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Election Monitoring

Wikipedia Definition
Observation of an election by one or more independent parties, typically from another country or a NGO, primarily to ensure the fairness of the election process.
There are national and international election observers. Monitors do not directly prevent electoral fraud, but rather record and report such instances. A notable individual is often appointed honorary leader of a monitoring organization in an effort to enhance its own legitimacy.

History of UN election monitoring/assistance
Korea 1948 UNTCOK
From Namibia (1989), election monitoring often became part of a broader mandate of peacekeeping (Exit strategy)
UN electoral assistance division ('92 DPA, '94 DPKO, '95 DPA)
363 requests during 1989-2005, 95 implemented
Of those implemented, 46% of requests from Africa (Asia 18%)

Merits
Attracts international attention (media, governments and international organizations)
  - Becomes an incentive for political leaders to 'behave'
  - Increases transparency
 Raises peoples' expectations for free and fair elections
  - Encourages participatory democracy and higher voter turnout
 Helps strengthen the election authority's commitment to enforce electoral laws and rules, and facilitates compliance
  - Awareness regarding accountability of administrators
  - Detection of technical problems
 Helps to deter and reduce fraud and electoral violence
  - Freedom to make public statements by monitors is the deterrent
  - Helps build trust in the accuracy of the balloting results
 Accords credibility and legitimacy to election results
  - Facilitates acceptance of results by candidates and political parties
  - Identify challenges for future improvement

Some critique
Monitors/observers are ignorant of local circumstances related to history, culture, etc.
Monitors/observers arrive shortly before the vote, without training for language nor culture
Monitors/observers tend to avoid working together with domestic observers in order to eschew appearance of bias
Monitors/observers are not entirely independent, with ties to a funding entity

GOJ’s Approach
Division of labor
  - Important post-conflict elections: dispatched by IPCHQ, under IPC Law
  - Other important elections: dispatched by MOFA
Election observers dispatched by IPC HQ
Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, El Salvador, Bosnia-Herzegovina x 2, East Timor, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Timor-Leste, Nepal
IPC Election Observation Mission is formed through Cabinet decision. Participants from private sector are employed as government officials for a fixed term, receiving orders from the Prime Minister.
Private sector participants: academics (experts on host country or on election monitoring), researchers (those with interest in peace-building), NGO members (those in NGOs with ongoing projects in the host country), JICA staff.
Government sector participants: MOFA official, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication election expert, IPC HQ Secretariat officials.
Head of IPC Election Observation Mission: Ambassador experience or equivalent.

Characteristics of IPC Election Observation Mission
Long term planning, with Cabinet decision one month prior to vote
Advance teams sent to make logistical arrangements for transportation, hiring of local assistants, etc.
Two to three day intensive training focused on local election laws and rules, political parties and main candidates, overall political atmosphere, local culture, important local language phrases, internal Mission discipline, internal Mission communication rules and procedures, and security issues.
“Buddy system” where two observers move together with the driver and locally hired assistant.
Working together with the election implementing authority of the host country and the UN, liaison with domestic and international observers.
Head of Mission is requested to deliver GOJ message to leaders of the host country government and also the leaders of the main political parties.
Mission announces its tentative findings and impressions at a press conference, when a majority of the ballots are counted and announced.

Example of Timor-Leste (2007)
April 8 (14 members), May 9 (8 members), June 30 (14 members)
Meetings with President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and leaders of main political parties.
Written tentative observations and impressions (in English and Tetun languages) are distributed at each press conference.
“Evaluation and Suggestions” of the Election Observation Mission is delivered to Timor-Leste government and UNMIN (the paper mentions commendable points and suggestions for future elections including improvement of the technical skills of electoral staff, improvements that could be expected in the attitudes of voters and political parties and institutional improvements for smooth and safe operations in the polling stations and tabulation centers. In addition to media coverage, symposia and lectures were held to inform interested people and students about post-conflict experience of Timor-Leste.