



METHODS FOR ELECTION OBSERVATION:

A Manual for
**OAS ELECTORAL
OBSERVATION
MISSIONS**

General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS)
Secretariat for Political Affairs (SPA)
Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO)

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**General Secretariat of the
Organization of American States (GS/OAS)**

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Methods for Election Observation: A Manual for OAS Electoral Observation Missions

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I. INTRODUCTION

Today, for the first time in the history of the Americas, all active member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) hold elections on a regular basis. To be sure, democracy is about more than elections. Yet, as OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza has emphasized, democratic elections are of fundamental importance, in that they constitute a key mechanism to handle political differences,¹ and much rides on the distinction between democratic and non-democratic elections. Indeed, elections are not a feature exclusive to democracies, as the usual reference to “free and fair” elections suggests, and the pronouncements of election observation missions around the world as to the quality of elections—using terms such as “genuine,” “acceptable,” or “flawed”—can be highly consequential. Thus, it is understandable that the need for explicitly formulated and well justified criteria and methods to assess elections has been increasingly recognized as electoral observation has evolved.

OAS Election Observation Missions (EOMs) in their “first generation” date back to the 1960s, when election observation was still an undefined and rather ad hoc concept. The missions at the time were first and foremost of a symbolic character, and very limited in time and scope. Against this background, the precedent for the “second generation” of OAS/EOMs was set by the mission sent to observe the Nicaraguan elections of 1990. These kinds of OAS/EOMs were a parallel process, and intimately linked to the political and cultural transformations of the countries of the region. With the transition of a significant number of countries from authoritarian regimes to democratic systems starting in the mid-eighties, international electoral observation acquired a singular relevance: to accompany these transitions that were being consolidated through the holding of free elections for the main public positions, and to help confer more legitimacy on these processes. The experience developed in Nicaragua marked the beginning of a new cycle of OAS international observation that was more ambitious than its predecessors in terms of size and scope, moved beyond a mere symbolic presence, and included an

analysis of diverse issues related to the quality of the electoral process.

Since 1990, election observation has become more widespread—to the point of becoming an integral aspect of electoral processes in many countries. At the same time, efforts to institutionalize and standardize the practice of election observation were central to the work of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, today the OAS Secretariat for Political Affairs, created in 1990 as the principal body within the OAS responsible for providing assistance and support to member states to strengthen their democratic institutions and procedures.

Another step along this path, which signals a move beyond “second generation” missions, was taken with the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter (IADC) in 2001. The IADC developed new paradigms for a more advanced form of collaborative democracy that goes beyond the procedural aspects of democracy, i.e. the holding of elections, and seeks to foster consensus building and cross-sector collaboration to achieve greater social, political and economic development. Indeed, the IADC transcended the notion of electoral democracy in favor of a marked trend in the democratic progress of the nations of the Hemisphere. However, it assigned an essential role to electoral democracy². In fact, in the fifth chapter, Member States emphasize the importance of the OAS Electoral Observation Missions (EOMs), as an instrument of democratic consolidation, devoting the entire chapter to this and other related activities within the Organization that support “the holding of periodic, free, and fair elections based on secret balloting and universal suffrage as an expression of the sovereignty of the people.” Indeed, the IADC,

¹ José Miguel Insulza, Speech at the International Seminar “*The 2005–2006 Electoral Cycle in the Americas: A Review of the OAS General Secretariat*,” Panama City, Panama, June 2, 2007.

² José Miguel Insulza, Introduction, Interamerican Democratic Charter, September 11, 2006.



along with other instruments of the Inter-American system developed by the OAS Member States, recognizes a series of rights related to electoral processes (see Appendix I) and thus articulates the criteria or standards that nowadays serve as a point of reference for OAS/EOMs.

A further step toward a “third generation” of election observation missions has been taken with the development of a systematic methodology, which draws on the OAS’s extensive experience in electoral observation and has been subjected to a thorough process of peer review and testing,³ and which aims at offering a comprehensive assessment of electoral processes in light of the standards enunciated in documents such as the IADC.

As a part of the aforementioned process of institutionalization and standardization of the practice of electoral observation, many international organizations have produced handbooks providing guidelines regarding what elements election observers should scrutinize in their attempt to discern whether elections live up to standards developed by the international community. Many academics and practitioners have sought to design methodologies that can be used for the same purpose. In this context, in addition to a *Procedural Manual for the Organization of Election Observation Missions*, the OAS Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) of the Secretariat for Political Affairs (SPA) has written the present manual with the purpose of outlining the criteria and methods used by the Organization to evaluate elections in the context of its election observation missions.

The first section introduces the concept of democratic elections and defines it in light of the fundamental rights enshrined in the diverse instruments of the Inter-American system. The second section discusses the two sources of information used by EOMs to measure the concept of democratic elections—the results of the election day Questionnaire for Electoral Observers, and the Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process—and briefly outlines the responsibility of two methodology specialists who are part of the EOMs Core Group—the Questionnaire Specialist and the Indicators Specialist—charged with preparing these two products.⁴ The rest of this manual spells out in detail the responsibilities of the two methodology specialists, focusing first on the Questionnaire for Electoral Observers and then on the Document of Indicators.

³ The methodology was developed between April and July 2006, and thereafter the methodology was applied in several cases during the second half of 2006 and 2007. The elaboration of the methodology reflects an exhaustive review of the methods for election observation used by the OAS and other organizations, and it was discussed and revised by numerous specialists of the OAS General Secretariat. For a brief presentation of the methodology, see Elizabeth Spehar and Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian with Raúl Alconada Sempé (eds.), *The 2005–2006 Electoral Cycle in the Americas: A Review of the OAS General Secretariat* (Washington, DC: General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, 2007).

⁴ OAS/EOMs are made up by a Chief and Deputy Chief, and a Core Group that includes—along with the methodology specialists—specialists in various aspects of the electoral process (political affairs, legal affairs, information technology, a statistician in charge of the quick count or the selection of a representative sample of polling stations, among others), as well as a logistics specialist and a media specialist. The missions are also composed of Regional Coordinators, and finally the group of Observers.

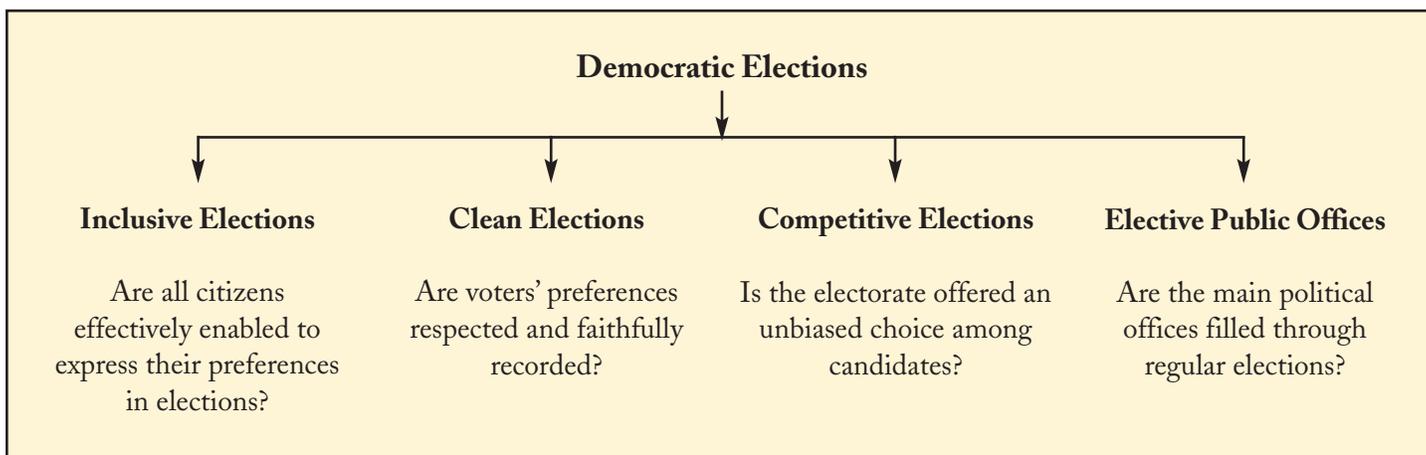


II. THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

The OAS methodology to evaluate elections takes as its starting point a definition of the concept of democratic elections,⁵ that includes the fundamental rights recognized in the instruments of the Inter-American system. The concept of democratic elections is defined in such a way that elections are considered democratic when they fulfill four basic conditions. First, elections must be *inclusive*, that is, all citizens must be effectively enabled to exercise their right to vote in the electoral process. Second, elections must be *clean*; in other words, voters' preferences must be respected and faithfully registered. Third, elections must be *competitive*, that is, they must offer the electorate an unbiased choice among alternatives. Finally, the main

important that the right to universal and equal suffrage is legally recognized, and the use of the right to vote is facilitated in practice. With respect to clean elections, the key issue is ensuring the integrity of voters' preferences, as well as the faithful recording of these preferences. With respect to competitive elections, what is captured is that citizens have the right to run for public offices, but also that candidates running for office must be able to do so without concerns for their security and with equal opportunities in a context of respect for civil rights, such as freedom of the press, free access to information, and freedom of association, assembly, expression and movement. Finally, the attribute regarding elective public offices is concerned with the access to all the main political

TABLE 1. THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS I: A FIRST APPROXIMATION



public offices must be accessed through periodic elections, and the results expressed through the citizens' votes must not be reversed. In sum, elections are democratic when they are inclusive, clean, and competitive and constitute the means of access to high public offices (see Table 1).

