examples of quantitative indicators are number of observers deployed, or % of selected polling stations effectively covered. Qualitative indicators could be the differential between the SBO results and official results, level of acceptance of SBO results by main stakeholders, impact of SBO results on official results, among others.

Given the technical and logistical complexity of an SBO, a thorough evaluation exercise is always advisable to identify lessons learnt and contribute to best practices in the field of SBOs.

CASE STUDY ONE: The Ghana 2008 SBO Experience



CASE STUDY ONE:

The Ghana 2008 SBO Experience

In 2008 the Ghana Coalition for Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)¹ decided to undertake a Sample-based Observation and Parallel Vote Tabulation given the high stakes in the 2008 presidential election. Many Ghanaians and civil society organisations anticipated a close and keen contest between the two dominant political parties – the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in opposition.

The SBO by CODEO was therefore intended to help verify objectively and scientifically the accuracy of the official result of the presidential election; and give confidence to Ghanaians that the official results announced by the EC truly reflect the will of the Ghanaian people.

The Sampling Methodology

With a total of 20,000 polling stations, CODEO decided to adopt a stratified random sampling technique for two reasons: (1) the fear of possible patterns in the list of polling stations from the Electoral Commission (EC) that could potentially affect the representativeness of the sample if a systematic sampling technique were applied; and (2) the desire to have observers in all 230 constituencies.

For the first level stratification (regional level), CODEO determined the proportion of each of the ten regions in the total number of polling stations in the country; then they used their proportions to determine the number of sample polling stations per region. For the second level (constituency level), CODEO determined the proportion of polling stations per constituency.

A total of 1070 polling stations were selected for the overall sample, covering over **600,000** registered voters. See Table 1 below for the regional distribution of the sample polling stations.

TABLE 1: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF POLLING STATIONS

AREA	SAMPLE		TOTAL UNIVERSE	
	NO. POLLING STATIONS	% SHARE	NO. POLLING STATIONS	% SHARE
WESTERN	115	10.7	2,240	10.7
GREATER ACCRA	125	11.7	2,457	11.7
UPPER WEST	44	4.1	854	4.1
BRONG AHAFO	120	11.2	2,382	11.3
NORTHERN	103	9.6	2,043	9.7
VOLTA	100	9.3	1,965	9.4
UPPER EAST	50	4.7	1,028	4.9
CENTRAL	93	8.7	1,763	8.4
EASTERN	135	12.6	2,609	12.4
ASHANTI	185	17.3	3,667	17.5
TOTAL	1,070	100%	21,008	100%

¹ CODEO is a voluntary federation of **34 independent**, non-partisan civil society organisations with the common agenda of safeguarding the democratic rights of Ghanaian citizens by promoting free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections.

Recruitment of Observers

CODEO relied on its broad-based civil society members to recruit the observers. As an observer profile, CODEO defined the desirable observer as a knowledgeable, committed, self-motivated and non-partisan person. CODEO's recruitments were supervised and coordinated by the CODEO Secretariat and was conducted in a cascade manner: first, at the national level, CODEO recruitment committee received, vetted and approved 30 of the nominees from member-organisations to serve as Regional Coordinators (RCs); second, the recruited RCs assisted the CODEO Secretariat in recruiting 280 Constituency Supervisors (CS) for the different regions; and lastly, the CSs, under the supervision of the RCs, assisted CODEO in recruiting 3,700 polling station observers, including the 1,070 for the OPVT at the constituency level.

Observers' Training

Before conducting training, CODEO developed three training manuals:

An **Election Observer Training Manual**, which was an administrative and training guide for the Coordinating Team, RCs and CSs, outlining the roles and responsibilities of all the project and volunteer coordination teams, and providing guidance for the recruitment and training of observers on election observation, code of conduct for observers, and communication and reporting procedures on election day.

An **SBO and Regular Observers Manual** containing guidelines on election observation, a code of conduct for SBO Election Day observers, and instructions on completing the CODEO checklist and incident forms.

The **SBO observer manual** had additional guidelines on using text messaging to transmit SBO data to the CODEO observation center.

SBO observers' training was also organised in a cascade manner at three levels: national training of trainers for 30 RCs by CODEO; 10 regional trainings were organised simultaneously for 280 CSs and facilitated by RCs and CODEO; and 30 constituency trainings organised simultaneously for over 3,700 SBO and regular observers and facilitated by CSs and supervised by RCs.

During training, special attention was paid to the SBO protocols, particularly the formulation of text message codes and their transmission via SMS to the CODEO database. Also, SBO observers were given the opportunity to practice SMS texting during the trainings as well as a simulation on the eve of the election.

Deployment of observers

Each RC was assigned a number of constituencies to coordinate. RCs from the same region chose among themselves a regional leader who coordinated their activities and served as a liaison between the RCs and the CODEO Secretariat.

