How Citizen Organizations Can Monitor Abuse of States Resources in Elections

An NDI Guidance Document

2021
National Democratic Institute
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Acknowledgements

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Special thanks to Janet Zhou of the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) and to NDI staff Julia Brothers and Pat Merloe for providing feedback on the guide. The guide's layout and style was created by design consultant Dana Sulit.

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Contents

I. Executive Summary 1
II. Framework and Definitions 2
III. Designing an Impactful Monitoring Plan 5
IV. Monitoring Abuse of Institutional Resources 14
V. Monitoring Abuse of Coercive Resources 21
VI. Monitoring Abuse of Regulatory Resources 27
VII. Monitoring Abuse of Budgetary Resources 31
VIII. Other Types of Abuse of State Resources 37
IX. Communicating Findings 38
Appendix A: Sample Key Informant Interview Questions 41
Appendix B: Resources 47
Appendix C: International Commitments on Countering Political Corruption in Elections 50

I. Executive Summary

Political corruption misallocates public resources for the benefit of a few, while detracting from the basic responsibilities of government. A serious form of political corruption includes the abuse of state resources in elections, whereby government resources – whether material, human, coercive, regulatory, budgetary, media-related, or legislative – are misused for electoral advantage. Beyond diverting resources from legitimate purposes, abuse of state resources in elections undermines central tenets of electoral integrity. It directly impinges on the right of candidates and parties to fairly compete for electoral office, and on the rights of citizens to express their political support and freely choose their representatives. Left unchecked, the abuse of state resources can permanently fix election outcomes, erode public confidence in the democratic process, and undermine the ability of governments to serve their citizens.

While some actors — like the election management body (EMB), journalists and other regulatory bodies — may track certain violations, nonpartisan citizen election observers are particularly well-suited to monitor the abuse of state resources given their on-the-ground presence, their understanding of the electoral context, and their impartial stance. However, the abuse of state resources in elections can be a complex and long-term challenge and groups must think strategically about what is most important and feasible to monitor in their respective contexts.

This guide is intended to help election monitoring groups and citizens make strategic decisions about what and how to monitor abuse of state resources alongside their broader observation activities. The document presents critical planning considerations, including: What abuses have the greatest impact on election integrity and which are most important to observe? How does the legal framework address those abuses, if at all? How can those abuses be monitored, given available information and levels of transparency? What is feasible and impactful to monitor given internal and external constraints?

The guide provides a detailed overview of the abuse of institutional, coercive, regulatory and budgetary resources in elections. It reviews various methodologies – including direct observation, key informant interviews, analysis of official data, in-depth investigation, verified citizen reports, and monitoring of traditional and social media – and discusses which are best suited to monitor different types of abuse. The guide also highlights successful and varied election monitoring strategies used to document abuse of state resources around the world. Finally, the guide discusses how election monitoring groups can ensure their findings and recommendations are presented in a compelling, persuasive, evidence-based manner.

II. Framework and Definitions

Political corruption occurs when individuals or groups abuse the powers of government — be it financial or other resources — for their private, illegitimate gains. This includes embezzlement, extortion, patronage or cronyism, among other abuses of power. Political corruption endangers state function and citizen wellbeing. It misallocates resources from the key responsibilities of government — like health, safety, education and the rule of law — and diverts services from citizens — especially marginalized populations including women, ethnic, religious and racial minorities, persons with disabilities, and others. In this way, political corruption undermines the healthy function of the state and exacerbates inequality — risking instability and even violence.

Incentives for political corruption are compounded in elections. For corrupt politicians already in power, winning elections can bring greater illegitimate benefits. On the other hand, losing elections means forfeiting those benefits and potentially facing prosecution. Corrupt officials may go to extremes in elections, including using state resources to bribe and otherwise coerce citizens.

The abuse of state resources in elections is a specific form of political corruption whereby incumbent political parties and candidates unduly utilize official powers and public goods to win. The abuse of state resources in elections includes the misuse of government powers — whether material, human, coercive, regulatory, budgetary, media-related, or legislative — for electoral advantage. Far beyond the inherent advantages of incumbency (such as the prestige of office and public name recognition), the abuse of state resources creates an uneven playing field and fundamentally diminishes election integrity. Such tactics impinge on the rights of candidates and parties to fairly compete and negate the rights of citizens to express their political support and freely choose their representatives. Not only does this undermine electoral integrity, it also removes public accountability and violates key international commitments.[1] Left unchecked, the abuse of state resources can permanently fix election outcomes, erode confidence in democracy, and undermine the ability of governments to serve their citizens.

Parties and candidates may abuse state resources to impede their opponents, to unduly influence voters, or to increase their campaign assets. Abuse of state resources can occur in a variety of different political contexts - in countries long dominated by a single party, places where different parties control different regions of a country or in democracies where political power changes hands in elections.

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[1] See Paragraph 19 of General Comment 25 regarding Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/general%20comment%2025.pdf

Abuses of state resources typically fall into the following categories:

Institutional Utilizing physical infrastructure and resources — such as vehicles, buildings, technology or other goods — for campaign purposes. It can also include human resources, like the efforts and skills of civil servants, to support partisan or campaign activities while on government paid time.

Coercive Deploying the power of security forces, law enforcement and other government authorities for political gain. This could include unequal treatment, intimidation or thwarting of opposition, or the intimidation of voters or funders to support certain candidates. This also includes pressuring civil servants to support campaigns, donate their salaries, or vote in a certain way.

Regulatory Enforcing laws in an unequal or biased way. This includes the unequal enforcement of campaign permits, tax laws, party registration, or candidate qualification. This also includes regulatory harassment of businesses owned by opposition candidates and supporters or creating financial or other barriers to disadvantage opposition candidates.

Budgetary Misdirecting public funds to benefit incumbents. This includes clientelism or vote buying, where public funds, development projects or services are illegitimately directed to certain populations. In some cases, incumbent leadership may take credit for these products on behalf of their political party, either implicitly or explicitly. This also includes the illegal transfer of public funds for use in campaigns.

Media* Using state-run or state-controlled media to promote incumbents, disparage opponents, or otherwise unfairly influence voters. This includes traditional state media, such as TV, radio, and print, as well as official government websites and social media accounts.

Legislative* Leveraging legislative majorities to pass election laws undemocratically favorable to incumbents or unfavorable to opposition. In some contexts, abuse of legislative power includes passing laws favorable to certain industries/elites in exchange for campaign donations.

**Monitoring the abuse of media and legislative resources will not be addressed in-depth in this guide, as those areas are covered in other resources (See Appendix B for recommendations). Similarly, this document does not address the monitoring of broader political corruption, such as campaign finance or biased private media coverage.*

The abuse of resources may be regulated, monitored, punished or exposed through a number of methods. Some countries enact laws that explicitly prohibit the use of state resources for electoral purposes and include clear mechanisms for enforcement. Independent government institutions —

including election management bodies, campaign finance regulators, tax or audit boards, ombudspersons, or complaint tribunals — may regulate and monitor the use of certain state resources and hold violators accountable. Nongovernmental actors, including independent media, anti-corruption organizations, and international and citizen election observers, may monitor and publicize violations and recommend improved safeguards. Political party codes of conduct can also serve as an informal mechanism to discourage the abuse of state resources and against which stakeholders can monitor incumbents' adherence to the code.