This succinct definition can be clarified by spelling out what is encompassed by each of its four core conceptual attributes: inclusive elections, clean elections, competitive elections, and elective public offices. With respect to inclusive elections, it is

offices through periodic elections and the irreversibility of the results of the elections. As Table 2 shows, this more detailed definition involves the identification of the components and

⁵ The importance of providing an explicit and logically coherent definition is that such a definition provides an essential point of reference in efforts to evaluate electoral processes. And the value of a good definition is that it serves as a touchstone when confronting various complex methodological choices related to the assessment of elections. Indeed, the danger of convoluted definitions or definitions that amount to little more than unstructured and frequently long lists of factors should not be underestimated.



TABLE 2. THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS II: A MORE ELABORATE APPROXIMATION

Attributes	Components of Attributes	Subcomponents of Attributes	Issue at Stake
<i>I. Inclusive Elections</i>	1. Universal and equal suffrage		Who is legally allowed to vote?
	2. Conditions for the use of the right to vote	Registration	Are there significant legal or other hurdles to register to vote?
		Electoral roll	Is the information on the electoral roll accurate?
		Polling station access	Are there significant legal or other hurdles to get to a polling station or otherwise cast a vote?
		Vote casting	Are all eligible and willing voters able to cast their vote and do so as intended?
<i>II. Clean Elections</i>	3. Integrity of voter preferences		Are voters able to vote without any outside pressure or fear of reprisals?
	4. Faithful recording of voter preferences		Are all ballots scrutinized (i.e. checked and counted) and/or tabulated (i.e. aggregated) impartially and accurately?
<i>III. Competitive Elections</i>	5. Right to run for office		Are there unreasonable legal hurdles to become a candidate?
	6. Basic guarantees for an electoral campaign	Equal security	Is the physical security of all candidates and party personnel guaranteed?
		Equal opportunity	Do candidates compete on a level playing field?
		Right to a free press and to information	Do the voters have access to the information needed to make an informed choice when they cast their votes?
		Freedom of association, assembly, expression, and movement	Are candidates for office and the electorate allowed to organize and interact freely?
<i>IV. Elective Public Offices</i>	7. Regular elections for top national offices		Are the main political offices (i.e. the national executive and legislature) filled through regular elections?
	8. Irreversibility of electoral results		Are the winners of elections duly installed in office?



subcomponents of the four core attributes of democratic elections, and the specification of what is at stake in each of the elements used in this definition.

Another way to clarify the definition of democratic elections is to state what it does not include. This perspective is particularly useful inasmuch as it touches on conceptually proximate items to the ones just discussed, but that are nonetheless excluded from the definition. Seen from this perspective, a number of exclusions are worth highlighting. First, this definition does not include a range of aspects of the electoral process, such as abstentionism, whether voting is compulsory, the drawing of the boundaries of voting districts, the electoral formula used to translate votes into seats, and the presence of territorial chambers. Though each of these items is important, we still lack unambiguous or shared standards regarding what practices are preferable from the point of view of democracy.

Second, this definition excludes aspects like the independence of electoral bodies and the confidence that different actors exhibit in the electoral process and election results. Evidently, the actions of electoral bodies have a big impact on the electoral process and hence are an integral part of an assessment of the quality of elections. Similarly, it is very desirable that the results of the elections be widely accepted, as long as these results are correct. Nevertheless, the ways in which the electoral authorities are constituted (whether by personnel who are part of the executive branch, by representatives of political parties, or by independent professionals), and the attitudes of politicians and citizens towards

electoral results, are usually seen as possible causes and/or consequences of the quality of electoral processes. Thus, they are not elements that should form part of an evaluation strictly focused on the quality of the electoral process.

Third, this definition does not cover a multitude of topics that are commonly identified as challenges to democratic governance. In fact, though the electoral process is more than an election day event, the actions of elected government officials largely pertain to a wider discussion about democracy. Thus, this definition does not extend to what happens after an electoral process has been completed, that is, once the victors of the electoral process have assumed their offices.

In sum, the proposed definition of democratic elections consists of four core conceptual attributes: two focused on voters and their intent to signal a preference for a candidate or position (inclusive and clean elections), one primarily focused on candidates and their need to communicate their proposals to their potential supporters (competitive elections), and the last focused on what is at stake in an electoral process, that is, the public offices (elective public offices). Moreover, as has been shown, this definition can be fleshed out in terms of multiple components and subcomponents, which are logically linked in an explicit manner with the four previously mentioned attributes and which jointly encompass the fundamental rights recognized in the instruments of the Inter-American system.



III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND METHODOLOGY SPECIALISTS

The information required to measure this concept of democratic elections and to carry out an assessment of an electoral process is quite extensive. One source of information is the quick count or parallel vote tabulation (PVT). This quantitative information is valuable inasmuch as it serves to detect irregularities in one key aspect of the electoral process, the totalization of votes cast at each polling station. But recognizing that an assessment of an election requires further information of both a qualitative and quantitative nature, OAS/EOMs rely on two other, supplementary sources of information.

Results of an Election-Day Questionnaire for Electoral Observers.

One source of information is a questionnaire, to be filled out by electoral observers on election day. This is the moment when EOMs deploy their largest number of observers throughout the territory of the country where elections are held and hence provides a unique opportunity for EOMs to collect first hand observations about events at polling stations. In addition, since the majority of observers are usually assigned the task of collecting data for the quick count or PVT and hence are assigned to observe polling stations that comprise part of a representative statistical sample, the information gathered through this questionnaire has a significant degree of representativeness. Thus, so as to offer systematic and valuable information about the unfolding of events on election day, an election-day questionnaire is administered and the results of the questionnaire are processed in real time at various moments during election day.

A Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process. At the same time, recognizing the imperative to assess elections as a process that begins well before election day and that extends beyond this day,⁶ OAS/EOMs rely on an extensive set of indicators on the electoral process broadly conceived. The relevant information must be gathered over a long period of time and should, as much as possible, rely on in-situ observations and research. The collection

of information depends on the work of many members of an observation mission and relies particularly on the information and analysis provided by the different experts who are a part of the EOMs' Core Group; thus, a coordinated effort is essential to the success of this data gathering effort. Finally, so as to ensure that this information can be readily used in an overall assessment of an electoral process, it must be orderly presented in a single Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process.

These two sources of information—the results of the election-day Questionnaire for Electoral Observers, and the Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process—are the final product of a complicated and ideally long term task involving many steps and requiring specialized knowledge. Therefore, they are the responsibility of two methodology specialists.

Questionnaire Specialist: This specialist is responsible for all stages in the administration of the Questionnaire for Electoral Observers, from the contextualization of the questionnaire, the training of electoral observers regarding the questionnaire, the training of the personnel who will receive the observers' responses to the questionnaire by phone and who will enter the data into a computer file, the processing and tabulation of the questionnaire's results; and the delivery of these results to the EOM Chief and Deputy Chief.

Indicators Specialist: This specialist is responsible for the production of the Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process. The person must compile the information on all indicators

⁶ Indeed, the information that is collected through the questionnaire administered on election day is only part of the information an EOM needs to offer a thorough assessment of an electoral process. This tool provides data that are relevant only to assess whether elections are inclusive and clean (see Table 2). And even in this respect it only offers part of the relevant information.



relevant to an overall assessment of the electoral process that is produced by other members of the Core Group of the EOM, by the regional coordinators, and by the observers (in the form of the questionnaire's results). They must conduct research on those indicators that are not gathered by other specialists of the EOM. Finally, the specialist must write up the Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process and then deliver this document to the Chief and Deputy Chief of the mission.