SBO Observers were posted to the 1,070 randomly selected polling stations while Regular Observers were sent to strategic polling stations.

Resources for Data Transmission and Processing

CODEO set up its secretariat and SBO Centre equipped with the following facilities: 30 computers connected to the internet, 3 land line telephones; 30 cell phones, and 1 fax machine. Additionally, CODEO recruited and trained about 40 data entry clerks who, together with some CODEO staff, managed the SBO Centre on a shift basis.

Highlights of Findings

The percentage of votes received by each of the candidates as announced by the Electoral Commission of Ghana was consistent with the SBO findings, within the expected margins of error.

TABLE 2: COMPARISON BETWEEN SBO RESULTS AND EC OF GHANA RESULTS

CANDIDATE	PARTY	SBO RESULTS (%)	EC OFFICIAL RESULTS (%)
Nana Akufo-Addo	NPP	49.8	49.1
John Atta Mills	NDC	47.4	47.9
Paa Kwesi Nduom	CPP	1.3	1.3
Edward N. Mahama	PNC	0.8	0.9
Emmanuel Ansah-Antwi	DFP	0.3	0.3
Kwesi Amofo-Yeboah	Independent	0.2	0.2
Kwamena Adjei	RPD	0.1	0.1
Thomas Ward Brew	DPP	0.1	0.1

Challenges encountered and lessons learnt

According to CODEO's own assessment, the following were the main challenges they encountered in planning for and carrying out the SBO:

1. It was not easy for CODEO to win the support of some civil society organisations, which were skeptical of the OPVT effectiveness.
2. CODEO was constrained by limited financial resources.
3. The lack of internal expertise on mounting the SBO operation put substantial pressure on CODEO in terms of preparations and planning.
4. In spite of the comprehensive training, some field observers made mistakes in coding and sending text messages. Also, in some instances the data management system was jammed and messages did not arrive at the expected time.
5. Poor cellular phone network access made communication difficult as some observers had to leave their assigned polling stations to other locations, where they could get access to the cell-phone signal.

6. The uncertainties surrounding the EC's election calendar constrained CODEO in its efforts to put the necessary structures for the conduct of the SBO in place in a timely manner.
7. Getting observers to understand and accept the principle of non-partisanship in election observation was quite difficult.
8. The desire of political parties and others to get early information on the SBO result estimates greatly challenged CODEO's resolve to wait for the EC to announce its results before the release of the SBO findings.

CODEO also identified a number of lessons from their SBO experience:

1. Ensuring that SBO result estimates are not released ahead of the institution legally mandated to announce election results makes the institution conducting the SBO trustworthy.
2. Individuals with past experiences in election observation make good observers. In fact, CODEO used the cream of its pool of observers for the SBO.
3. Having enough time to undertake a well structured recruitment and training of personnel for election observation ensures effective and efficient delivery.
4. Outreach to major election stakeholders (EC, political parties, government officials, development partners) and good media publicity targeted at the general public create awareness and understanding of the SBO methodology. It also creates the necessary conditions for the acceptance of SBO results.