Citizen election observers are particularly well-suited to monitor the abuse of state resources given their on-the-ground presence, their understanding of the electoral context, and their impartial stance. Citizen election monitors can be particularly effective in detecting and exposing abuse of state resources through strategically designed programs that: incorporate comprehensive monitoring of the campaign environment; leverage trusted relationships with stakeholders around the country; join forces with other independent efforts that gather and analyze data about certain forms of corruption; and release timely, relevant and evidence-based findings to shed light on the abuse of state resources and its impact on election integrity. Citizen election monitors may partner with other nonpartisan actors — including investigative journalists, anti-corruption organizations or transparency advocates — to uncover and share findings about abuses and/or advocate for stronger sanctions. This document addresses the strategies, methodologies and real-world approaches that citizen monitors can use to track the abuse of state resources and advocate for effective safeguards.

III. Designing an Impactful Monitoring Plan

The abuse of state resources in elections is one of many critical aspects that nonpartisan monitors may observe during an election. As groups consider what and how they will monitor abuses as part of their monitoring plan, they should consider the following:

- What is most important to observe?
- How does the legal framework address the issue?
- How can abuses be monitored and analyzed?
- What is feasible and impactful given internal and external constraints?

What is most important to observe?

Election monitoring groups should consider their specific electoral and political context to determine what is most relevant and important to observe. As discussed in Section II, there are many types of state resource abuse that can occur. It is not possible to effectively monitor all possible abuses, and certain abuses will have a greater impact on elections than others. To better identify observation priorities, election monitoring groups should consider:

Which abuses have the greatest impact?

Some abuses have a greater electoral or governance impact. Consider which abuses are most likely to affect the results of the elections or violate fundamental electoral rights? Which abuses misdirect a large amount of public resources or represent a severe form of corruption?

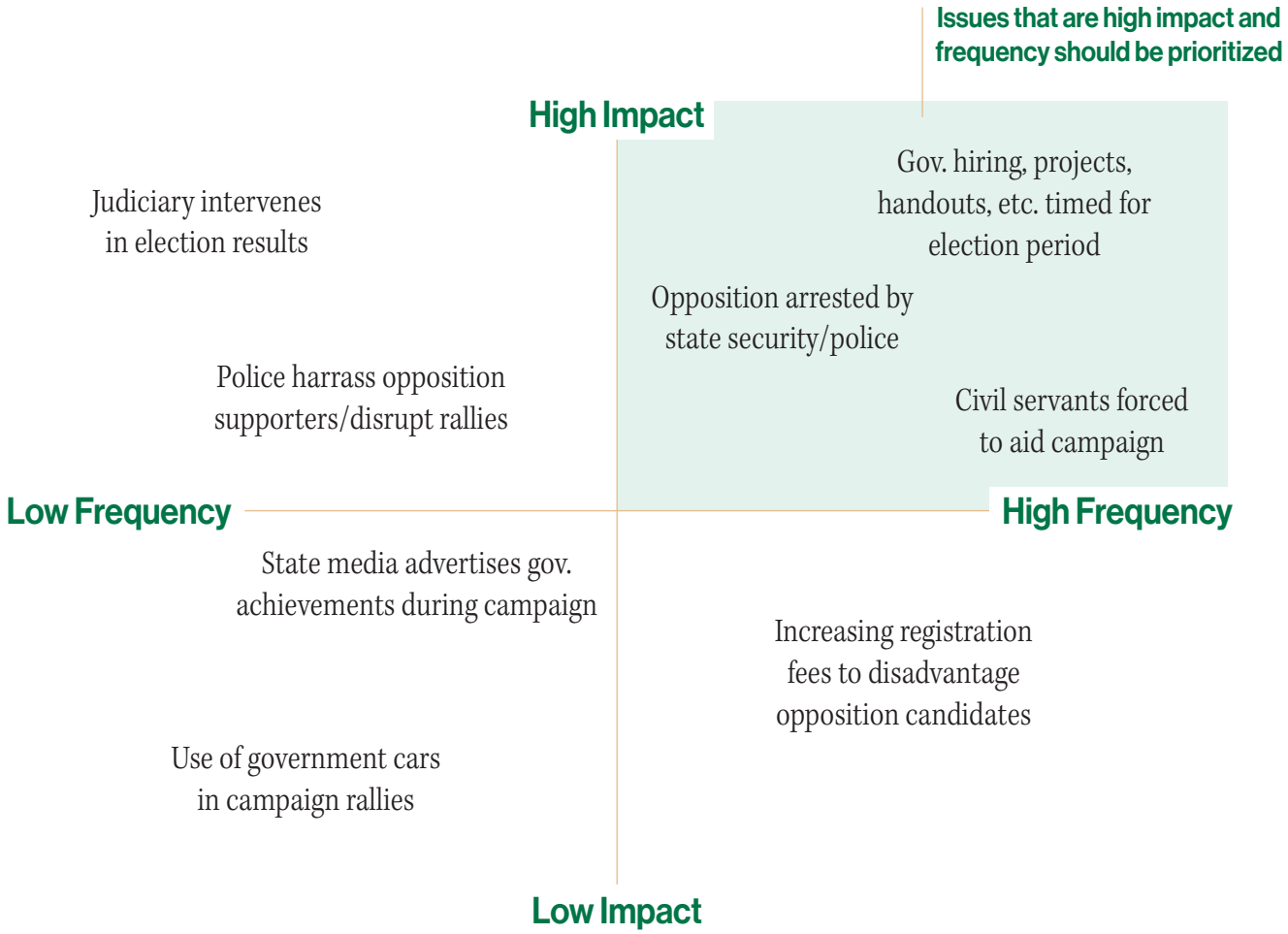
Some abuses impact marginalized communities, including women, ethnic or religious minorities, youth, persons with disabilities, low-income or rural citizens, etc. In many countries, these communities are targeted for coercion, misinformation or vote-buying — particularly if they rely more upon government institutions or resources than other communities. These groups suffer most from misallocated resources and are most vulnerable in an ineffective state.

Which types of abuse are most common?

Review recent elections: What were common abuses that citizens, parties, the media or government watchdogs reported in recent elections? What did election observers see and report? Are there abuses that have not previously been monitored but are important to document? What practices might emerge or change in the upcoming elections?

Talk to other stakeholders: Interview grassroots efforts, anti-corruption groups and investigative journalists who follow corruption. Ask about the most common types of corruption that may be leveraged for electoral gains. Surveys, focus groups or other methods can also be used to assess public perceptions among citizens who may experience vote buying or other abuses of state resources first hand.

Next, consider which abuses are common **and** have a high impact. Those top abuses should be a monitoring priority. The sample graph below is an exercise conducted by real election observation organizations based on the context in their countries. ***The impact and frequency of abuses will vary from country to country — and even between elections in the same country — so your priorities may differ from this example.*** Oftentimes, issues most easily observed (for example, occasionally using state vehicles in campaign events) may not be frequent or may not have a large impact on electoral integrity.



How does the legal framework address abuse of state resources?

Before considering a specific methodology, review what the legal framework says about abuse of state resources. In some contexts, legal regulations lay out clear benchmarks for what constitutes abuse and what sanctions should be applied. These legal benchmarks can guide monitoring priorities to focus on clear standards and actionable findings. In other contexts, the legal framework may not adequately address abuse of state resources. In cases where there is a dominant political party that has remained in power over time, this may result in a weaker legal framework for regulating such abuses.

Depending on the type of abuse being monitored, analysis of the legal framework may include:

- The Constitution;
- Election Laws: election code and by-laws; electoral offenses and/or criminal code; media/broadcasting laws and regulations; political party laws; campaign/political finance regulations; or campaign codes of conduct;
- Other related laws or regulations addressing money laundering, procurement, anti-corruption, taxation, auditing, media, civil service, etc.;
- Lower level regulations, internal rules of government bodies, and public calendars may also set standards, guidelines or measurements; and/or
- Other voluntary measures like electoral conduct pledges, open government commitments, and other agreements.