In short, in their assessment of elections, OAS/EOMs rely, among other things, on two sources of information—the results of the election-day Questionnaire for Electoral Observers, and the Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process—produced by two methodology specialists. The preparation of these two products, as suggested, entails complicated tasks. Thus, the rest of this manual will spell out in detail the responsibilities of the two methodology specialists.



IV. THE ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR OBSERVERS

The production of good quality data through a questionnaire that is filled out by observers on election day entails multiple steps that take a standardized questionnaire as a starting point. This section discusses these steps, outlining the various responsibilities of the Questionnaire Specialist. The work of the Questionnaire Specialist requires numerous forms to record, transmit and present the information, and a procedure to process the responses of the questionnaire. All of these elements related to the questionnaire have been standardized and are available in an Excel document that serves as

a key tool for the Questionnaire Specialist. In addition, a checklist of tasks for the Questionnaire Specialist, which summarizes much of the following discussion, is included in Appendix II.

1) The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of five parts. One group of observers is required to visit the same polling station at three times during the day— at the opening of the polls, around mid-day, and at the closing of the polls—so as to be able to offer an in-depth account of the voting process in a location which is part of a representative

TABLE 3. ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELECTORAL OBSERVERS I

A	Questions Regarding the Opening of the Polling Station	Answer (mark your response with a circle or write in your answer)		
1	At what time did the polling station open?	Did not open	Time:	
2	Were all the indispensable electoral materials available at the polling station?	Yes	No	
3	Were all the designated polling officials present at the opening of the polling station?	Yes	No	
4	Were representatives of the following parties present at the polling station?	(Insert party acronym)		
5	Were domestic election observers present at the polling station?	Yes	No	
6	Is the space at the polling station adequate?	Yes	No	
7	Were members of the security forces present in the polling center?	Yes	No	
8	Is the electoral roll on display?	Yes	No	NA (Not applicable)
9	Do the voters have adequate information about the location of their polling station?	Yes	No	



TABLE 4. ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELECTORAL OBSERVERS II

**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)
ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (EOM)**

Country: ..., Date ...

ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE (PART 2)

Name of Observer : _____

Name of Polling Center : _____

Number of Polling Station: _____

B	Voting process, at approximately 1 p.m.	Answer (mark your response with a circle or write in your answer)	
1	How many voters are there on the voting roll?	Number:	
2	How many voters have cast a ballot by 1:00 p.m.?	Number:	
3	How many minutes does each voter take to cast their ballot?	Number of minutes:	
4	Were representatives of the following parties present at the polling station?	(Insert party acronym)	
5	Were domestic election observers present at the polling station at 1:00 p.m.?	Yes	No
6	Did you observe any of the following practices at the polling station?		
	i. Voters on the electoral roll were not allowed to vote	Yes	No
	ii. Long lines of voters waiting to vote	Yes	No
	iii. Interruptions in the voting process	Yes	No
	iv. Restrictions to the right to a secret vote	Yes	No
	v. Electoral campaigning	Yes	No
	vi. Incidences of violence	Yes	No
	vii. Others (indicate which)	Yes	No
7	Are there any other issues or observations not covered in the questions that you consider significant?		

sample (usually used to conduct a quick count).⁷ Thus, the questionnaire is designed to address the various issues that are relevant to the opening of the voting process, the situation at roughly the middle of the day, and the closing of the voting process (see Tables 3, 4 and 5). Moreover, a fourth part of the questionnaire is designed to obtain a thorough evaluation of the overall electoral process at the specific polling station visited on three occasions (see Table 6).

All the responses to the questions are supposed to rely on observations made at a specific polling station or polling center, rather than on events the observer has either not witnessed or that have not occurred at the designated polling station or center. Most

of the questions ask for simple Yes/No answers, seek to pinpoint the time when certain events happen, or are designed to gather information about the numbers of citizens that have cast a vote. But the second and third parts of the questionnaire do include an open-ended question that allows the observer to convey information about issues not explicitly addressed in the close-ended questions.

⁷ Though the common practice of OAS/EOM's is to link the administration of the Questionnaire for Electoral Observers to the quick count, and thus to use the same representative sample of polling stations, the possibility of selecting a representative sample of polling stations only for the purpose of the questionnaire is also envisioned.



TABLE 5. ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELECTORAL OBSERVERS III

		ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (EOM) Country: ..., Date ... ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE (PART 3)		
Name of Observer : _____				
Name of Polling Center : _____				
Number of Polling Station: _____				
C	Closing of polling station and vote counting	Answer (mark your response with a circle or write in your answer)		
1	At what time did the polling station close?	Time: _____		
2	Were any voters left in line at the moment of the closing of the polling station not allowed to vote?	Yes	No	
3	Were representatives of the following parties present at the polling station?	(Insert party acronym)		
4	Were domestic election observers present at the polling station?	Yes	No	
5	Did the counting of the ballots follow legal procedures?	Yes	No	
6	Were there any administrative or organizational defects or problems in the counting of the ballots?	Yes	No	
7	Were there intentional acts to alter the expressed preferences of voters during the vote counting?	Yes	No	
8	Were claims and disputes related to the vote counting addressed to in a fair and quick manner?	Yes	No	NA (Not applicable)
9	How many voters are there on the voting roll?	Number: _____		
10	What is the total number of votes cast in the presidential (or otherwise, in the parliamentary) election?	Number: _____		
11	How many votes in the presidential (or otherwise, in the parliamentary) election were declared null?	Number: _____		
12	Was the voting returns protocol challenged?	Yes	No	
13	Was a copy of the voting returns protocol provided to party representatives?	Yes	No	
14	At what time was the vote counting finished?	Time: _____		
15	Are there any other issues or observations not covered in the questions that you consider significant?			

For observers who are not assigned a polling station that is part of a representative sample, two options are envisioned. If the observer can visit the same polling station on three occasions during the election day, they are supposed to use the same four parts of the questionnaire discussed above (Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6).

Alternatively, if an observer will only visit a polling station briefly (or if an observer visits a polling station briefly in addition to visiting one polling station on three occasions), they are supposed to use a questionnaire that is geared to recording observations made during short visits to multiple polling stations (see Table 7).



2) Adjusting the Questionnaire

The rationale for having a standardized questionnaire is to ensure its consistency from one election observation mission to another. Nonetheless, the questionnaire must be adjusted for each

election and to each national context. Specifics, such as the name of country, the date of the elections and the acronyms of parties, must be added. The wording of the questionnaire must be revised to ensure that it reflects the terminology used in the country. More

TABLE 6. ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELECTORAL OBSERVERS IV

 <p style="text-align: center;">ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (EOM) Country: ..., Date ... ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE (PART 4)</p>					
Name of Observer : _____					
Name of Polling Center : _____					
Number of Polling Station: _____					
D	Overall evaluation in light of observations made at the polling station has been visited on three occasions during the day. Restrict the evaluation of the electoral process to that specific polling station	Answer (mark your response with a circle or write in your answer)			
1	<i>Voter Education.</i> Did voters appear to understand when, where and how to vote?	Yes	No	NA (Not applicable)	
2	<i>Exclusion of Registered Voters.</i> Were registered voters prevented from voting, because of problems with the electoral rolls, voting hours or other reasons?	Yes	No	NA	
3	<i>Ballot Design.</i> Has the design of the ballot and/or the voting mechanism made it likely that voters are able to record their preferences accurately?	Yes	No	NA	
4	<i>Voter Intimidation.</i> Did you observe threats targeted at potential voters?	Yes	No	NA	
5	<i>Vote Buying.</i> Did you observe instances of voters being offered rewards in exchange for votes?	Yes	No	NA	
6	<i>Electioneering at Polling Station.</i> Did you observe electioneering at the polling stations?	Yes	No	NA	
7	<i>Secret Ballot.</i> Was the right to a secret ballot guaranteed?	Yes	No	NA	
8	<i>Secure Ballot.</i> Have all ballots been properly supervised and secured during the voting?	Yes	No	NA	
9	<i>Dispute Resolution.</i> Were complaints and disputes dealt with in a fair and timely manner?	Yes	No	NA	
10	<i>Political Party Representatives.</i> Did the main political parties have representatives present at the polling station?	All	Some	None	NA
11	<i>National Observers.</i> Were national electoral observers present at the polling stations?	Yes	No	NA	
12	<i>General Impression.</i> In general, the voting process at the polling station that you observed was...	Very good	Good	Bad	Very bad



TABLE 7. ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELECTORAL OBSERVERS V



**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)
ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (EOM)**

Country: ..., Date ...