FIGURE 1: OBSERVER CHECKLIST

CODEO RRO CHECKLIST – 07 December 2008 Elections				PS ID 9999							
Region	ASHANTI (AS1)		Constituency	AFIGYA-SEKYERE EAST							
Polling Station Name	KOFIKROM L/A PRIMARY SCHOOL			Code	F272702						
1st TEXT – Arrival at Polling Station (Answer questions upon arrival at the polling station at 6:00 am and report immediately!)											
A	Were election officials present?	Yes (1)	No (2)	B	Were you permitted to observe?	Yes (1)	No (2)				
2nd TEXT – Setting Up of the Polling Station (Answer questions during setting up of the polling station and report at 7:30 am!)											
C	Polling agents for which presidential candidates, if any, were present? (Tick one or more)	None (0)	CPP (1)	DFP (2)	DPP (3)	NDC (4)	NPP (5)	PNC (6)	RPD (7)	Ind (8)	
D	Which items, if any, were missing (Tick one or more)	None Missing (0)	Ballot Box (1)	Ballot Paper (2)	Voters' Register (3)	Indelible Ink (4)					
		Voting Screen (5)	Validating Stamp (6)	Endorsing Ink (7)	Ink Pad (8)	Other (9)					
E	Total number of registered voters for the presidential election (according to all registers)?										
F	Number of presidential ballot papers?										
G	Were security personnel present?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
H	Was the polling station set up so that voters could mark their ballots in secret?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
J	Was the polling station accessible to persons with disabilities and the elderly?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
K	Was the presidential ballot box shown to be empty, sealed and placed in public view?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
L	Did the polling station open at 7:00 am?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
3rd TEXT – Voting (Review these questions throughout the day and answer them at the close of polls and report at 5:00 pm!)											
[If a critical incident occurs during voting immediately complete a critical incident report and send an SMS!]											
[For Questions M to T: None = 0, Few = 1 to 10, Some = 11 to 50 and Many = 51 or more]											
M	How many people were turned away and <u>not</u> permitted to vote who had voter ID cards?	None (1)	Few (2)	Some (3)	Many (4)						
N	How many people voted <u>without</u> voter ID cards? (This is allowed if their names appear on the voters' registry, but CODEO still wants to know how many people voted without voter ID cards)	None (1)	Few (2)	Some (3)	Many (4)						
P	How many people were permitted to vote <u>without</u> their names being checked on the voters' register or whose names did <u>not</u> appear on the voters' register?	None (1)	Few (2)	Some (3)	Many (4)						
Q	How many people's fingers were <u>not</u> marked with indelible ink before voting?	None (1)	Few (2)	Some (3)	Many (4)						
R	How many people's ballots were <u>not</u> stamped?	None (1)	Few (2)	Some (3)	Many (4)						
S	How many people were assisted to vote (blind, disabled, elderly)?	None (1)	Few (2)	Some (3)	Many (4)						
T	How many people were in the queue waiting to vote at 5:00 pm?	None (1)	Few (2)	Some (3)	Many (4)						
U	Was everyone in the queue at 5:00 pm permitted to vote?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
V	Overall, how would you describe any problems that may have occurred during the voting process?					Major (1)	Minor (2)	None (3)			
4th TEXT – Counting (Answer questions during counting and report immediately after counting!)											
W	Were more ballot papers found in the presidential ballot box than voters who cast ballots?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
X	Did <u>any</u> polling agent request a recount of the presidential ballots?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
Y	Did <u>all</u> polling agents present sign the declaration of results for the presidential election?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
Z	Do <u>you</u> agree with the vote count for the presidential election?					Yes (1)	No (2)				
5th TEXT – Presidential Vote Count (Record official figures and report immediately after counting!)											
AA	Spoilt ballot papers			FF	DFP/Emmanuel Ansah-Antwi						
BB	Rejected ballot papers			GG	DPP/Thomas Ward Brew						
CC	NPP/Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo			HH	CPP/Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom						
DD	PNC/Dr. Edward Nasigrie Mahama			JJ	RPD/Kwamena Adjei						
EE	NDC/Prof. John Evans Atta Mills			KK	Ind./Kwesi Amofo-Yeboah						
Observer First Name		Surname		Arrival Time		Departure Time		Signature			

FIGURE 2: OBSERVER TEXTING SHEET

CODEO – RRO TEXTING CHEAT SHEET

Send all Text Messages to 1419

Text messages must be sent in the proper format or the computer will not understand!

SPACES DO NOT MATTER. YOU CAN INSERT SPACES AS YOU LIKE. ALSO, YOU CAN DROP LEADING ZEROS. FOR EXAMPLE, "0010" IS THE SAME AS "10"

☎ 1st TEXT – Arrival at Polling Station *(Answer questions upon arrival at the polling station at 6:00 am and report immediately!!)*

All text messages must begin with the letters "PS"	Polling Station ID (PS ID) (must be a four-digit number)	Answer to Question A (must be a 1 or 2)	Answer to Question B (must be a 1 or 2)	At Symbol indicating additional message (Optional)	Additional Message (if any – not required)
P	S	A	B	@	

Example: PS9999 A1 B1 @Everything is fine

☎ 2nd TEXT – Setting Up of the Polling Station *(Answer questions during setting up of the polling station and report at 7:30 am!!)*

All text messages must begin with the letters "PS"	Polling Station ID (PS ID) (must be a four-digit number)	Answer to Question C (must be one or more numbers)	Answer to Question D (must be a number between 0 and 9999)	Answer to Question E (must be a number)	Answer to Question F (must be a number)
P	S	C	D	E	F

Answer to Question G (must be a 1 or 2)	Answer to Question H (must be a 1 or 2)	Answer to Question J (must be a 1 or 2)	Answer to Question K (must be a 1 or 2)	Answer to Question L (must be a 1 or 2)	At Symbol indicating additional message (Optional)	Additional Message (if any – not required)
G	H	J	K	L	@	

Example: PS9999 C1458 D0 E818 F1250 G1 H1 J2 K1 L1 @Opening went smoothly

☎ 3rd TEXT – Voting *(Review these questions throughout the day and answer them at the close of polls and report at 5:00 pm!!)*

All text messages must begin with the letters "PS"	Polling Station ID (PS ID) (must be a four-digit number)	Answer to Question M (must be a 1, 2, 3 or 4)	Answer to Question N (must be a 1, 2, 3 or 4)	Answer to Question P (must be a 1, 2, 3 or 4)	Answer to Question Q (must be a 1, 2, 3 or 4)	Answer to Question R (must be a 1, 2, 3 or 4)	Answer to Question S (must be a 1, 2, 3 or 4)	Answer to Question T (must be a 1, 2, 3 or 4)	Answer to Question U (must be a 1 or 2)	Answer to Question V (must be a 1, 2 or 3)	At Symbol indicating additional message (Optional)	Additional Message (if any – not required)
P	S	M	N	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	@	