(For more detailed guidance on reviewing legal frameworks for abuse of state resource regulations, please see the sources listed in Appendix B.)

It is also important to understand aspects of the legal framework that may bolster efforts to monitor and/or publicize findings about abuses. Whistleblower protections or Right-To-Information laws may create inroads for gathering data about abuses. Regulations may bring transparency, such as campaign finance reporting rules that can illuminate campaign spending and financial entanglements. On the other hand, some laws may create obstacles, such as defamation laws that may be used to stifle reporting of abuse cases. Understanding - and leveraging or overcoming - these legal considerations leads to greater monitoring and advocacy success.

Beyond domestic laws and regulations, international laws and norms should be considered. Countries may be subject to international commitments that address election integrity, the abuse of state

resources, and/or the obligation to root out corruption. While implementation of these international commitments may be limited if they have not been ratified or codified into national law, the commitments can serve as focal points for advocacy efforts and encouraging changing norms around political corruption locally. International laws and norms related to corruption and the abuse of state resources may include:

International Commitments	• International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 25 and 26 • Human Rights Committee/CCPR General Comment 25 • United Nations Convention Against Corruption
Regional Commitments	**Africa** • African Union (AU) Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, art. 4.1 • Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on the Fight against Corruption, art. 6.1(e) • South African Development Community (SADC) Protocol Against Corruption, art. 3 • SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, 2004, art. 2 **The Americas** • Organization of American States (OAS), Inter-American Convention Against Corruption, art. VI.1(c) **Arab States** • Arab Anti-Corruption Convention **Asia** • ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025, Article A.2.3 **Europe/Eurasia** • Council of Europe/Venice Commission, "Joint Guidelines on the Misuse of Administrative Resources During Electoral Processes," • Council of Europe/Committee of Ministers, Recommendation to Member States on Common Rules Against Corruption in the Funding of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns • Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE

See Appendix C for relevant text of the above international conventions.

In many countries, the use of state resources in elections is not well regulated, or is defined narrowly, only accounting for the most egregious transgressions. Some abuses may be unaddressed or even allowed under domestic law, but are none-the-less unethical, corrupt, and in violation of the fundamental rights of citizens, parties and candidates. Knowing what is prohibited and what is un- or under-regulated under the law can help election monitors better frame problems they observe, and better advocate for stronger legal reforms.

When Legal Frameworks and Political Will Fail: Building Norms, Transparency, and Accountability

Many legal frameworks fail to address the most detrimental abuses of state resources. Moreover, where legal frameworks exist, the political will to enforce sanctions may be weak. In these instances, citizen groups can promote norms and strengthen accountability by leveraging existing mechanisms, changing culture, and advocating for reforms.

Some monitors collect evidence about abuse of state resources to aid enforcement of existing laws. In addition to public reporting, they may submit specific violations to enforcement bodies, such as anti-corruption or election commissions, or law enforcement. Other groups aim to shift the culture around political corruption. They work with public institutions to strengthen employee guidance, train civil servants, and/or support whistleblowers. Of course, many citizen groups publicize their findings to demonstrate problems, mobilize public support, and compel decision-makers to improve laws.

The strategic aim of a project should guide its design, including determining the type of evidence — and the method of communicating that evidence — that would be most impactful.

How can abuses of state resources be monitored and analyzed?

When determining an effective observation methodology, election monitoring groups should consider how abuses take place, what type of data might be observable or accessible, and what evidence will best support their broader strategic goals. Often, the most pervasive forms of abuse will not be easily monitored using traditional election observation methods. Thinking creatively about employing new methodologies, exploring new partnerships, and working around systemic challenges (like weak enforcement or institutional complacency) is critical to impactful monitoring.

Below is a list of different data collection methods that may be effective, depending on the type of abuse being monitored, organizational resources, and the realities of the political, electoral and legal environment. These methods are not necessarily exclusive and in many cases can be used in tandem to strengthen findings. A single organization — or entities working in partnership — can employ a mix of methods to illuminate the scope and impact of abuses and to gather different types of evidence for comprehensive accountability and advocacy purposes.

Methods of Observation, Data-Gathering and Analysis of Abuse of State Resources

Direct Observation by Monitors. Observers may be able to directly monitor particular abuses. This could include monitoring campaign events or the general campaign environment for abuses of institutional resources, like vehicles, staff, or buildings. This could also include monitoring regulatory processes, such as the approval of rally permits, for signs of abuse. Direct observation of parliamentary sessions and budgetary sessions may also be effective to gather information about legislative or budgetary resource abuses.

Key Informant Interviews. Long-term observers or other team members can systematically interview stakeholders, including campaign officers, election officials, local civic leaders, representatives of marginalized communities, government officials, journalists, voters and others. Groups or people that are most likely impacted by or aware of abuses should be interviewed. Interviewers should have clear instructions on whom, when and how to interview.

A related method of collecting data from citizens is public opinion surveys (not detailed in this guide). Groups with survey experience may consider collecting citizen perceptions on corruption and the abuse of state resources in elections. Surveys can also measure changes in perceptions of public services, development projects and other social benefits during election periods versus non-election periods.

Analysis of Official Data. Groups may be able to analyze official data for evidence of abuses. Data could include: campaign finance reports; government budget/expenditure data; development project data; records from election management bodies, complaints tribunals, or other independent arbiters; tax records; etc. In some cases, data may be readily available online or by request. In other cases, groups may need to gather their own dataset from official but decentralized sources, file official information requests through courts or other bodies, or advocate for greater access to election data. *(The Open Election Data Initiative[2] provides further guidance on data analysis and advocacy for open election data.)*

In-depth Investigation. For issues that are particularly sensitive — like coercion of civil servants or voters, or the misallocation of public funds — in-depth investigation may be the best tool to gather information. Investigative teams work to gather evidence on a particular topic by collecting critical data or documentation and conducting interviews with impacted victims or witnesses. This approach requires special training on how to handle sensitive information, develop and manage delicate relationships, and maintain the security of data, informants, and themselves. Journalists, human rights monitors, and anti-corruption groups may have helpful experience in conducting sensitive investigations and may share useful approaches.

Traditional Media Monitoring/Analysis. Analysis of abuse of state media resources (typically a part of "media monitoring") involves systematic analysis of the fairness and equality of media coverage and requires a specially trained team. *(For more details, see NDI's Media Monitoring Guide referenced in Appendix B).* For other types of abuses, media reports may provide evidence of flagrant abuses of state resources. For example, the appearance of high-profile civil servants in campaign events or election-period development projects, though prohibited by law or regulation, may be covered in the media.

Social Media, Web and Other Media Content Monitoring. Social media may also be a source of data when tracking the abuse of institutional resources, like the use of official government or civil servant accounts in campaigning. Government websites, listservs, SMS broadcasts, and mailings could also be monitored for campaign content. Social media may also be a source of citizen-reported abuses that require further investigation (Also see "Verified Citizen Reports").

Verified Citizen Reports. Some groups collect citizen reports (also called crowdsourced reports) through websites, apps, SMS and/or hotlines. Such reports can provide information — from voters,

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[2] https://openelectiondata.net/en/

civil servants or others — that is difficult to directly observe. Beyond simply setting up tools, successful citizen reporting programs require strong marketing to people most likely impacted by or knowledgeable about abuses. Once reports are received, groups should further investigate and verify claims using other approaches listed above, such as looking at open data or public records, or conducting key informant or investigative interviews. In some situations, reporting may be anonymous due to the sensitive nature of claims; however, even in such instances, reports should be further investigated and verified before they are released publicly.

