

3. Election Observation and election Monitoring

Election observation and election monitoring are often used as inter-changeable terms; But that is not correct. Election observations are not the same activity as election monitoring. The difference is simple but crucial: **An election observer has no role in the actual administration of an election; an election monitor has.**

Indeed, an election monitor is deemed to be an integral part of the election administration process; consequently s/he has the power to supervise and intervene in the actual administration of an electoral activity. So, unlike the observer, the monitor can, where and when ever necessary, gives binding corrective instructions to an election official in the course of executing his/her duties. For this reason, to be able to do work properly, the monitor requires greater technical knowledge of election administration than the ordinary Observer. Unlike an observer, the monitor must know not only how an electoral activity is carried out, but also why it is done that way. Where necessary, this understanding enables the election monitor to prescribe an alternative way of carrying out a particular electoral activity, without compromising its underlying principle.

An observer who oversteps his/her bounds and behaves like a monitor is most likely to come into conflict with election managers or officials on the ground.