Example: PS9999 M1 N1 P1 Q1 R2 S3 T2 U1 V3 @No serious problems during voting

FIGURE 3: CONTINUATION OF THE OBSERVER TEXTING SHEET

4th TEXT – Counting *(Answer questions during counting and report immediately after counting!!)*

All text messages must begin with the letters "PS"	Polling Station ID (PS ID) (must be a four-digit number)	Answer to Question W (must be a 1 or 2)	Answer to Question X (must be a 1 or 2)	Answer to Question Y (must be a 1 or 2)	Answer to Question Z (must be a 1 or 2)	At Symbol indicating additional message (Optional)	Additional Message (if any – not required)
P	S	W	X	Y	Z	@	

Example: PS9999 W2 X2 Y1 Z1 @They are done counting

5th TEXT – Presidential Vote Count *(Record official figures and report immediately after counting!!)*

All text messages must begin with the letters "PS"	Polling Station ID (PS ID) (must be a four-digit number)	Answer to Question AA Number of Spoilt Presidential Ballots (must be a number)	Answer to Question BB Number of Rejected Presidential Ballots (must be a number)	Answer to Question CC Number of Presidential Ballots for NPP (must be a number)			
P	S	A	A	B	B	C	C

Answer to Question DD Number of Presidential Ballots for PNC (must be a number)	Answer to Question EE Number of Presidential Ballots for NDC (must be a number)	Answer to Question FF Number of Presidential Ballots for DFP (must be a number)	Answer to Question GG Number of Presidential Ballots for DPP (must be a number)				
D	D	E	E	F	F	G	G

Answer to Question HH Number of Presidential Ballots for CPP (must be a number)	Answer to Question JJ Number of Presidential Ballots for RPD (must be a number)	Answer to Question KK Number of Presidential Ballots for the Independent Candidate (must be a number)	At Symbol indicating additional message (Optional)	Additional Message (if any – not required)			
H	H	J	J	K	K	@	

Example: PS9999 AA10 BB10 CC250 DD50 EE250 FF50 GG50 HH50 JJ50 KK50 @Waiting for Constituency Supervisors

All text messages must be sent to 1419. This number works on all networks. After each text message you should receive a confirmation text message in response from the CODEO Observation Center. If you do not receive a confirmation text message within 15 minutes you should call the CODEO Observation Center at one of the numbers below. Never call 1419. This number is only for receiving texts. Do not sent text messages to any number other than 1419.

MTN: 0241 523280 or 523281 or 523282 or 523283 or 523284 / OneTouch 0204 922392 or 922395 or 922396 / Tigo 0276 046267 or 046273 or 046285 / Kasapa 0285 393858 / Landline 021 718205

CASE STUDY TWO: The Zambia 2008 SBO Experience



CASE STUDY TWO:

The Zambia 2008 SBO Experience

The Zambia Foundation for Democratic Progress (FODEP)² conducted a Sample-based Observation and Parallel Vote Tabulation during the 2008 Zambian Presidential election. FODEP's decision to conduct an SBO was based on the fact that the preparations for the 2008 election were marred by legal disputes as a result of constitutional disagreements following the death of President Levy Mwanasa, the first time that Zambia had to deal with the succession of a sitting president. Due to time constraints there was no update of the voters' registry and the 2006 voters' roll was used.

By carrying out an SBO, FODEP's aim was to increase confidence in the election results, by independently evaluating the official results through a statistical method, given past history of results being disputed. Among political observers there was also high expectation of a tightly contested election, under the First Past the Post (FPTP) system.

FODEP conducted the SBO as part of an integral election monitoring agenda that included a wider observation effort.

The SBO Team

The FODEP SBO team included an SBO Manager, an IT & Database Manager, a statistician, a training coordinator, an observer manager, a media officer, data collection & entry personnel, field coordinators and observers (150 field supervisors and 922 observers).

Sampling Design and Size

The sample was based on a comprehensive list of polling stations and voting streams. For each polling station all relevant data (number of registered voters, number of streams, location, etc.) was available.

The sampling methodology used was random cluster sampling, stratified by province - each province had a percentage share of the polling stations relative to the national total of polling districts. The final sample included 922 polling streams.

Selection of Observers

FODEP used two sets of Observers: SBO Observers (deployed in sampled polling stations and coordinated by "Constituency Supervisors") and Regular Observers (deployed in all polling stations and coordinated by "District Mobile Monitoring Teams").