What is feasible and impactful to observe given internal and external constraints?

The abuse of state resources is one among many priorities election monitors may consider when assessing the integrity of elections. After determining ***what*** abuses are important to observe and ***how*** they can be monitored, groups will need to determine ***what is feasible and impactful*** alongside their broader goals. Before finalizing a monitoring plan, take a moment to consider the following:

What data can we reasonably access? A group may decide that the abuse of development funds has the most serious impact on electoral integrity. However, if budgeting data is not transparent, it will be difficult to properly analyze expenditure trends. In this case, a group will need to decide if other monitoring methods would be effective. (They should also advocate for more transparency in budgeting to allow for future monitoring).

Will our findings be timed strategically? To have the greatest advocacy impact, findings should be released when they are most compelling and most actionable. Some groups may not have access to certain data until well after the election. In other cases, internal capacity constraints may mean that groups won't complete analysis until well after an election. In either case, findings should be timed to take advantage of public engagement and openings for reforms, including planned reviews of laws, legislative sessions, or changes in government.

Do we have the capacity (and budget!) to take on a new project? Depending on the approach, some groups will need to look beyond their existing observers and staff to monitor the abuse of state resources. Some methods — like media or parliamentary monitoring, collecting and verifying citizen reports, and in-depth investigation — may require dedicated, specially-trained personnel. Other methods, like analysis of official data, may require assistance of data experts. Consider internal capacity to manage new projects, utilize in-house expertise, and mobilize resources for additional staff/volunteers.

What can we incorporate into our existing monitoring approach and structure? Some methods more readily fit within a typical election monitoring program. For example, long-term observers are well placed to directly observe the campaign period and events, and have time to build relationships with key informants. At the same time, many groups can utilize existing capacities to analyze data and regulations, and to assess the political environment.

How can we share the load and/or learn from our peers? Given that these projects require special skills and introduce sensitivities, some groups pursue partnerships to expand capacity. Human rights monitors, anti-corruption organizations, investigative journalists, and others may be better placed to monitor and analyze certain abuses. Some groups, like journalists, may have certain legal protections that enable them to publish findings more safely than citizen groups. Other groups may be better placed to engage in advocacy for legal reform. Working in partnership with credible, non-partisan entities can strengthen monitoring efforts and fortify calls for reform by adding stronger evidence and more allies to the cause.

Are there any risks associated with methodologies being considered? Organizations may face new risks — physical, legal, reputational, etc. — that could result from the adoption of specific methodologies. For example, monitoring political violence could increase the risk of physical harm to observers, or publicizing findings of corruption could expose organizations to libel charges. Organizations should understand these risks and seek ways to mitigate them before committing to a new methodology.

Finally, what is the most systematic and evidence-based methodology we can use? Many election monitors report abuse of state resources as stand-alone incidents. However, incident reports do not allow for an assessment of the scope, scale, or trends of different abuses and do not typically provide data that leads to reforms. Consider how to collect strong evidence and frame findings to show broader trends and impacts on elections and governance at large in order to demonstrate the seriousness of the problem and bolster reform advocacy.

IV. Monitoring Abuse of Institutional Resources

Monitoring Framework for Abuse of Institutional Resources

Definition: Utilizing public physical infrastructure and resources — such as vehicles, buildings, stationary, technology (telephones/internet/computers), mailing, or printing. It also includes human resources, such as staff time and skills of civil servants, to support campaign activities.

Common Types of Abuse	Where it May be Observed	Best Methodologies
Illegal or unethical use of public office to support a candidate/party, such as state officials campaigning for (or against) a candidate or party in their official role.	• Official public speeches • Printed campaign materials • Media reports/interviews • Social media accounts	• Direct Observation • Social Media Monitoring • Verified Citizen Reports
Use of civil servants in campaign activities. This includes civil servants attending rallies, preparing or distributing campaign materials/messages, conducting campaign research or gathering voter data, or other campaign services during work hours -or- after hours, if they are required or pressured to attend.	• Campaign events and activities • Interviews with campaign officials or civil servants • Social media accounts of civil servants	• Direct Observation • Key Informant Interviews • Social Media Monitoring • Verified Citizen Reports
Unequal use of public buildings. In some countries, public buildings, including schools, are entirely prohibited from use in campaigns. In others, the law requires that public facilities are available on an equal basis to all candidates/parties. Abuse may be observed through the allowed use or unequal use of public buildings by campaigns.	• Location of campaign operations and meetings with supporters • Rally locations • Storage of campaign materials at public buildings • Posting of campaign materials in/on buildings	• Direct Observation • Key Informant Interviews

Common Types of Abuse	Where it May be Observed	Best Methodologies
Unequal use of state vehicles. State vehicles may be entirely prohibited from use in campaigns or must be available on an equal basis to all candidates/parties. In cases of abuse, vehicles may be provided for free or discounted rates to incumbents, or may be used exclusively by one campaign.	• Candidate and/or campaign staff travel • Transportation of voters or materials to campaign events • Transportation of supporters to polling places	• Direct Observation • Key Informant Interviews • Citizen Reports
Use of other institutional resources. This includes the use of state-owned utilities, security services, technology, public broadcast or communication, printing, mailing/distribution, state enterprise, intellectual resources (like government data, survey tools, research, etc.), or other materials for the benefit of a single campaign.	• Campaign events • Campaigning activities • Interviews with campaign officials or civil servants	• Direct Observation • Key Informant Interviews • Investigative Teams

Monitoring Abuse of Institutional Resources: Effective Approaches

When abuse of institutional resources occurs on a large scale, when it disrupts state function, or when it relates to more pervasive crimes (like coercion of civil servants, campaign finance fraud, or broader state capture), it may be a high priority for election monitoring organizations. ***Ideally, a methodology should demonstrate not only the extent of abuse — including frequency and trends by party/candidate, by resource, and by region/geography — but also the broader impact on electoral integrity.*** Whenever possible, data should be collected and reported in a way that can be easily summarized in public findings and used to support a broader advocacy goal.

Systematic Monitoring by Long-Term Observers

Incorporating abuse of institutional resource monitoring into the scope of long-term observers' work can be effective — especially if their focus already includes campaign monitoring. ***A critical step for many election monitoring groups is to move beyond collecting and reporting isolated incidents of abuse to a more systematic, structured data collection that produces stronger findings.*** A strategic and well-designed methodology, including thoughtful LTO form design can produce findings that better demonstrate the scope of the problem.

Tips for Systematic Long-Term Observation of State Resources Abuses

Collect specific and strategic data. Rather than asking LTOs to report open-ended analysis of the campaign period, provide a structure to collect systematic, comparable data that focus on priority abuses. Depending on the type of abuse, it may be helpful to collect data that demonstrates differences between candidates/parties (ruling vs opposition, large vs small), differences in communities (urban voters vs. rural voters, among ethnic communities, etc.) or differences between geographic units. Provide detailed guidance on where, when and how to collect this data so that all LTOs are following the same methodology.

Use close-ended questions. Asking LTOs to answer close-ended questions ensures that data can be directly compared, analyzed quickly, and presented in a more compelling manner. Further, this structured data analysis allows groups to track trends over time.

Collect critical incidents. Rely on critical incident reports for serious abuses that require immediate action. For example: A party permanently taking over public spaces or reports of serious threats against voters. Less urgent infractions should be detailed if they are helpful for advocacy and specific accountability needs.

