


Electoral Observation and Conflict Prevention

**THEMATIC WORKSHOP ON ELECTIONS, VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT
PREVENTION**

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A dark, semi-transparent background image showing a UN peacekeeping vehicle. A soldier in a blue helmet and tactical vest is standing on a white lift platform attached to the vehicle. The vehicle has 'UN' written on its side. In the background, there are multi-story buildings, suggesting an urban environment. The overall tone is somber and professional.

“One month of international election observation costs us far less than one day of international peacekeeping”

Chris Patten, 2000

Election Observation: Definitions

- “Electoral observation is the “purposeful gathering of information regarding an electoral process, and the making of informed judgments on the conduct of such a process on the basis of the information collected” (*International IDEA Code of Conduct 1997*)
- “Election observation is the political complement to electoral assistance” (*Ibidem*)
- “Observation involves the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of an electoral process and the presentation of recommendations. This provides an important basis for deciding on further assistance”
(*EC WP on the Implementation of COM 2000/191, SEC 03/1472*)
- “Election observation and electoral assistance are two separate but complementary pillars of the EU Support to Electoral processes” (*EC Methodological Guide*)

Another definition

- Snapshot evaluation of the state of democracy in the partner country in a very specific moment
- Two tiered evaluation:
 - 1) Assessing how the host country meets its own obligations for democratic elections enshrined in international instruments
 - 2) Assessing the eventual gap between the observed practice on the ground and the host country legislation

What are the aims of election observation?

- Provide independent, neutral and professional assessment of the election process
- Enhance public confidence
- Deter fraud, irregularities and intimidation
- Contribute to conflict prevention and resolution
- Assess the extent to which international commitment are adhered to by the host country

What are the aims of election observation?

- **It's not about standards!!!**

What observation does not do

- Interferes with the election process while it is ongoing
- Certifies or validates the process
- Produce immediate changes in the electoral framework
- Indicate specific solution to identified shortcomings

Violence Inhibitors

- In highly polarised settings, it can be crucial for the results to be accepted both internally and externally
- Provides balanced assessment without playing down the flaws of the process
- Calls on stakeholders to channel grievances through complaint and appeal mechanisms
- The PRESENCE of international observers in itself may deter violence or electoral fraud

Violence Inhibitors

- Increases the electorate's confidence in the process by adding transparency to an election;
- Places pressures on the stakeholders to behave according to the rules of the game
- Defuses tensions between parties by encouraging parties and candidates to accept the election results (if not rigged);

Violence Triggers

- In highly polarised contexts, maintaining neutrality might prove extremely difficult.
- Observers can be easily manipulated
- Impartiality is NOT neutrality
- The recognition that an electoral process is flawed runs the risk of instigating conflict rather than defusing it
- BUT, playing down flaws for the sake of stability can lead to long-term tension and conflict

A dark, grainy photograph of a group of people running down a street. In the foreground, a man in a light-colored tunic is running towards the right, holding a long stick high in his right hand. To his right, another person is running, partially visible. In the background, several other people are running in the same direction, some also holding sticks. The scene appears to be outdoors, with buildings and trees visible in the distance. The overall tone is somber and urgent.

“The April elections were heralded as among the fairest in Nigeria's history, but they also were among the bloodiest”

***Corinne Dufka
Senior West Africa researcher
Human Rights Watch***



***“Time to stop this Franco-American
combine and let Ivorians be ruled by their
legitimately elected president”***

**Laurent Gbagbo
Abidjan, January 2011**

ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF KENYA

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION / PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