FODEP's provincial and district officials were key in selecting SBO observers based on the following criteria:

- Experience as observer;
- Ability to communicate the results soon after the close of the vote count (ideally within 3 hours) at whatever time of the night;

² FODEP is a Zambian civic NGO involved in election monitoring, civic education, democracy promotion and advocacy. It has structures throughout Zambia in every constituency and district, and a National Secretariat, with full-time staff for day-to-day coordination of the organisation.

- Commitment as an observer to ensure that all the information and the Observer Form are passed on to the Supervisor;
- Adept in numeric accuracy and dependable.

Observer Training

Training was conducted in a cascade approach. The first step was a two day training of national master trainers, followed by the two day training of provincial trainers, and lastly the one-day training of SBO and regular observers, at constituency level.

Both SBO and regular observers were trained to use the same Observer Forms and underwent the same training to allow for the replacement of any SBO observer by a regular one.

Supervisors were drawn from their localities and were ideally resident in the constituencies in which they were assigned to mobilise, coordinate, train monitors and deploy SBO observers.

Deployment and Coordination

Each supervisor was responsible for briefing and deploying the SBO observers under his/her jurisdiction (between 4 and 8 observers). Each SBO observer was given clear instructions to only report to the SBO Supervisor whose full contacts were provided.

Technology Resources

FODEP established a National PVT Centre, with a good communications network (13 cell-phones - 2 for the hotline and 11 for the data operators) and 12 networked computers (11 for data entry and 1 as a server).

Data Transmission and Reporting

Data was transmitted through cell-phones. Each SBO observer reported only to their supervisor (physically when s/he visited the polling station or via phone). Supervisors were key communication points with the National SBO Centre, and they reported directly to the Centre in Lusaka via cell-phone to a designated hotline number (either through beeping or calling).

Supervisors reported using two Forms: the Incident Form and/or the Election Day Observation Form. Information obtained over the phone was recorded on identical Forms by data operators and passed on for verification and consistency checks by the data manager, before being handed in for input into the computer database. Consistency checks were based on the pre-printed identification figures such as ID for the given Polling District, number of registered Voters, and name of the designated Supervisor.

Dissemination of Results

FODEP disseminated the findings from the SBO at two press briefings: one on the day after Election Day to share mainly on the qualitative findings (the initial SBO results indicated that the election results would be very close, but FODEP withheld figures until more data was received) such as assessments on opening of the polls, presence of party agents, conduct of the poll, Election Day incidents, among others; the other two days after Election Day to disseminate the quantitative part of the SBO results after having processed reports from just above 96% of the sampled stations. The SBO results were consistent with the results announced by the ECZ (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: COMPARISON BETWEEN THE SBO RESULTS AND ECZ RESULTS

CANDIDATE	PARTY	SBO RESULTS (%)	EC OFFICIAL RESULTS (%)
Rupiah Banda	MMD	39.18	39.95
Hakainde Hishilema	UPND	20.77	19.54
Godfrey Miyanda	HP	0.95	0.75
Michael Sata	PF	37.36	38.46

Lessons Learned

- Need for ample time to plan, assess, fundraise, and implement an SBO
- Stakeholders need to be sensitised on the real meaning of an SBO
- A shorter and more focused Reporting Form can help quick reporting and analysis
- Need to be sensitive to the political environment.

Achievements

- FODEP was able to do a quick analysis of the election results and other qualitative aspects of the election;
- The SBO contributed to increase the confidence and credibility of the results, and helped reduce tension around results management among political players.

Challenges

- Suspicions among stakeholders about the real meaning, purpose and value of an SBO;
- FODEP was accused by the opposition of siding with ECZ, while Government officials and ECZ initially viewed the SBO as an exercise to “catch” electoral officials;
- Time-frame of three weeks was very limited;
- FODEP had very limited staff - no full-time staff in the provinces/districts (FODEP relied mainly on its network of experienced structures in districts/constituencies);
- Inadequate funding and delays in accessing donor funding;
- Training materials were not in place in time;
- Some polling districts in the sample were logistically very difficult to access by ordinary means.

CASE STUDY THREE: The Zimbabwe 2008 SBO Experience



CASE STUDY THREE:

The Zimbabwe 2008 SBO Experience

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)³ for the March 2008 harmonised election, conducted long-term observation, short-term observation (8,667 static observers and 210 mobile supervisors) and Sample-based observation for the first round of the Presidential Election.

SBO Methodology

A representative random sample of 435 out of 9,132 polling stations across the ten provinces of the country was drawn. The sample was stratified by province, local authority and urban/rural areas to ensure that the findings were representative. Static observers were trained and allocated to sample polling stations. The SBO observers collected the official vote counts as publicly displayed at the polling stations as required by the Electoral Act. ZESN set up a Central SBO Centre for receiving data and performing data entry and analysis. The data analysis included an independent statistician to ensure it met the highest statistical standards.

Structure

The ZESN SBO operation was led by a National Director, supported by a Programmes Manager, two project consultants seconded by ZESN members, a statistician, a database expert, a communications manager, and data entry clerks.