Prepare for timely and relevant reporting. Collecting systematic data allows groups to quickly compile, analyze and release data. To have the highest impact, plan to release findings at strategic points during the election cycle. Ensure findings are timely by maintaining a clear schedule for data collection and cleaning, analysis, and graphic and message development. *For more information, see Section IX. Communicating Findings.*

Observing Campaign Events and/or Activities

LTOs may monitor multiple campaign events or activities of different parties, in different locations, etc. Some monitoring groups ask LTOs to collect data on each individual event or activity they observe. For example, a Campaign Rally Form may contain questions, such as:

- Did any government official speak at the event?
- Were on-duty civil servants at this event?
- Were teachers and students dismissed to attend or required to attend the event?
- How many state-funded security officials were supporting this event?
- Were state-benefits or goods distributed at this event?

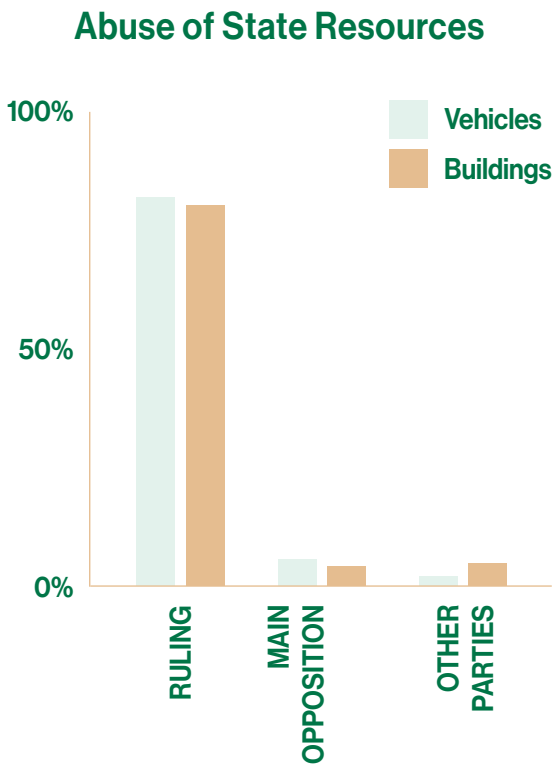
Alternatively, some groups instruct LTOs to monitor and report a summary of the campaign context. This can still be done systematically using weekly or bi-weekly summary checklists that ask relevant close-ended questions, for example:

- Did Party X utilize public vehicles for campaign activities? Did Party Y?
- Were any campaign materials posted inside public buildings for Party X? For Party Y?
- Did you observe civil servants campaigning during work hours for Party X? For Party Y?

In most contexts, systematic LTO data will show that only incumbent parties or candidates are abusing state resources (not surprising, since they more directly control state resources!). Still, collecting systematic data allows groups to show they are looking for abuses among all political competitors, not targeting one party. Also, in some cases, different parties may have control of different levels of government - for example, national, provincial, municipal - for the same locality. It also provides data that can be compared over time. If, for example, the opposition wins an election, monitors can show if they engage in higher rates of state resource abuse once they are in power. On the other hand, if the ruling party retains power, systematic observation may show changes in the scope and scale of abuses over several elections.

MONITORING IN ACTION In 2016 in Nicaragua, LTOs for the election monitoring coalition Panorama Electoral (led by Ética y Transparencia[3]) monitored whether different political parties were using state vehicles and public buildings for campaign activities. Presenting this data in the chart below, they were able to demonstrate that, around the country, the ruling party used those resources at a much higher rate than the main opposition party and other political parties. Rather than listing incidents, this data analysis demonstrated that the ruling party used state institutional resources to gain a vast advantage over other parties.

Graph source: Panorama Electoral 2016, Ética y Transparencia.



Conducting Key Informant Interviews

LTOs can also collect information through key informant interviews with campaign staff and candidates, community leaders, representatives of marginalized communities, civil servants, journalists, and others to collect specific information about abuse of institutional resources. As discussed above, LTOs should be instructed on the types of informants to interview. Some election monitoring groups choose to provide specific interview surveys for each type of informant. Other election monitoring groups collect summary information on weekly reporting forms. At a minimum, LTOs should be provided with sample questions to ask and should report data for all targeted parties/candidates/groups using close-ended questions. *For a list of sample key-informant interview questions, see Appendix A.*

[3] https://eyt.org.ni

Social Media Monitoring

Given the growing importance of social media in elections, many groups monitor social platforms to measure whether government communication resources or civil servant staff time are being used for campaign purposes. In some countries, the legal framework may be silent on the use of social media resources. In this case, demonstrating the existence of a problem can be a strong advocacy tool for promoting new or improved laws. In other countries, the law may regulate the use of official social media channels and even activities on the private accounts of civil servants during official work hours.

Social media monitoring should be done systematically and requires a specialized team. The social media monitoring team may also be tasked with tracking other social media activity, including official online campaigning and disinformation.[4] NDI's Fact-A-Lyzer[5] software or other aggregation tools can make social media monitoring more efficient. Monitors can look for campaign content on official government pages — or for increases in announcements of development projects compared to non-election periods.

MONITORING IN ACTION As part of their broader social media monitoring campaign in 2018, Georgian monitoring group ISFED observed the abuse of government social media resources during the official election period.[6] They tracked official municipal government Facebook accounts and were able to demonstrate that those accounts were ***not*** used for campaigning purposes and did ***not*** increase in content/promotion as compared to non-election periods. At the same time, they monitored the personal Facebook accounts of more than 600 civil servants and identified 62 civil servants in 30 municipalities that were campaigning online during work hours — in contradiction of Georgia's election code and memorandum on the use of administrative resources. ISFED reported these violations to election authorities, though no punitive action was taken — demonstrating the need for better education and enforcement mechanisms.

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[4] For more information, see *Disinformation and Electoral Integrity*, National Democratic Institute (2018).

[5] Fact-a-lyzer is a social media data collection, management, and analysis tool developed by NDI to empower citizen observer groups to collect and analyze data from Facebook and Twitter. The tool has been used by citizen observers to monitor disinformation, coordinated inauthentic behavior, and other issues in the electoral information environment on social media.

[6] For more information, see Social Media Monitoring – Second Interim Report, ISFED, 20 December 2018.

Verified Citizen Reports

In countries where abuse of institutional resources (including civil servants) are difficult to directly observe, verified citizen reporting may be an effective method. Hotlines, SMS, or online tools can collect reports from the public. However, building reporting tools is the easiest and least resource intensive step of this methodology. To be effective, observer groups must sufficiently advertise the tool to those most likely to witness the abuse (such as women and voters of other at-risk communities, civil servants, people using state transportation depots, etc.). Citizen reports should be verified and, if possible, investigated and analyzed so they can serve as well-documented evidence of abuse. LTOs or investigators may be well placed to verify reports by locating and interviewing witnesses, finding photos or recordings (including cell phone videos/audio/photos) of incidents, or otherwise confirming evidence.

MONITORING IN ACTION As part of their Program for Protection of Public Resources, Transparency International Sri Lanka[7] launched a hotline to collect citizen reports of the use of public resources in the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in 2015.[8] TISL also set up an investigative team made up of retired senior police officers to verify citizen reports, and deployed observers around the country. TISL only published reports that its teams were able to verify. By augmenting more than 370 verified citizen reports with investigative teams, observers, and a strong legal and contextual analysis, they were able to show how the extensive use of state vehicles for campaign purposes led to a decline in government-supported transportation services available to the public.