ELECTION-DAY QUESTIONNAIRE (PART 5)

Name of Observer : _____

E	Evaluation in light of observations made at a polling station during any moment of the day	Answer (write in your answer)			Station 1	Station 2	Station 3	Station 4	Station 5	Station 6	Station 7	Station 8	Station 9	Station 10
		Yes	No	NA (Not applicable)										
1	<i>Voter Education.</i> Did voters appear to understand when, where and how to vote?	Yes	No	NA (Not applicable)										
2	<i>Exclusion of Registered Voters.</i> Were registered voters prevented from voting, because of problems with the electoral rolls, voting hours or other reasons?	Yes	No	NA										
3	<i>Ballot Design.</i> Has the design of the ballot and/or the voting mechanism made it likely that voters are able to record their preferences accurately?	Yes	No	NA										
4	<i>Voter Intimidation.</i> Did you observe threats targeted at potential voters?	Yes	No	NA										
5	<i>Vote Buying.</i> Did you observe instances of voters being offered rewards in exchange for votes?	Yes	No	NA										
6	<i>Electioneering at Polling Station.</i> Did you observe electioneering at the polling stations?	Yes	No	NA										
7	<i>Secret Ballot.</i> Was the right to a secret ballot guaranteed?	Yes	No	NA										
8	<i>Secure Ballot.</i> Have all ballots been properly supervised and secured during the voting?	Yes	No	NA										
9	<i>Dispute Resolution.</i> Were complaints and disputes dealt with in a fair and timely manner?	Yes	No	NA										
10	<i>Political Party Representatives.</i> Did the main political parties have representatives present at the polling station?	All Some None NA												
11	<i>National Observers.</i> Were national electoral observers present at the polling stations?	Yes	No	NA										
12	<i>General Impression.</i> In general, the voting process at the polling station that you observed was...	Very good	Good	Bad	Very bad									



significantly, it is possible that certain issues considered important to the work of observation are not addressed in the questionnaire. Thus, additional questions might need to be added to address elements of the electoral law, such as the technology used in voting, and so on.⁸ At the same time, it is crucial to never eliminate questions from the questionnaire, since the standard set of questions is needed to assess whether elections are democratic or not in a comparable manner.

3) Training the Observers

The quality of the data obtained through this questionnaire is largely determined by the extent to which observers understand the questions being asked and do their job as observers well. For this reason, it is vital that observers are properly trained. In particular, three points deserve highlighting.

The purpose of each part of the questionnaire should be explained, copies of the appropriate parts of the questionnaire should be distributed (in the necessary quantity) to each observer, and those observers who have been assigned a polling station that is part of a representative sample should receive clear instructions that they must report from the same designated polling station at the three specified times of the day (the opening of the polls, around mid-day, and the closing of the polls). Observers that have not been assigned a polling station that is part of a representative sample could also be assigned polling stations to visit at three specified times of the day (the assignment of polling stations is generally done by the regional coordinator).

It is also important to stress that observers should answer questions based exclusively on what they observe at a specific polling station and, where relevant, a specific polling center, and not based on information they might have learned through the media or through unverified second-hand sources. In addition, the meaning of the questions should be discussed so that the terminology used in the specific country is understood and the legal framework of the country is grasped. Indeed, as part of the training of election observers, it is imperative to fully brief observers regarding electoral laws (the instructions manual prepared by the electoral authorities to train polling station officials

is the most accessible source of information and should be distributed to each observer). In addition, the glossary included in this manual (see Appendix III) could be distributed to each observer.

Finally, observers should be given instructions regarding when and how they should communicate their responses to the questionnaire to the Communication Center, which has a bank of telephones and is located at the mission's headquarters. The instructions regarding the transmission, as well as the recording, of information at different times are as follows:

I. *Observers who are part of the quick count* or otherwise have been assigned to a polling station that is part of a representative sample

Polling stations: Conduct 3 visits to the polling station assigned by the mission headquarters, at the opening of the polls, at 1 p.m., and at the closing of the polls.

Questionnaire: Fill out parts 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Transmission of data:

Part 1 of questionnaire: call the Communication Center between 8 and 9 a.m.

Part 2 of questionnaire: call the Communication Center between 1 and 2 p.m.

Parts 3 and 4 of questionnaire: In the case that a quick count is carried out, after calling in the data for the quick count, the observers must wait to be called from the Communication Center (it is critical that the observers remain in a location where they can be reached over the phone). In the case a quick count is not done, call after the closing of the polling station.

⁸ When electronic voting is involved, it is essential to rely on the analysis of an Information Technology Specialist and also to include a distinct battery of questions in the questionnaire. On a methodology that is appropriate in the context of electronic voting, see The Carter Center, *Developing a Methodology for Observing Electronic Voting* (Atlanta, Georgia: The Carter Center, October 2007).



II. *Observers who are not part of the quick count (or otherwise have not been assigned to a polling station that is part of a representative sample) but who will visit a polling station on 3 occasions*

Polling stations: Conduct 3 visits to the polling station assigned by the regional coordinator, at the opening of the polls, at 1 p.m., and at the closing of the polls.

Questionnaire: Fill out parts 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Transmission of data:

Part 1 of questionnaire: call the Communication Center between 9 and 10 a.m.

Part 2 of questionnaire: call the Communication Center between 2 and 3 p.m.

Parts 3 and 4 of questionnaire: send by fax and/or hand in to regional coordinator the night of the election or the next day. The regional coordinator will bring the filled out questionnaires to the headquarters the day after the election and hand them in to the Questionnaire Specialist.

III. *All observers*

Polling stations: Any polling stations visited by observers.

Questionnaire: Fill out part 5.

Transmission of data: send by fax and/or hand in to regional coordinator the night of the election or the next day. The regional coordinator will bring the filled out questionnaires to the headquarters the day after the election and hand them in to the Questionnaire Specialist.

4) Training the Personnel in the Communication Center

On the day before the election, the personnel who will receive the responses to the questionnaires over the phone should be trained. The information from the observers is recorded in sheets similar to those that are handed out to the observers. It is important to record information about the specific polling station about which the observer is relaying their observations. Other than that, the personnel at the Communication Center should read each question (or, at least, the numbers of each question) and the

observer should give the answer they have recorded in their questionnaire. When the personnel at the Communication Center is also responsible for receiving the data for the quick count, they should be instructed on the procedures to be followed after the closing of the polling stations, that is, that observers who gather data for the quick count will first call in that information and that these same observers will subsequently be called from the Communication Center to retrieve their responses to parts 3 and 4 of the questionnaire.

5) Training the Personnel in the Computer Center

On the day before the election it is also necessary to train the person/s in charge of entering, into an Excel document, the data from the questionnaires that will be received over the phone on election day. The data are entered into specially designed Excel spreadsheets, which contain instructions on how the data should be entered. The job of data entry is largely carried out on election day, since it is imperative to deliver the results of the questionnaire that are based on a representative sample of polling stations to the Chief and Deputy Chief of the mission on the election day itself. However, given that questionnaires (or parts of the questionnaire) filled out by observers who were not assigned to a polling station that is part of a representative sample will be brought to the mission headquarters the day after the election (and sometimes later), this job can continue for a day or more after the elections.

6) Preparing for Data Entry, Processing and Presentation

On the day before the election, the Questionnaire Specialist should ensure that the Excel documents into which data will be entered, and which will be used to process the data, are adequately prepared. Though a standardized document is provided, any adjustments to the questionnaire will require an adjustment to this standardized document, and since the processing of the data is done automatically, through formulas included in the Excel document, any adjustments require the inclusion of the appropriate formulas to process the data.

In addition, the name of the country and date of the election should be included in this document, and the names of the



observers who are part of the quick count and the location from which these observers will be reporting should be entered into the Excel document used for data entry. Since one of the things the Questionnaire Specialist must verify on election day is that the observers are actually reporting from their assigned polling sites, this information (which the person in charge of the quick count or the selection of polling sites that are part of a representative sample should share with the Questionnaire Specialist) is critical.

Finally, the Excel document includes standard forms for presenting the aggregate results of the questionnaire, consisting essentially of the percentages of observers who respond in different ways to each question. These forms must be contextualized, just as the questionnaire, by adding specifics, such as the name of country, the date of the elections and the acronyms of parties. Indeed, any adjustment to the questionnaire should be reflected in these forms. Also, so as to expedite the presentation of results on election day, any graphical presentations of the results of the questionnaire that might be considered convenient should be ready on the day before the election.

7) Data Entry, Processing and Presentation

On election day, data are entered into the corresponding Excel document as it is called in by the observers to the Communication Center. Particular attention should be paid to ensure that the observers who are part of the quick count (or a designated polling station) are reporting from their assigned polling stations. If they are not doing so, the observers should be contacted and asked to go to and report from their assigned polling station. It is also critical to avoid introducing errors in the data entry phase, to double check the entered data for any mistakes, to return to the hard copy to verify that the correct response has been entered, and even to call the observer if there is any doubt regarding the observer's answer to a question.