Main Steps

The first step taken by ZESN was the sample selection to determine the location and the logistical needs of the polling stations. Once the sample was determined, ZESN developed the sample map and identified the logistical support required to cover those locations.

The next step was to develop all the materials needed, such as training manuals and observer forms. With the materials in place, ZESN recruited trainers, supervisors and observers, who were then trained and deployed.

On Election Day, the SBO observers collected the required information and transmitted it to the SBO Centre, where it was entered into the database and processed and analysed.

Training and accreditation

All SBO observers received half-day of training as short-term observers and a full-day training for the SBO methodology.

Focus of E-Day Observation

On polling day, the SBO observers focused their attention on the following aspects of the voting process:

- Freedom to observe
- Presence of police in polling stations

³ ZESN is a coalition of 40 Zimbabwean non-governmental organisations formed in 2000 to co-ordinate civil society activities pertaining to elections.

- Polling processes (opening, voting, closing, counting, and transmission)
- Voters turned away
- Availability of materials
- Assisted voters
- Polling station results
- Tracking incidents

All these aspects of the polling day were reported on by the observers to the SBO Centre.

Challenges

ZESN faced several challenges in carrying out their SBO. Some of them are listed below:

- Delays in delimitation and publication of polling stations had an impact in sample drawing
- Time constraints for training and accreditation
- Changes to legislation affecting election day processes
- Security of observers and of ZESN before, during and after the SBO

Other challenges were of a logistical nature:

- Deployment of supervisors and vehicles, as fuel was not always available and in the quantities required, despite having been pre-purchased
- Bad roads and terrain also made it difficult to cover as much ground as necessary
- Coverage per supervisor in rural constituencies was too large
- Communication with rural based observers was difficult due to poor communications infrastructure
- Election day communication
- Delay in the announcement of results by ZEC

Achievements

The main achievement was the rapid and accurate analysis of qualitative aspects of the polling process and election results.

Results

The comparison between the SBO results and the official ECZ results can be found in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON BETWEEN SBO RESULTS AND ECZ RESULTS

CANDIDATE	PARTY	SBO RESULTS (%)	EC OFFICIAL RESULTS (%)
Morgan Tsvangirai	MDC-T	49.4	47.87
Robert Mugabe	ZANU PF	43.2	43.24
Herbert Simba Makoni	INDEPENDENT	8.3	8.31
Langton Towungana	MDC-T	0.6	0.58

CASE STUDY FOUR: The Kenya 2010 SBO Experience



CASE STUDY FOUR:

The Kenya 2010 SBO Experience

The Kenya Elections Observation Group (ELOG)⁴ put in place a Sample-based Observation and Parallel Vote Tabulation operation for the August 4, 2010 national referendum on a new Constitution. The SBO was implemented in conjunction with general observation of the referendum.

To that end, ELOG recruited, trained and deployed more than 10,000 general observers spread out in the whole country and 702 SBO observers in sampled polling stations.

The Sample

ELOG used a nationally-representative random sample of 502 polling stations drawn by experienced statisticians from the official list of polling stations provided by the Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC). The sample contained polling stations in all 210 constituencies of the eight provinces of Kenya.

SBO Observers

The 502 SBO observers were selected from ELOG's overall 11,000 observers. They represented the most qualified and reliable of ELOG's observers.

Observer Training

All SBO observers received additional training on how to undertake the SBO on referendum day, and how to collect and transmit data using text messaging. As part of the training, the SBO observers were given a detailed manual covering all aspects of the SBO. All ELOG observers signed ELOG's Pledge of Neutrality.

This required them to be nonpartisan, abide by the Interim Independent Electoral Commission's Code of Conduct for Observers, and provide only accurate and unbiased reports.

A simulation exercise of the SBO communication system was conducted ahead of referendum day by having all 502 SBO observers send text messages to the ELOG Observation Centre.

Reporting by SBO Observers

SBO reports were sent from sampled polling stations via specially formatted text messages and received directly into ELOG's SBO database. This was done to ensure the rapid and accurate transmission of information and to prevent data entry errors.

Operations on Referendum Day

ELOG SBO observers reported on several aspects of voting day operations. For instance, they reported that 98% of polling stations opened on time and that only 7% of polling stations had no referendum agent (the equivalent to party agent in regular elections). They also reported that requests for recounts only occurred in 4% of polling stations.

⁴ ELOG is a platform of civil society organisations for the promotion of citizen participation in the electoral processes, through non-partisan and impartial domestic observation. ELOG seeks to promote peaceful, credible, transparent, accountable, free, fair, and inclusive elections through consistent election monitoring and observation. The following are the founder members of ELOG: Centre for Governance and Development (CGD), Institute for Education in Democracy (IED), Constitution and Reform Education Consortium (CRECO), Consortium for Empowerment and Development of Marginalised Communities (CEDMAC), Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), Ecumenical Centre for Justice and Peace (ECJP) and United Disabled Peoples of Kenya (UDPK).