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[7] https://www.tisrilanka.org

[8] For more information, see ELECTORAL INTEGRITY A Review of the Abuse of State Resources and Selected Integrity Issues during 2015 Presidential Election in Sri Lanka by Transparency International Sri Lanka.

V. Monitoring Abuse of Coercive Resources

Monitoring Framework for Abuse of Coercive State Resources

Definition: Deploying the authority and power of security forces, law enforcement and other government positions of power for political gain. This could include unequal treatment, which encompasses failure to protect or prosecute violations committed against opposition candidates, civil society representatives or journalists, intimidation or thwarting of political opponents and their supporters, and coercing voters to support certain parties or candidates. This also includes putting pressure on civil servants to service campaigns, donate their salaries, or vote for certain parties or candidates.

Common Types of Abuse	Where it May be Observed	Best Methodologies
Coercion of voters by state authorities. This includes the undue influence on voters to support (or oppose) certain candidates/parties — or to abstain from voting entirely. Often, these threats are targeted towards vulnerable communities, including women, youth, ethnic or religious minorities, rural citizens, and voters reliant on state institutions or support, such as internally displaced persons, university students, hospital patients, incarcerated voters, persons with disabilities, or low income voters.	• Unequal application of the law based on citizens' political views, manifesting as legal harassment or lack of basic security services • Signs of undue control or 'capture' of campaigning/voting in state facilities, including jails, hospitals, state universities, refugee camps, etc. • Public or private threats to remove critical government assistance based on election results • Public or private threats to personal safety, livelihood, etc.	• Direct Observation, particularly of state institution voting • Key Informant Interviews, particularly of at-risk community members • Investigative Teams • Verified Citizen Reports

Common Types of Abuse	Where it May be Observed	Best Methodologies
Coercion of Opposition Parties/ Candidates/Staff/Supporters. This may include arrest, threats or harassment of party leaders, candidates, campaign staff and supporters. It may also include an unequal approach to investigating or prosecuting electoral or criminal complaints raised by opposition members, or those raised by electoral officials, election monitors or journalists.	• Use of force or intimidation during campaign events, for example, police crackdown of political rallies • Unequal application of the law, manifesting as legal harassment, or lack of action on complaints • Threats of arrest, often reported in media or heard in public speeches • Arrest of opposition candidates, based on bogus charges, or on arbitrary charges revived during elections • Private threats or harassment received by party leaders, candidates, campaign staff, election officials, monitors, journalists, etc. related to personal safety or livelihood	• Contextual/legal analysis of arrests or threats • Key Informant Interviews • Investigative Teams
Coercion of Civil Servants. This may include threats of termination or impacts on salary/promotions from supervisors or other authorities. Civil servants may be coerced into actively campaigning (during work hours or after work hours), voting, providing campaign contributions, and/or providing services for a campaign.	• Most often, private threats or harassment of civil servants • Pervasive abuse of institutional human resources, such as very high rates of civil servant participation in campaign events/activities • In some cases, official civil servant employment/payroll data or campaign contribution data	• Key Informant Interviews of civil servants, union leaders, etc. • Investigative Teams • Verified Citizen Reports • In select cases, analysis of official data

Monitoring Abuse of Coercive Resources: Effective Approaches

Abuses of coercive resources often have the most significant impact on election integrity, but are particularly difficult to observe. Most abuses are conducted out of sight. Many victims of coercion may not report or admit to abuses due to fear, to trauma, or — in some cases — to a culture of secrecy or complacency. And even more observable abuses — like the publicized arrest of a candidate — may be difficult to contextualize and objectively determine if it is warranted or not. In any case, coercive abuses may be particularly difficult to verify. ***Ideally, the selected methodology should prove the existence and scale of coercion using strong, non-refutable evidence and contextual analysis.*** It is important to demonstrate evidence of this type of coercion and show the impact on the election process, as well as on the rights of candidates, voters (including marginalized communities), electoral officials, monitors, and journalists.

Observation methods that produce more qualitative information and contextual/legal analysis — like investigative teams or key informant interviews — may be more effective in monitoring coercive abuses. Often, these efforts require long-term investment in building trusted relationships, understanding power structures, building protection and reporting mechanisms for whistleblowers, and even shifting cultural norms that overlook such abuses. Given these complexities, election monitors may benefit from partnering with groups with these experiences, skill sets, and trusted levels of access, such as investigative journalists or anti-corruption organizations.

Key Informant Interviews

As described in Section IV, structured and strategic Key Informant Interviews can be a helpful source of information about abuses. Depending on the context, LTOs could interview opposition candidates/campaign staff, civil servants from impacted ministries, public university students, and/or other voters, particularly those in marginalized communities. Given the sensitivity of these abuses, it is critical that LTOs have the training on building rapport and trusted relationships with interlocutors, have carefully-worded interview questions (See Appendix A), and have relevant security training and support. Interviewers should be trained in protecting the privacy of interviewees and in being cognizant of any sensitivities when speaking to victims and members of marginalized communities. It can be helpful to recruit interviewers who are members of those communities and can more easily build trust with victims of abuse. *Please see the text box below for additional considerations.*

MONITORING IN ACTION In 2018, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, ISFED, and Transparency International Georgia documented coercion of state employees during the campaign. ISFED LTOs collected information from the media and interviews with NGOs and individual citizens. The groups found 54 instances of intimidation, including incidents of employees being forced to compile detailed "lists of supporters" whom they guaranteed would vote for a certain candidate. LTOs also heard from public school teachers reporting political pressure and acts of retaliation through undue dismissals, inspections and harassment.[9]

In-depth Investigative Teams

In many cases, coercion may be so sensitive and difficult to document that a separate team of experienced and specially-trained investigators is necessary. Investigative teams can serve as a complement to other parts of a monitoring program by conducting a more thorough and nuanced evaluation of trends or incidents identified by LTOs or citizen reports. Ideally, investigative teams will be able to provide evidence of specific abuse and can produce a comprehensive case study describing the problem. Some groups may choose to hire and manage their own investigative teams and should seek out individuals with prior experience, such as former/retired police officers (if appropriate in the context!), investigative journalists, human rights investigators, etc. Other groups may look to partner with nonpartisan, credible organizations that have expertise in anti-corruption, journalism, or other sensitive investigative work. *For guidance on managing the sensitivities and potential security concerns for these investigations, please see the text box below.*

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[9] See ISFED Final Report of the 2018 Presidential Elections and the 2018 Joint Statement by ISFED, GYLA and TI Georgia on Employee Pressure

Lessons from Corruption Investigators – How to conduct safe and successful investigative interviews

Build trust with the right people! Assess power structures and patterns of influence. Target those most likely to be impacted by or know about abuse of state resources in the community. Build trusted relationships with those sources over time. Ensure that no further harm is done to victims of coercion through the interview process. Respect cultural sensitivities — especially with victims and members of marginalized communities.

Build safe, discrete spaces! Ensure that interviewees feel they can speak openly. Coordinate and conduct interviews in private. Be in touch regularly and keep an open line of communication in case they need to report new information. Assess what steps need to be in place to ensure that data and communication is fully secure. Guard information carefully by securing sensitive data during collection, transmission, storage and analysis. Apps like Signal and Telegram's secret chats can help users send encrypted messages privately. Special security measures should be built into observer databases that store sensitive information.