DECLARATION OF ELECTION RESULTS AT: STATION 1 LAMIA LAMIA

POLLING STATION: NAKURU TOWN CONSTITUENCY

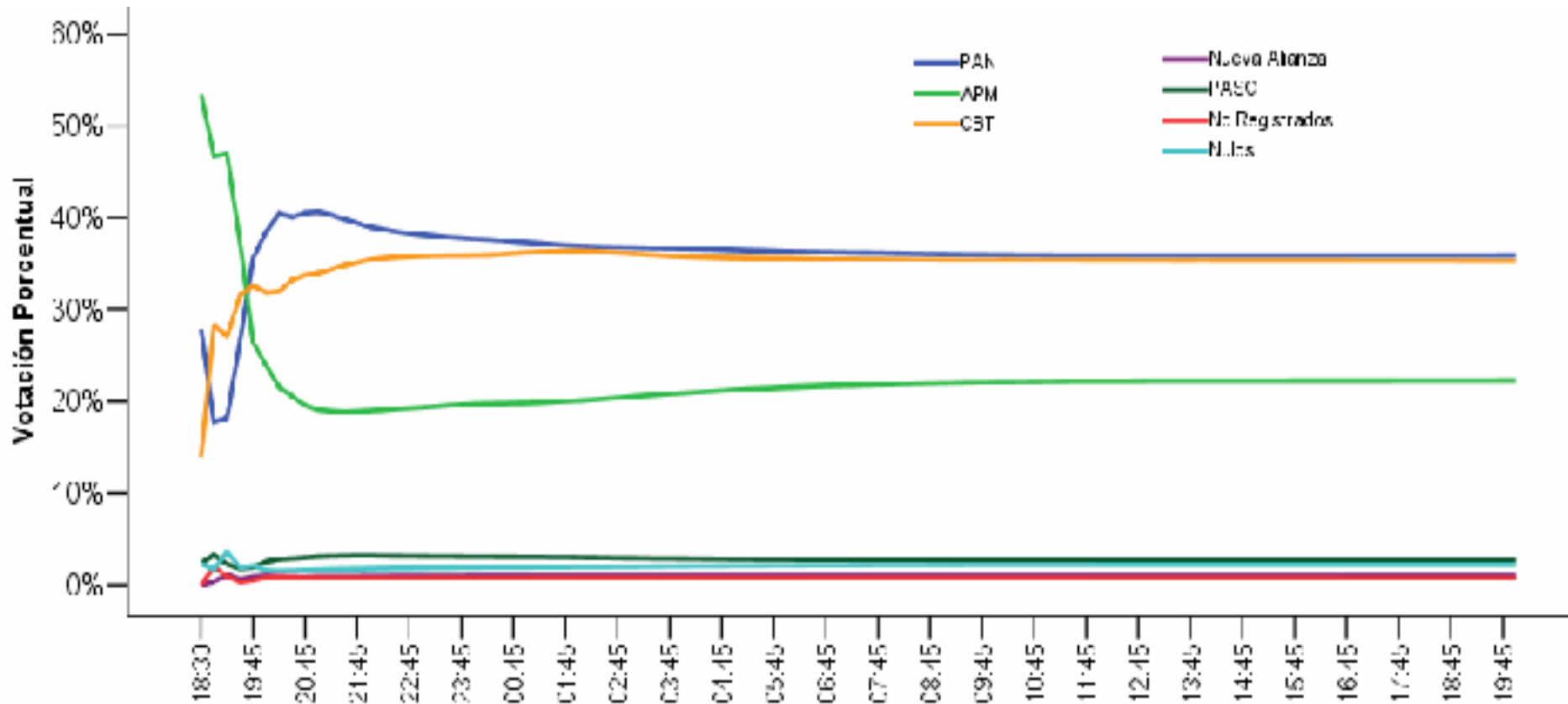
1. Total number of registered voters:
2. Total number of valid votes cast:
3. Total number of rejected votes:
4. The number of disputed votes :
5. The number of valid votes cast in favour of each candidate:

Name of Candidate:

No. Of valid votes cast:

a.	RAILA AMOLLO ODINWA	= 238 = VOTES
b.	MWAI KIBAKI	= 790 = VOTES
c.		
d.		
e.		
f.		
g.		
h.		

Mexico 2006 Presidential Elections



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