Once all the observers have called in their responses to a part of the questionnaire and these responses have been entered into the computer, the data are processed and the results are produced. Most of this process has been automated, but the comments

offered in response to the open-ended questions have to be transferred manually. Finally, the results are presented to the Chief and Deputy Chief of the mission. The results of questionnaires filled out by observers assigned to a polling station that is part of a representative sample should be delivered on election day itself (in the morning, early afternoon, and evening); the rest of the results should be presented as soon as the remaining questionnaires have been processed.

The results based on responses of observers that are part of the quick count, or that otherwise have been assigned to a polling station that is part of a representative sample, should be considered the more accurate depiction of national trends. The results from other observers are used to check whether the tendencies revealed by the representative sample are confirmed or not. In all cases, however, it is important to note that the results garnered through the questionnaire are based on a relatively small sample of observers and that they should be interpreted with caution, as one more source of information used in evaluating the electoral process. In particular, it is necessary to bear in mind that the observers have many other duties aside from completing questionnaires, such as making the OAS presence known and felt in several polling centers. After all, observers not only seek to detect but also to dissuade any attempts to manipulate the people's will expressed through the polls or any other electoral irregularity. Thus, when evaluating the questionnaire's results, it is important to bear in mind that observers have other roles aside from collecting data.

To complete the assignment, the Questionnaire Specialist should gather all the hard copies of the questionnaire, electronic versions of the results of the questionnaire, and the Excel document with the questionnaire and all the data, and ensure that it is all handed over to a member of the permanent staff of the OAS Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) for archiving in the EOM files.



V. THE DOCUMENT OF INDICATORS ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

An assessment of an electoral process must address diverse issues that go well beyond the things that can be observed on election day at polling sites. The electoral process entails many events on election day outside of the polling sites and, most critically, both before and after election day. Indeed, as it is widely recognized, the process leading up to election day and also after election day can have a determinative impact on the democratic nature of an election. Thus, OAS electoral observation

missions supplement the questionnaire administered on election day with other sources of information.

To offer a more complete assessment of elections, the OAS collects information about a wide range of indicators that tap into all aspects of the concept of democratic elections and that are presented in a Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process prepared by the Indicators Specialist. This section discusses the

TABLE 8. A GUIDE FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION ON THE INDICATORS

Attribute	Components of Attributes	Sub-Components of Attributes	Issue at Stake
<i>I. Inclusive Elections</i>	1. Universal and equal suffrage		Who is legally allowed to vote?
	2. Conditions for the use of the right to vote	2. i. Registration	Are there significant legal or other hurdles to register to vote?
		2. ii. Electoral roll	Is the information in the electoral roll accurate?
		2. iii. Polling station access	Are there significant legal or other hurdles to get to a polling station or otherwise cast a vote?
	2. iv. Vote casting	Are all eligible and willing voters able to cast their vote and do so as intended?	
<i>II. Clean Elections</i>	3. Integrity of voter preferences		Are voters able to vote without any outside pressure or fear of reprisals?
	4. Faithful recording of voter preferences		Are all ballots scrutinized (i.e., checked and counted) and/or tabulated (i.e. aggregated) impartially and accurately?



work of the Indicators Specialist. It first presents a guide for the collection of information on the indicators. Next it addresses the role of the Indicators Specialist in gathering this information. Finally, it discusses the preparation and the uses of the Document of Indicators.

1) A Guide for Collecting Information on the Indicators

To direct the collection of information used in the Document of Indicators, a guide has been developed. This guide specifies what information is relevant to each aspect of the concept of democratic elections, what are the relevant sources, and when the observation

and collection of information regarding each aspect should take place (see Table 8).

The information collected according to these guidelines is extensive, largely of a qualitative nature but also quantitative, and calls for research and observation work over a prolonged period of time.⁹ To gather all the information needed to provide a thorough assessment of an election, it is imperative to rely on multiple

⁹ Ideally, the work of the Indicators Specialist would start four months before election day.

Relevant Information	Relevant Sources	Observation Times
Exclusions of any adults (18 years and older).	Constitution, laws and regulations.	Before the elections.
Documentation required to register to vote, residency requirements, and voter registration procedures (e.g. automatic registration, centralized vs. decentralized registration, registration period).	Constitution, laws and regulations; decisions by the electoral authorities.	Before the elections.
Regular updating of electoral roll, mechanisms for challenging incorrect inclusions or exclusions or other inaccuracies, response to petitions for corrections of the electoral roll.	Decisions by the electoral authorities; electoral roll.	Before, and during, the elections.
Voting sites close to place of current residence, mobile voting, absentee voting, and external voting.	Constitution, laws and regulations; electoral observer reports.	Before, and during, the elections.
Exclusion of registered voters at the polling station, provisional ballot, ballot design, voter education on where and how to vote.	Data from the Electoral Observers' Questionnaire; constitution, laws and regulations; election materials; electoral authority programs.	Before, and during, the elections.
Secret ballot, voter intimidation, vote buying, electioneering at polling station, campaigning on election day.	Data from the Electoral Observers' Questionnaire; constitution, laws and regulations; election materials; electoral observer reports.	Before, and during, the elections.
Secure ballot and protection of the voting returns protocol, at every relevant stage in the electoral process; vote counting and totalization that is not a reflection of the votes legally cast by voters, number of contested ballots and extent to which they are resolved impartially and in a way that is consistent with the intent of the voter, number of null or invalid ballots, oversight of all stages of the vote count by accredited representatives of parties and/or candidates, prompt publication of results, prompt and impartial resolution of disputes, possibility of access to and auditing of all and any materials and mechanisms used to arrive at total and final vote results.	Data from the Electoral Observers' Questionnaire; constitution, laws and regulations; exit polls; quick counts; official count; electoral observer reports.	Before, during, and after the elections.

Table continues on page 20



TABLE 8. A GUIDE FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION ON THE INDICATORS (CONTINUED)

Attribute	Components of Attributes	Sub-Components of Attributes	Issue at Stake
<i>III. Competitive Elections</i>	5. Right to run for office		Are there unreasonable legal hurdles to become a candidate?
	6. Basic guarantees for an electoral campaign	6. i. Equal security	Is the physical security of all candidates and party personnel guaranteed?
		6. ii. Equal opportunity	Do candidates compete on a level playing field?
		6. iii. Right to a free press and to information	Do the voters have access to the information needed to make an informed choice when they cast their votes?
	6. iv. Freedom of association, assembly, expression, and movement	Are candidates for office and the electorate allowed to organize and interact freely?	
<i>IV. Elective Public Offices</i>	7. Regular elections for top national offices		Are the main political offices (i.e., the national executive and legislature) filled through regular elections?
	8. Irreversibility of electoral results		Are the winners of elections duly installed in office?

sources, of known reliability, and, when possible, on the direct observations by the EOM members. In fact, an assessment of an electoral process requires that an EOM be able to observe and gather information regarding an electoral process broadly understood.

2) The Indicators Specialist as a Resource Coordinator and Researcher

The collection of this information depends on the efforts of many members of an observation mission. It relies particularly on the information and analysis provided by the different experts who

are part of the mission's Core Group of Experts. It should consider the mission's technical and political reports, and the reports written by the regional coordinators. It also draws on the answers of the questionnaires filled out by observers and the results of these questionnaires produced by the Questionnaire Specialist. Thus, one of the key tasks of the Indicators Specialist is to serve as a resource coordinator, collecting the diverse materials produced by each of the mission's members. Indeed, one of the main aims in preparing the Document of Indicators is to provide an encompassing and integrated depiction of the electoral process and, to this end, it is imperative to ensure the necessary



Relevant Information	Relevant Sources	Observation Times
Prohibition of multiple candidacies, political bans, unjustifiably constraining legal requirements to form a political party and/or run for office.	Constitution, laws and regulations.	Before the elections.
Violence against, and/or intimidation of, candidates, party leaders or activists; legal harassment of candidates.	Electoral observer reports and news reports.	Before, and during, the elections.
Use of state resources, predictable rules, financing of parties and electoral campaigns, access to the mass media.	Constitution, laws and regulations; electoral observer reports; reports from the electoral authority.	Before, and during, the elections.
Media content, intimidation of journalists, use of opinion polls, structure of media ownership, access to information about the government, presentation of candidate's platforms.	Constitution, laws and regulations; yearly and other reports from the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR); electoral observer reports.	Before, and during, the elections.
Bans on social organizations; threats against, and intimidation of, citizen groups; restrictions on travel throughout the territory.	Constitution, laws and regulations; yearly and other reports from the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR); electoral observer reports.	Before, and during, the elections.
Unelected officials in high offices, suspension of elections, postponement of elections.	Constitution, laws and regulations; news reports.	Before the elections. After the elections.
Annulment of election results; illegal proclamation of election results.	News reports.	

coordination within the EOM and the centralization of the flow of information.