Make safety a priority! Take measures to keep LTOs/investigators safe with protocols and security plans. Make sure to have a trusted security point of contact (perhaps an influential townsperson or local police) wherever LTOs/Investigators are deployed and design a clear emergency communication plan. Consider deploying LTOs/investigators in pairs and schedule pre- and post-interview check-ins with supervisors.

Take intimidation seriously! If LTOs/Investigators are conducting very sensitive interviews where they may face intimidation, threats, or harm, take extra measures. Use smartphones to set up a "panic" button, so that LTOs/investigators can discreetly call a security contact if needed. Require the interviewer to bring a partner or driver to the interview. Consider recording the interview.

Verified Citizen Reports

As mentioned in Section IV, citizen reporting tools (including whistleblowing mechanisms) can be a first step to collecting tips or reports of abuse (and LTOs or investigators can verify further details). Tools can be designed to collect verbal or written reports and can also allow for the collection of audio or video evidence of coercion (for example, a mobile-phone video of threats). To be effective, citizen reporting tools should be built and marketed to the stakeholders most likely to face coercion (for example, civil servants or marginalized communities). In some countries and industries, labor

rights organizations have built apps that target workers and provide proactive rights education and violation reporting tools. With a diligent marketing strategy, a similar approach could be adapted for civil servants. As mentioned above, some groups or institutions may suffer from a culture of fear, secrecy or complacency that discourages reporting abuse. Additional work may be needed to shift norms, build trust, and ensure protection of anyone reporting such abuses.

Documenting Abuses: Lessons on Human Rights Video Advocacy from WITNESS

Experiences from citizen documentation of human rights violations offer helpful lessons for state resource abuse monitors seeking evidence on specific incidents. WITNESS provides resources, training and support to human rights activists around the world on using video documentation of human rights abuses for advocacy and accountability campaigns. They offer the following best practices:

- First and foremost: Consider whether or not video serves a strategic use. Also, consider whether releasing a video will cause harm to the citizen documentarian or others.
- Before asking citizens, observers or staff to document with video, consider "right to record" laws in the country and other safety precautions, like deploying in pairs.
- When filming:
  - Ensure it is safe to record
  - Record for an appropriate amount of time to capture the full scope of the violation
  - Film overview shots (including 360° shots) to capture the broader location/context
  - Take shots of varying scope, including wide, medium and close-up to get the full scale, context and relevant details of an incident.
- Immediately after filming, securely back up the video and include other supporting documentation, such as maps, notes about the video/incident, still photos, etc.

Access More Resources at https://www.witness.org/resources/

VI. Monitoring Abuse of Regulatory Resources

Monitoring Framework for Regulatory State Resources

Definition: Enforcing regulations in an unfair, unequal, or biased way. This may include unfair approval of campaign event permits, tax enforcement, deregistration of opposition parties or disqualification of candidates — or even annulling election results without just cause. This may also include regulatory harassment of businesses owned by opposition candidates or their supporters.

Common Types of Abuse	Where it May be Observed	Best Methodologies
Abusing election-related regulations. This may include unequal or biased processing of campaign rally permits, party registration, or ballot (candidate/party) qualification by the election management body, local authorities or other relevant bodies. This may also include biased or unequal enforcement of campaign rules and finance regulations — or even of election certification.	Process/Decisions/Enforcement of: • Rally permits • Party registration • Ballot qualification • Campaign rules and campaign finance regulations • Election processes or results	• Key Informant Interviews of multiple parties and EMBs/officials • Analysis of Official Data • Direct Observation of electoral tribunals
Abusing other regulatory resources. This may include unequal enforcement or penalties of other official laws and regulations.	• Apparent targeting (or lack of enforcement) of tax rules, audits, declarations of bankruptcy, etc. • Apparent targeting (or lack of enforcement) of regulations, including criminal, media, defamation, real estate, etc. • Apparent targeting of businesses of opposition leaders and their supporters • Apparent targeting (or lack of enforcement) of rules regulating civil society organization registration and conduct around election periods	• Key Informant Interviews of multiple parties • Analysis of Official Data • Investigative Teams (including experts)

Common Types of Abuse	Where it May be Observed	Best Methodologies
Abusing emergency powers. Crises — like the COVID pandemic, violence, or natural disasters — may require emergency rules and regulations. Some incumbents may abuse emergency powers by cancelling, postponing, and/or restricting elections and political campaigning without due justification, without consultation, and/or in a manner intended to harm political opponents.	Any restrictions should be considered alongside the specific emergency and broader political context to determine if they are justified, reasonable and limited in harm. • Application of arbitrary restrictions on core electoral and political rights • Uneven application of restrictions targeting opposition supporters.	• Legal/Contextual analysis • Direct Observation • Key Informant Interviews of multiple parties

Monitoring Abuse of Regulatory Resources: Effective Approaches

Effectively demonstrating the abuse of regulatory resources requires a well-designed methodology that can show unequal treatment or bias in the way that regulations are applied. ***Ideally, a monitoring effort can document that certain parties or candidates are held to different rules than others.*** As such, it is important to consider methods that collect data on multiple parties or types of candidates so they can be compared in a systematic way. This methodology may be integrated into an existing election monitoring plan that includes long-term observation of the campaign period and/or analysis by a core team. Some regulatory abuses may also be coercive in nature. In such cases, methods listed in Section V above may be more effective.

Key Informant Interviews

As discussed in Sections IV and V, Key Informant interviews can be an effective way to gather data, especially if they are structured to collect comparative information between parties/candidates and different areas of the country. LTOs can interview candidates or staff of a representative list of parties (e.g. the governing party, the main opposition party, a smaller party, independent can-

didates, and as applicable ethnic/women/youth parties or candidates), business people, or others who may be the subject of regulatory enforcement abuses. LTOs should ask specific questions and report back closed-ended data for all candidates. Depending on the issue being monitored, LTOs may be instructed to ask questions about whether or not approvals are given, about the efficiency of the process, and about any formal complaints filed about the process (See Appendix A for sample questions). Data obtained through interviews can also be compared against official data, discussed below.

Analysis of Official Data

Gathering and analyzing official data about the rates or status of approvals, the timing/process of applications, and the number and type of complaints received can identify any systemic biases in the regulation of election rules or the application of other laws. Data may be available online, by request to the responsible body, or by request to or interview of local officials in charge of the process. Some organizations need to make official public information requests and even go to court to compel authorities to share necessary data. It can be helpful to complement analysis of official data with key informant interviews or investigations to ensure that data is complete and accurate and that the full context is understood.

Other methods

Direct Observation Some groups choose to directly observe specific aspects of the election process, such as party or candidate qualification hearing or complaints tribunals.[10] Monitoring checklists should be designed to capture the process and nature of proceedings in a consistent, analyzable manner.

Investigative Teams In some cases, such as highly sensitive or complex incidents, investigative teams may be best placed to gather and analyze information. Depending on the issue, it may be helpful to recruit or consult with experts in the related field, like legal scholars, tax experts, etc.

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[10] See OSCE/ODIHR 2019 Handbook for the Observation of Election Dispute Resolution

MONITORING IN ACTION When the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE)[11] observed Myanmar's 2015 elections, they wanted to measure whether the government provided equal opportunity to all candidates. Of specific concern was whether local election officials would allow campaign rallies in a biased manner — a noted problem in past elections. To collect measurable data on the fairness of the rally approval process, LTOs conducted weekly key informant interviews with representatives from the ruling party, the main opposition party, regional parties, and small parties or independent candidates. They asked about the application process and status of rally approvals. They also collected official data about approvals and complaints from local election officials. By collecting systematic interview data, PACE was able to show that the process was easy for the vast majority of candidates. Importantly, PACE did not detect any significant differences between the responses of candidates of different parties or between male and female candidates.[12]

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[11] https://www.pacemyanmar.org/home/

[12] See PACE Final Report Myanmar Elections 2015, Page 36 and Appendix 2, page 78-82.