SBO Referendum Results

For the Kenya referendum, the ELOG SBO projected 68.8% for the Yes vote and 31.2% for the No vote, with a +/-2.9% margin of error. The official result announced by the Interim Independent Electoral Commission of Kenya gave the Yes vote 68.55% of all valid votes, with 31.45% for the No vote.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON BETWEEN SBO RESULTS AND IIEC RESULTS

	SBO RESULTS %	IIEC OFFICIAL RESULTS (%)
YES	68.8	68.55
NO	31.2	31.45

CASE STUDY FIVE: The Mozambique SBO Experience 2003-2009



CASE STUDY FIVE:

The Mozambique SBO Experience 2003-2009

Mozambique is the African country with the longest experience in the conduct of Parallel Vote Tabulations (PVTs) by civil society organisations. The first experience, as a pilot exercise, was carried out by the Electoral Observatory⁵ during the municipal elections of 2003. Mozambique has applied the sample-based methodology only to the parallel tabulation of votes, and not to the reporting of polling station operations. PVTs in Mozambique used both sample and non-sample approaches, and were always complemented by regular observation.

The 2003 pilot PVT

This was a politically-sensitive exercise as it was the first time that Mozambican civil society attempted to use such an election observation tool, and almost no Mozambican stakeholder was familiar with it.

The Electoral Observatory chose to conduct the first PVT exercise atypically during municipal elections as a pilot experience for the 2004 general elections in order to test the methodology and their technical abilities and logistical capacity.

Ten out of 33 municipalities were selected for this first PVT: the 3 largest municipalities in the country (including Maputo, the capital city) and 7 politically-disputed or conflict-prone municipalities. In the 3 largest municipalities: the PVT was conducted on the basis of a random sample, and in the other 7 municipalities a full PVT was conducted because the totality of polling stations was too small for sampling. In total, 486 PVT observers were deployed.

Results collection by the PVT observers was done through results forms, which were delivered to municipal supervisors, who in turn sent them to the PVT Centre in Maputo either by air, road or fax. This process took 36 hours. In Maputo, the data in the forms was inserted into a database.

The PVT results were available in 48 hours, and the official provisional result of one particular mayoral election differed from the PVT result.⁶ The Electoral Observatory informed the National Elections Commission of the discrepancy and submitted the data of their PVT. In the end, the National Elections Commission announced a final result that coincided with the PVT result for that particular election. In all other elections, the PVT results coincided with the official ones.

The main achievement of this pilot exercise was to create local capacity to conduct PVTs and to establish the credibility of PVTs as a solid election observation tool.

The 2004 PVT

In the 2004 presidential and parliamentary election in Mozambique, the Electoral Observatory carried out its first national PVT, which used a national random sample of 750 polling stations out of 12,000, with two observers per polling station.

⁵ The Electoral Observatory is a coalition of eight Mozambican civil society organisations that came together to observe and assess electoral processes in Mozambique, and contribute to their improvement and credibility.

⁶ The official provisional result, as announced by the municipal elections commission gave the victory to the candidate of one party, whereas the PVT result (in a full PVT count) showed that the candidate of another party had won.

The national PVT was logistically challenging due to the remote location of many polling stations and the poor communications network and infrastructure in the country.

Results were transmitted by observers to the PVT Centre in Maputo using phones or faxes. The results transmitted by phone were read out loud by the PVT observers from their results form and captured by data entry operators using similar forms, which were in turn inserted manually into the results database. The results received by fax were also inserted manually into the database.

PVT results were available 48 hours after the closing of the polls and were immediately shared with the National Elections Commission and the presidential candidates. They were made public only after the announcement of the official results. The PVT results were within a 0.5% margin of official results and helped demonstrate instances of electoral fraud by showing abnormally high turnout levels in certain polling stations.

The PVT helped the acceptance of election results by the opposition and contributed to post-election stability.

The 2008 PVT

In the 2008 municipal elections, the Electoral Observatory, in conjunction with EISA, again conducted a local level PVT covering 13 of the 43 municipalities in Mozambique. In all of them, a full-count PVT was used, with a total of 650 PVT observers.

Polling station results were again transmitted by phone and captured by data entry operators into a database in Maputo. This was a slow and cumbersome process and final results were only available 48 hours after polls closed.

Again, the PVT contradicted the official provisional results in two municipalities.⁷ In the end, the National Elections Commission approved final results in all municipalities that coincided with the PVT results, and announced that in the municipality of Nacala, for the first time in the electoral history of Mozambique, a run-off election for mayor would take place.

The Nacala second round took place in February 2009 and the Electoral Observatory together with EISA conducted a full-count PVT, whose result, released 12 hours after the closing of the polls, coincided with the final official result.