The job of the Indicators Specialist also extends to conducting research to fill any gap in the gathering of information that is required to address all central aspects of the electoral process. This aspect of the Indicators Specialist's job includes, but is not restricted to, research on the constitution, the political party and election laws, resolutions of the electoral authority, and any other document that shapes the legal framework of the electoral process.¹⁰

3) Preparing the Document of Indicators

The Indicators Specialist is responsible for the writing of the Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process. This document provides a comprehensive view of an electoral process, organizing the presentation and analysis of all the information that has been

¹⁰ On one particularly important issue, the role of the media, it is advisable to incorporate a Media Specialist in the Electoral Observation Mission. For a useful methodological discussion on the monitoring of the media, see Council of Europe, Venice Commission, *Guidelines on Media Analysis during Election Observation Missions* (Strasbourg, Study n° 285/2004, CDL-AD(2005)032), 2005).



gathered according to the categories used to define the concept of electoral democracy (see Table 8). Moreover, to facilitate its comprehension, this document includes a summary table that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the electoral process, indicator by indicator (see Table 9).

In preparing this document, the Indicators Specialist should refer to examples of the document prepared in the context of previous missions and consult with other members of the EOM. Once the Document of Indicators is complete, all the materials gathered by the Indicators Specialist should be delivered to a member of the permanent staff of the Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) for archiving, and the Document of Indicators should be given to the Chief and Deputy

Chief of the mission and the Director of the OAS Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO).

4) Using the Document of Indicators

The Document of Indicators serves as an input for the Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission, and for the OAS headquarters in Washington, in their final and overall evaluation of an electoral process. As a comprehensive and systematically organized presentation of the information gathered by the EOM, the Document of Indicators provides a basis for arriving at an overall evaluation of an electoral process, for identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and for making recommendations towards future electoral processes in a given country.

TABLE 9. A SUMMARY TABLE OF ELECTORAL INDICATORS

Aspect	Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>I. Inclusive Elections</i>		
1. Universal and equal suffrage		
2. Conditions for the use of the right to vote		
2. i. Registration		
2. ii. Electoral roll		
2. iii. Polling station access		
2. iv. Vote casting		
<i>II. Clean Elections</i>		
3. Integrity of voter preferences		
4. Faithful recording of voter preferences		
<i>III. Competitive Elections</i>		
5. Right to run for office		
6. Basic guarantees for an electoral campaign		
6. i. Equal security		
6. ii. Equal opportunity		
6. iii. Right to a free press and to information		
6. iv. Freedom of association, assembly, expression, and movement		
<i>IV. Elective Public Offices</i>		
7. Regular elections for top national offices		
8. Irreversibility of electoral results		



At the same time, in using the information in the Document of Indicators, the following considerations should be kept in mind. Regarding the results of the election-day questionnaire for electoral observers, as noted above, it is important to bear in mind that observers have other roles aside from collecting data. In turn, regarding the information presented in the Document of Indicators on the Electoral Process, it is particularly critical to take into consideration the length of the mission and the resources available for its execution, and how these factors might affect the quality and scope of the information collected by the EOMs. The ability of an EOM to gather information on all aspects of an electoral process is largely shaped by the amount of time the EOM spends in the field and the thoroughness with which it is able to look into certain aspects of the electoral process, especially those that take place during the pre-election period. Thus, these matters should be considered in drawing conclusions from the Document of Indicators.

More broadly, in using the Document of Indicators to arrive at conclusions about an electoral process, the possibility of making two types of mistakes should be kept in mind. On the one hand, it is possible to believe that certain information points to the occurrence of irregularities in an election, when this is not the case. This could happen if the EOM's information is incorrect or if too much weight is given to very specific problems that have been detected. On the other hand, it is possible to believe that the information collected by the EOM does not point to any irregularities in the election, when these have actually occurred. This is possible if the EOM does not detect irregularities, for instance, because it was denied access to certain key aspects of the electoral process or simply because it was not present in the country long enough to collect first-hand information about certain events and aspects of the electoral process. Therefore, it is essential to note that although the information collected by the EOMs is a key input for the electoral observation exercise, it still requires meticulous interpretation.



VI. CONCLUSION

The methodology outlined in this manual responds to the demand that OAS election observation missions (EOMs) be conducted “in an objective, impartial, and transparent manner” (Inter-American Democratic Charter, Art. 24). It aims at systematizing the practice of electoral observation and standardizing the information that is gathered by each EOM. The products of this methodology provide both quantitative and qualitative input for the Organization to prepare a final report based on first-hand observations while at the same time seeking to

systematize and standardize its work. In other words, these products provide a rigorous basis for arriving at an overall evaluation of an electoral process, for identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and for making recommendations. In short, the methods discussed in this manual seek to contribute to the professionalization and standardization of electoral observation and the credibility of the work on election observation that the OAS carries out in the Americas.



APPENDIX I: CRITERIA FOR ELECTORAL OBSERVATION

Article 24 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter states that “Electoral observation missions shall be carried out in accordance with the principles and norms of the OAS”. Hence, the basic criteria or standards for electoral observation used by OAS election observation missions are drawn from instruments, elaborated and subscribed to by the OAS member states. The various rights related to electoral processes consecrated in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, as well as the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (1948) and the American Convention on Human Rights (1969), are listed

in the following Table.¹¹ Thereafter, excerpts of the relevant articles from these instruments of the Inter-American system are presented.

¹¹ For an analysis of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, see Humberto de la Calle (ed.), *Inter-American Democratic Charter: Documents and Interpretations* (Washington, DC: OAS, 2003). For a discussion of the benchmarks regarding elections established in various OAS documents, as well as in the similar documents of other regional and global organizations, see Mark Stevens and Anders Eriksson (eds.), *Benchmarking for Electoral Standards: A Guide for European Union Election Observation Missions* (London: ERIS, n.d.).

ELECTION-RELATED RIGHTS ENSHRINED IN THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM

Right	Instrument		
	American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (1948)	American Convention on Human Rights (1969)	Inter-American Democratic Charter (2001)
Right to democracy			Art. I
Right to participate in government	Art. XX	Art. XXIII	
Periodic elections	Art. XX	Art. XXIII	Art. III
Free elections	Art. XX		Arts. III & XXIII
Fair elections			Arts. III & XXIII
Universal and equal suffrage	Art. XX	Art. XXIII	Art. III
Secret ballot	Art. XX	Art. XXIII	Art. III
Honest elections	Art. XX		
Right to participate directly in government	Art. XX	Art. XXIII	
Right of access to power			Art. III
Full and equal participation of women			Art. XXVIII
A pluralistic system of parties and organizations			Art. III
Right to security	Art. I	Art. VII	
A balanced and transparent system of financing election campaigns			Art. IV
A free press			Art. IV
Transparency in government activities			Art. IV
Right to petition	Art. XXIV		Art. VIII
Freedom of association	Art. XXII	Art. XVI	Art. III
Freedom of assembly	Art. XXI	Art. XV	
Freedom of expression	Art. IV	Art. XIII	Art. IV
Freedom of movement	Art. VIII	Art. XXII	
Right to basic civil rights	Art. XVII		
Right to equality	Art. II		
Elimination of all forms of discrimination		Art. I	Art. IX
Human rights			Art. III
Rule of law			Arts. III & IV
Fundamental freedoms			Art. III



Excerpts from the Instruments of the Inter-American System

Inter-American Democratic Charter (2001)

Article I. The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it.

Article III. Essential elements of representative democracy include, inter alia, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, access to and the exercise of power in accordance with the rule of law, the holding of periodic, free, and fair elections based on secret balloting and universal suffrage as an expression of the sovereignty of the people, the pluralistic system of political parties and organizations, and the separation of powers and independence of the branches of government.

Article IV. Transparency in government activities, probity, responsible public administration on the part of governments, respect for social rights, and freedom of expression and of the press are essential components of the exercise of democracy.

The constitutional subordination of all state institutions to the legally constituted civilian authority and respect for the rule of law on the part of all institutions and sectors of society are equally essential to democracy.

Article VIII. Any person or group of persons who consider that their human rights have been violated may present claims or petitions to the inter-American system for the promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with its established procedures.

