

4. What to observe

The first obligation of an election observer is to know exactly what to observe, what to look out for. At minimum, this requires adequate familiarity with the rules, procedure and processes of the electoral system to be observed. So, it is important for the prospective elections observer to study the manuals of instructions written for the election officials. It is also important for observers to participate in any briefing by the Commissions and the use the opportunity to seek clarifications on any grey areas.

Beyond that, depending on its scope, elections observations in practical terms consists in trying to find answers to a myriad of questions relating to various aspects of the organizations, management and conduct of the election:

- The legal and institutional framework
- The condition of the general electoral environment
- The integrity of the electoral preparations, including voter registration and voter education.
- The degree of political competitiveness
- The inclusiveness of the electoral system and the extent of citizen participation
- The extent of human right violations and election-related violence
- The extent to which rights violations and election access to parties and candidates
- The conducts of the main players: do they act in a mature and responsible manner?
- The posture of security personnel in providing general and election security
- The integrity of the conduct of the poll, including voting, the count, collation, and declaration of result.

The resolution of electoral disputes