The 2008 PVT further contributed to the credibility of this mechanism as an effective tool for election observation.

The 2009 PVT

Building on the experience from previous years, the Electoral Observatory and EISA conducted a second national PVT in Mozambique for the 2009 presidential and legislative elections, with a national random sample of 997 polling stations (out of 12,581), covered by an equal number of observers.

For the first time, the coded text message methodology was introduced to facilitate and speed up the results transmission process. Special cell-phone numbers from both cell-phone companies were made available to the PVT operation, and text messages were sent to a private server, which in turn relayed them in bulk, via internet, to the PVT Centre, where they were decoded using a specially-written computer programme in order to be fed into the database.

⁷ In the municipality of Nacala, the official provisional result released by the local elections commission indicated the victory of one candidate, whereas the PVT results indicate that no candidate had obtained the required 50%+1 to win the election. In the municipality of Beira, the official provisional result released by the local elections commission indicated that one party had obtained more than 50% of the votes in the election for the municipal assembly, whereas the PVT indicate that no party had reached 50% of the vote.

Below is an example of the text message format of a coded PVT text message:

OBS MapC-3746 1*MAPC-AB18 2*1000 3*845 4*200 5*300 6*256 7*44 8*45

OBS is the keyword to initiate the message.

MapC-3746 is the observer code. It indicates in which polling station the observer is located.

1*MAPC-AB18 is the polling station code as allocated by the National Elections Commission.

2*1000 is the number of registered voters at the polling station.

3*845 is the total number of votes in the ballot box.

4*200 is the number of votes obtained by the first candidate as they appear on the ballot.

5*300 is the number of votes obtained by the second candidate as they appear on the ballot.

6*256 is the number of votes obtained by the third candidate as they appear on the ballot.

7*44 is the number of blank votes.

8*45 is the number of null votes.

When errors were made in the text message code by the PVT observers, the system would alert them to the error and require them to correct it and send the text message again. Technical back-up staff was on standby to provide technical support and guidance over the phone if necessary.

However, lack of cell-phone coverage in many remote areas meant that, although 70 percent of the polling station results had been transmitted in the first 24 hours after the closing of the polls, only after 48 hours all the results had been received and processed. Nonetheless, this methodology proved to be more efficient and more reliable than the use of phone calls.

The final PVT results confirmed the final official results released by the National Elections Commission, within the expected margin of error. In Table 1, below, find the comparative results between the 2009 PVT and the official results announced by the National Elections Commission.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON BETWEEN 2009 PVT RESULTS AND CNE RESULTS

CANDIDATE	PARTY	SBO RESULTS (%)	EC OFFICIAL RESULTS (%)
Daviz Simango	MDM	8.2	8.59
Armando Guebuza	FRELIMO	74.43	75.01
Afonso Dhlakama	RENAMO	17.17	16.41

Observer Recruitment and Structure

PVT observers were recruited among the members and activists of the eight CSOs comprising the Electoral Observatory, following criteria of electoral experience, trustworthiness, commitment and geographical location.

In every province, there was at least one provincial PVT co-ordinator, but in larger provinces that number was as high as four.

Observer Training

In every PVT year, the training was administered using the cascade method. All provincial coordinators were trained in Maputo and they, in turn, trained the PVT observers in their provinces with the assistance and supervision of the Maputo-based trainers.

During the training, a trial run of the transmission system was conducted in order to familiarise PVT observers with it and to test and correct any technical weaknesses.

Observer Deployment

PVT observers were deployed to their respective PVT polling stations only 24 hours before polling day to ensure the security and integrity of the operation. Most PVT observers resided in areas very close to the polling stations to which they were assigned.

Challenges

The main challenges were related to the quality of PVT observers and their ability to deal with technology in a country with high levels of illiteracy, the quality of knowledge transmission when using cascade training, and the remoteness of many polling stations and the difficulties it created for accessibility and results transmission.

Achievements

The two main achievements of seven years of PVTs are the establishment of local capacity for Mozambicans to conduct PVTs entirely on their own, and the unquestionable credibility of PVTs as an election monitoring tool. The most visible evidence of the latter is the use of the PVT concept by political parties and the Elections Commission to control and monitor the formal results management system.

**Tally sheet used by observers in the 2008 municipal elections SBO
to record polling station results**

Municipal Elections 2008

Results Sheet

Polling Station Number

Total Number of Registered Voters
(N° Total de Eleitores Inscritos)

Province _____ Municipality _____

Voting Site (School): _____

President of Municipal Council	Members of Municipal Assembly
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Número de Votos na Urna

Number of Cast Votes

Número de Votos na Urna

Number of Cast Votes

Candidate	Votes	Party, Coalition, or Civic Group	Votes
Total de Votos Válidos		Total de Votos Válidos	
Total de Votos Brancos		Total de Votos Brancos	
Total de Votos Nulos		Total de Votos Nulos	

Observer Signature _____

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