

## 2. What is Election Observation?

In simplified terms, election observation involves the two main activities:

- To gather facts about the election
- To interpret the facts so gathered from the purposes of determining whether or not, on the whole, the election went well.

Two factors are worth noting in connection with these two activities.

First, an election is a process consisting of several activities. As such, the best form of election observation would be one that covers the key activities undertaken in connection with the election from the start to the finish. The reason is straightforward. All sorts of malpractices that could affect the eventual outcomes of an election might occur well before the day of the election: at the preparatory stages like the demarcation of electoral boundaries, the registration of voters, the nomination of credentials, and campaigning. In principle, this underscores the importance of domestic observers, who could conveniently do long term domestic observation much more cheaply than foreign observers. Long term domestic observation is particularly suited to tracking election-related violence, human right violations, and media coverage of elections. However, perhaps for lack of funding, much domestic elections observation is limited to the actual conduct of election. Consequently, this framework relates the observation of the conduct of elections.

Secondly, at core, election observation is about whether an election is carried out in accordance with the laws, rules, regulations, procedures, and processes that are prescribed for the management and conduct of elections in a particular country. Of course, such observation would take account of the extent to which the election managers, officials and other actors conduct themselves properly by the acting in accordance with the principle and norms associated with democratic elections.