Article IX. The elimination of all forms of discrimination, especially gender, ethnic and race discrimination, as well as diverse forms of intolerance, the promotion and protection of human rights of indigenous peoples and migrants, and respect for ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in the Americas contribute to strengthening democracy and citizen participation.

Article XXIII. Member states are responsible for organizing, conducting, and ensuring free and fair electoral processes.

Member states, in the exercise of their sovereignty, may request that the Organization of American States provide advisory services or assistance for strengthening and developing their electoral institutions and processes, including sending preliminary missions for that purpose.

Article XXVIII. States shall promote the full and equal participation of women in the political structures of their countries as a fundamental element in the promotion and exercise of a democratic culture.

American Convention on Human Rights (1969)

Article I. 1. The States Parties to this Convention undertake to respect the rights and freedoms recognized herein and to ensure to all persons subject to their jurisdiction the free and full exercise of those rights and freedoms, without any discrimination for reasons of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic status, birth, or any other social condition.

Article VII. 1. Every person has the right to personal liberty and security.

Article XIII. 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression. This right includes freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, in print, in the form of art, or through any other medium of one's choice.

Article XV. The right of peaceful assembly, without arms, is recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and necessary in a democratic society in the interest of national security, public safety or public order, or to protect public health or morals or the rights or freedom of others.



Article XVI. 1. Everyone has the right to associate freely for ideological, religious, political, economic, labor, social, cultural, sports, or other purposes.

Article XXII. 1. Every person lawfully in the territory of a State Party has the right to move about in it, and to reside in it subject to the provisions of the law.

Article XXIII. 1. Every citizen shall enjoy the following rights and opportunities:

1. To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
2. To vote and to be elected in genuine periodic elections, which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and by secret ballot that guarantees the free expression of the will of the voters

American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (1948)

Article I. Every human being has the right to life, liberty and the security of his person.

Article II. All persons are equal before the law and have the rights and duties established in this Declaration, without distinction as to race, sex, language, creed or any other factor.

Article IV. Every person has the right to freedom of investigation, of opinion, and of the expression and dissemination of ideas, by any medium whatsoever.

Article VIII. Every person has the right to fix his residence within the territory of the state of which he is a national, to move about freely within such territory, and not to leave it except by his own will.

Article XVII. Every person has the right to be recognized everywhere as a person having rights and obligations, and to enjoy the basic civil rights.

Article XX. Every person having legal capacity is entitled to participate in the government of his country, directly or through his representatives, and to take part in popular elections, which shall be by secret ballot, and shall be honest, periodic and free.

Article XXI. Every person has the right to assemble peaceably with others in a formal public meeting or an informal gathering, in connection with matters of common interest of any nature.

Article XXII. Every person has the right to associate with others to promote, exercise and protect his legitimate interests of a political, economic, religious, social, cultural, professional, labor union or other nature.

Article XXIV. Every person has the right to submit respectful petitions to any competent authority, for reasons of either general or private interest, and the right to obtain a prompt decision thereon.



APPENDIX II: A CHECKLIST OF TASKS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SPECIALIST

Preliminaries

- Read the manual.
- Review the questionnaire.

Adjusting the Questionnaire

- Enter the name of country, the date of the elections, and the acronyms of parties to all the parts of the questionnaire.
- Consult with the Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission regarding any adjustments to the questionnaire and any new questions that might be added, and implement the suggested adjustments.

Training the Observers

- Make copies of the questionnaire and distribute to the observers.
- Consult with the Logistics specialist regarding the phone numbers that will be used in the Communication Center to receive the answers to the questionnaire.
- Prepare a sheet, to be distributed to observers, with instructions concerning the filling out of the questionnaire and the transmission of responses to the questionnaire. Make sure this sheet includes the phone numbers at the Communication Center that the observers will call to convey their answers to the questionnaire.
- Explain to observers the purpose of the questionnaire, what polling sites they should observe at different times of the day, and when and how they should report back to the Communication Center.

Training the Personnel in the Communication Center

- Make copies of the questionnaire that will be used to receive the responses of the observers.
- Explain the procedures that will be followed to receive the responses of the observers.

Training the Personnel in the Computer Center

- Consult with the Logistics specialist regarding the availability of a computer for the data entry task.
- Explain to the Data Entry person the procedures that will be used to enter the data (the responses of the observers) into the Excel spreadsheet.
- Conduct a data entry exercise using simulated responses to the questionnaire.

Preparing for Data Entry, Processing and Presentation

- Make the needed modifications of the Excel spreadsheet in light of any changes made to the questionnaire.
- Conduct a test to ensure that all formulas in the Excel spreadsheet are correct.
- Ask the Logistics specialist for an electronic list of the observers who are assigned to the quick count, along with the location to which they have been assigned, and enter the names and polling sites into the appropriate spreadsheet.
- Enter the name of country, the date of the elections, and the acronyms of parties to the spreadsheets that are used to present the results of the questionnaire.



- Include any modifications to the questions, and add any new questions that were introduced into the questionnaire, to the spreadsheets that are used to present the results of the questionnaire and check to ensure that the links with spreadsheet into which the data are entered are working correctly.
- If the results of the questionnaire are going to be presented in graphical form, prepare these graphs ahead of time.
- Consult with the Logistics specialist regarding the availability of a printer to print out the results of the questionnaire and test the printer.

Data Entry, Processing and Presentation

- During data entry, ensure that the observers that are part of the quick count are reporting from their assigned polling station. If they are not, report this problem and contact the observer.
- During data entry, double check the entered data for any mistakes and call observers to clarify any doubts.
- After data entry is complete, transfer the responses to open-ended questions manually (using the cut-and-paste functions) to the spreadsheet used to present the results. Also add the information about the number of observers in this spreadsheet.
- Once the results are obtained, check them once more, print them out, and present them to the Chief and Deputy Chief of the mission.

Archiving

- Gather all the hard copies of the questionnaire, electronic versions of the results of the questionnaire, and the Excel document with the questionnaire and all the data, and hand over to a member of the permanent staff of the Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO).



APPENDIX III: A GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS USED IN ELECTION OBSERVATION

Absentee ballot. A vote cast by a means other than going to a polling station. See postal vote and proxy vote.

Abstentionism, Voter. The failure to vote on the part of people who have the right to vote. See turnout, voter.

Anomalies. Anomalies refer to unusual behavior involving any aspect of the electoral process. Anomalies may indicate the presence of irregularities or fraud.

Anti-system party. A party that does not support democracy

Ballot. Another term for vote.

Ballot box. A sealed box, with a slit in the lid, into which voters place their ballots.

Ballot box stuffing. The placement of fraudulent ballots into a ballot box.

Ballot paper. The paper on which a vote is marked. It contains a list of all candidates standing in a constituency or the options to be determined in a referendum or plebiscite.

Ballot screen. The representation on a monitor screen of a ballot.

Blank ballot. A ballot with no mark. Compare to invalid ballot.

Boundary Commission. A body that has the authority to drawing the geographic boundaries of electoral districts.

Campaign. The activities of political parties and candidates aimed at encouraging potential voters to vote for their party or candidacy.

Candidate. Someone putting themselves up for election.

Candidate, Independent. Someone putting themselves up for election who is not nominated by a party.

Civil registry. A list with a range of information about all citizens and that can be used to produce a list of people who are eligible to vote. Under this system of voter registration, citizens are typically registered to vote automatically, and changes in residence are usually reflected in voting registration status without any necessary action by the citizen.

Compulsory voting. The legal requirement that people who have the right to vote must vote. Also known as mandatory vote. Compare to voluntary voting.

Constituency. All the people who live in a geographical unit such as a congressional district.

Contested ballot. A ballot whose validity has been questioned and is not included in the vote count until a ruling has been issued on whether it should be counted as a valid vote or not.

Continuous register. A list of people who are eligible to vote that is constantly maintained and updated by elections officials. It is used in every successive election and evolves over time.

Convention. An election in which candidates for public office are chosen delegates at a convention rather than a direct vote of the people. Compare to primary election.

Count, Vote. See vote counting.

Counting center. The location where the votes for more than one polling station are counted and displayed on election night. Also known as tallying center or totalization center.

District, Electoral. An administrative electoral unit.



Election. The process of choosing, through voting, a particular nominated candidate (or candidates) to occupy some official position (or positions).

Election observers. International or domestic, non-partisan people that observe and report on the election process in a country. Also known as election monitors.

Elector. A person who elects others. Also known as voter.

Electoral authorities. The authorities entrusted with the administration of elections. They are frequently called electoral management bodies (EMBs).

Electoral dispute resolution bodies. Electoral authorities charged with resolving complaints, disputes, claims and contestations relating to the electoral process.

Electoral formula. The particular rules that determine the winner(s) of an election.

Electoral offence. Any action which breaches the electoral law.

Electoral register. See register, electoral.

Electronic vote counting. The electronic calculation of the results of an election after voting data has been loaded into a computer, either by manual data entry, the electronic scanning of ballots, the extraction of data from voting machines, or the downloading of information from a secure electronic vote store.

Electronic vote recording. A system where a voter records their vote on a voting machine and the vote is stored within the machine. When voting is finalized, data stored within the machine is transferred to the relevant counting center.

Electronic voting. Voting conducted using an electronic voting “kiosk,” that is, a computerized touch screen voting terminal located in a polling booth or voting compartment.

Enrolment. The act of adding one’s name to the list of electors entitled to vote. Same as voter registration.

Exit poll. A survey asking people how they voted just after they left the polling station.

External voting. Voting by citizens living outside their country of origin.

Franchise. The right to vote. Also known as suffrage.

Fraud. An act carried out with the deliberate intent to alter the results of an election. Fraud may occur in isolated cases, affecting a single candidate or a particular geographical area, or it may be widespread, affecting the electoral process as a whole. Compare to irregularities.

General election. An election carried out on the entire territory of a country.

Gerrymander. The redrawing of a voting district to the advantage of a party or group. See redistricting.

Invalid ballot. Ballot paper that has been filled in incorrectly. Also known as null or void ballots. Compare to blank ballot.

Irregularities. Irregularities are administrative or organizational shortcomings or defects resulting from incompetence, ignorance, or simple human error. Common examples include the failure to open polling stations on time, the absence of staff at polling stations, and the failure to include a voter’s name on the rolls. Irregularities may be isolated or widespread. Compare to fraud.

Itinerant elector. A person who does not have a permanent address, but whose name has been placed on the electoral roll.

List of candidates. A list of candidates nominated by a party or parties in order to take part in elections.

Mandatory voting. See compulsory vote.



Mobile voting. Voting conducted in portable voting compartments and ballot boxes, which have been brought by election officials to potential voters.

Nomination of candidates. The process by which an individual seeks to formally contest an election or ballot as a candidate.

Official election results. Election results published by the appropriate electoral official containing all the information required by law.

Opinion poll. A survey asking people's opinion on one or more issues.

Party election broadcast. Broadcasts made by the parties and transmitted on TV or radio. By agreement with the broadcasters, each party is allowed a certain number according to its election strength and number of candidates fielded.

Periodic list. A list of people who are eligible to vote that is constructed from scratch before every election, and is used only for the purposes of a single election.

Personation. The offense of impersonating someone else in order to use their vote.

Platform. A political party's formal written statement of its principles, policies, and goals.

Plebiscite. A direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal. The term is frequently used interchangeably with referendum.

Political party. An organization that, among other things, promotes the election of a candidate or candidates endorsed by it.

Poll. Another word for an election.

Polling officials. The staff responsible for overseeing polling and administering the electoral laws in regard to the conduct of the poll at a polling station. Their responsibilities commonly include checking the electoral register to verify that the voter is eligible to cast a vote at that particular polling station, ensuring that ballot boxes are kept secure, counting the ballots, and filling in a voting return protocol. See presiding officer.

Polling station. The location where people go to cast their votes. Also polls or polling place or voting center.

Polling station committee. Also known as electoral committee of the polling station. See polling officials and presiding officer.

Postal vote. A vote sent by mail.

Pre-poll vote. A vote cast before polling day at a pre-poll voting center by electors who will not be able to vote on polling day.

Presiding officer. The head polling officer. See polling officials.

Primary election. An election to select a party's candidates for public office. Primaries can be direct or indirect (for e.g. a convention), and if direct, they can be open or closed. See primary, direct; convention; primary, open; primary, closed.

Primary, Closed. A direct primary election in which the voters must declare party affiliation and may vote only for candidates of their party.

Primary, Direct. An election in which candidates for public office are chosen by direct vote of the people rather than by delegates at a convention. Compare to convention.

Primary, Open. A direct primary election in which the voter does not need to declare party affiliation.

Proportional representation. Systems of allotting seats in parliament which seeks to give parties a number of seats in parliament relatively similar to their level of voting support.



Protest vote. A vote for the candidate that is cast not to elect that candidate, but to indicate disapproval of the major political parties and their candidates.

Protocol of voting returns. See voting returns protocol.

Provisional ballot. A ballot that is cast in cases when a voter's eligible to vote cannot be determined at the polling station. Subsequently, a decision is made whether to count the vote or not.

Proxy vote. A vote cast by someone appointed to vote on behalf of a voter who is not able to go to a polling station.

Public funding. The financing, through public resources, of the electoral activities of candidates and parties.

Quick count. A forecast of electoral results based on actual observation of the vote count in statistically significant, randomly selected polling places. Also known as “sample-based parallel vote tabulation” or “sample-based quick count.”

Recall election. An election held for the purpose of allowing the voters of a jurisdiction to decide whether an elected official shall be recalled from office.

Recheck. A recheck is a normal procedure undertaken before a vote count is conducted. All polling place figures and ballot papers are re-examined. Compare to recount.

Recount. A new count of the votes. It is sometimes requested by a candidate, especially when the results of an election are close. Compare to recheck.

Redistricting. The process of redrawing the geographic boundaries of electoral districts. See gerrymander.

Referendum. A direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal. The term is frequently used interchangeably with plebiscite.

Register, Electoral. A list of all those in a constituency entitled to vote. Also known as electoral roll.

Registration of candidates. The process by which an individual formally becomes a candidate. It involves filing nomination papers for public office.

Roll, Electoral. See register, electoral.

Runoff election. A second election in a two-round system, in which the two candidates with the most votes in the first round face off.

Scrutineer. A person formally appointed (usually be candidate) to represent the candidate's (or an organization's) interests in the election process and to observe voting and the scrutiny of ballot papers.

Scrutiny. The checking and counting of ballot papers to ascertain the result of an election.

Secret ballot. A ballot in which the voter's expressed preference cannot be known to anyone else.

Secure ballot. A ballot that cannot be tampered with or altered in any way, and hence that safely records the preferences of voters legally entitled to vote.

Spoiled ballot. A ballot that cannot be used. A spoiled ballot could be one that is returned to the voting officer at the voting station because the voter may have marked it incorrectly and requires another ballot to vote. A spoiled ballot may also be one that is improperly printed, torn, or marked in a way that could be linked to an individual voter and does not guarantee vote secrecy.

Suffrage. The right of a person to vote in elections. Also known as franchise.

Tabulation. See vote tabulation.



Tallying centers. See counting center.

Threshold. In a proportional representation system, the minimum portion of the total vote that a party must receive in order to receive any seats in the legislature. Known technically as the threshold of exclusion because if a party reaches this threshold it cannot be excluded from winning a seat. Also known as quota.

Totalization. See vote totalization.

Transmission. The transfer of results from polling stations to counting centers.

Turnout, Voter. The number or percentage of voters who cast a vote in a given election. It can be calculated relative to all those who have the right to vote or all those who are registered to vote. It is used as a measure of voter abstentionism. See abstentionism, voter.

Unenrolled elector. A person who is not on the roll at the polling station where he or she reports to vote.

Universal and equal suffrage. The right for all adults, over the age of 18, to cast one vote in each race or electoral contest.

Validation. The process of validating a person's entitlement to have their vote admitted to the count. Also referred to as voter entitlement check.

Voluntary voting. The option given to those who have the right to vote to vote or not. Compare to compulsory voting.

Vote. The formal act of an elector in an election to choose the candidate of the elector's preference.

Vote counting. A term usually used to refer to the initial count of votes carried out at polling stations and that is recorded in a voting returns protocol that serves as basis for the vote totalization carried out at counting centers. See voting returns protocol.

Vote tabulation. The adding up of vote totals. Similar to vote totalization.

Vote totalization. A term usually used to refer to the adding up of votes at counting centers, as opposed to polling station. Totalization relied on data submitted by polling station officials. Similar to vote tabulation. Compare to vote counting.

Voter. Those people who vote in an election. Also known as elector.

Voter registration. The process of adding a person who has the right to vote to the electoral register. Same as enrolment. Voter registration can rely on a periodic list, a continuous register, or a civil registry. See periodic list, continuous register, and civil registry.

Voting machine. A device that records and totals votes cast in an election.

Voting returns protocol. Official document with voting results of individual polling stations that is forwarded to a counting center. Also known as ballot account form.