VII. Monitoring Abuse of Budgetary Resources

Monitoring Framework for Abuse of Budgetary State Resources

Definition: Misdirecting public funds to benefit incumbents. This may occur in the form of clientelism or vote buying, where development projects or public services are inappropriately or illegally directed to certain projects and/or populations. This may also include the illegal transfer of public funds to support the campaigns of incumbent parties.

Common Types of Abuse	Where it May be Observed	Best Methodologies
Abuse of public spending/ development projects. This may include the illegal or inappropriate use of budgetary resources or public services to benefit certain constituencies of voters, industries, or even public employees, in an attempt to buy votes. Note that emergency spending (during natural disasters, pandemic, other emergencies) are also of concern as they often involve large budgets that move quickly with limited transparency and oversight.	• Public funds or goods provided to voters alongside campaign events. This may include explicit or implicit conflation of the roles of government or party in delivering social services. • Previously unannounced or unplanned development projects, service discounts, or public support spending, such as food aid, provided to certain communities in the election period • Notable, unexplained over-spending of election or general budget categories during the elections • Special raises or bonuses to civil servants during or immediately after the election period • Awards of government projects to political supporters • Long-term development of clientelism where certain communities are made dependent upon a governing party through targeted/favored public services not provided to other communities. • In the case of emergency budgets, funds may be justified by a broader need, but directed primarily for political benefit, as discussed above.	• Key informant interviews, particularly with community leaders and voters • Detailed analysis of official budget data, as well as official information about budget decision-making • Direct observation of campaign rallies/ events • Direct observation or analysis of local development projects and budget planning process

Common Types of Abuse	Where it May be Observed	Best Methodologies
Misallocation or diversion of public funds for campaign purposes. This may include the misdirection of public funds to the campaigns of certain parties or candidates or to other sources directly benefiting campaign finance. Note that this ***does not*** include regulated, public funding of campaigns, if it is provided to all political competitors on a fair/equitable basis.	• Embezzlement by a third party that is redirected to a campaign • "Kick back" schemes, where the state contracts a private vendor/service at an inflated rate and the overage is donated to a campaign • Special bonuses to civil servants, followed by a bump in civil servant contributions to campaign funds. (Essentially, a coercive kick-back scheme) • Notable, unexplained, over-spending of election or general budget categories during the elections • Unequal or unfair distribution of public campaign funding • Use of public funding for elections-related activities for civil society groups that politically aligned with the ruling party.	*Can be very difficult to monitor* • Specialized investigative teams with anti-corruption focus • In-depth analysis of official data

Monitoring Abuse of Budgetary/Financial Resources: Effective Approaches

Abuse of budgetary and financial resources can be challenging to document. The abuse of public spending and development projects may be visible, but proving that it is motivated by elections and/or in violation of laws or budgetary processes can be difficult. Even more so, the diversion of public finances is rarely transparent and is difficult to trace. As such, traditional forms of monitoring, including long-term observation, may be insufficient to demonstrate a problem. ***Ideally, a monitoring methodology will utilize in-depth analysis to show broader trends in budgetary abuse, and/or will gather and present detailed evidence of clear cases of budgetary abuse.*** Monitoring budgetary abuse requires: a deep analysis of laws and budgetary processes; access to necessary data sources; long-term data collection and analysis; and, in some cases, expert investigative and analytical teams, to demonstrate the full scope of the issue. Some groups partner with anti-corruption, budget monitoring or good governance partners to benefit from their expertise, particularly in public finance laws, budgetary processes, and data analysis.

Depending on the level of transparency and the formal process in a country, the budgeting cycle presents several opportunities for oversight, analysis and monitoring for abuse of state resources. For example, with citizen volunteers, the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD)[13] monitors the full budget cycle (from planning, approval, execution, and auditing) to track spending and fight mis-prioritization, abuse of resources and corruption. ZIMCODD has also used a Public Expenditure Tracking System (PETS) to show the flow of public funds from the source of the funds to the beneficiary of public services or direct aid. Using this system over time has allowed the organization to draw nuanced conclusions about the budgetary allocations that are targeted to give unfair advantages to the incumbent and where potential vote-buying activity may occur. Budget processes can be monitored to track manipulation of procedures or abuse of funds for political purposes in an elections context. Where PETS have been instituted in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, they have shown to be effective in identifying delays in financial and in-kind transfers, leakage rates, and general inefficiencies in public spending with an impact on voter and citizen perceptions. When designing a system for monitoring and analyzing potential abuses of budgetary resources around elections, groups may consider, for example:

- **Budget drafting:** Was the process transparent and inclusive of broad citizen input? Were spending priorities justified and in-line with historical trends? Is there evidence of cronyism, clientelism, or other political favoritism in the budgeting process?
- **Budget approval process:** Was the budget approved according to legal procedures? Were any changes made prior to approval — and if so, were changes publicly debated and justified? Was the approval process transparent and timely?
- **Procurement processes:** Were budget funds allocated based on competitive procurement processes? Is the procurement process open for oversight by citizens, journalists and watchdog organizations? Is official information on the procurement process — including the requirements, timeline, scoring methodology and participating bids — easily available on government's websites? Is information on procurement available published in a timely manner and in a format that facilitates its analysis?
- **Execution of the budget:** Does actual spending reflect the approved budget? Were funds dispersed and spent according to historical timing and spending levels? Were any unusual supplemental or emergency budget requests made? Were specific projects and budget disbursements legitimate? *(See text box below)* Were funds misallocated for direct campaign purposes? How were specific expenditures/projects presented to the public: As standard government services? As politicized 'gifts' or incentives for voters?

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[13] https://zimcodd.org

- **Post-spending auditing and evaluation:** Are auditing and evaluation procedures transparent? Were auditing procedures applied consistently — even during election periods? Do audits reveal any deviation from historical trends or intended purposes of the budget? Did evaluations reveal any illegitimate spending? *(See text box below)*

When is Public Spending Illegitimate?

Determining whether or not public spending is legitimate requires serious analysis, significant expertise, and a long-term understanding of spending trends and budget decision-making. It's important to justify internally and to the public how an expense or project is determined to be illegitimate or electorally motivated. Helpful questions* to consider include:

- Did the project announcement or spending take place immediately before or during the campaign period?
- Was the project previously planned and announced as part of the normal policy and budgeting process?
- Was the project publicly debated/justified?
- Does the project have clear targets, built-in transparency and accountability to the same level as other public spending projects?
- Does the project benefit the public at-large or only certain subgroups/supporters of a political party?
- Is spending for the project in line with the planned budget and with historical spending trends?

**Questions adapted from Open Society Justice Institute's Monitoring Election Campaign Finance: A Handbook for NGOs and the Organization of American States' Government Use of State Resources for Electoral Purposes.*

As shown in the examples below, election monitoring groups can take a variety of approaches to detect and analyze the abuse of budgetary resources during different phases of the spending cycle. The specific approach to budget monitoring will vary from country-to-country based on the most relevant issues to monitor, as well as the level of access to budget information. Some practices may be directly analyzed (if data is transparent) or directly observed in parliament sessions, press conferences, or campaign events. Other issues — from embezzlement for campaign purposes to misallocations of internal bureaucratic budgets — may be more opaque and require investigative tools.

Using key informant interviews to demonstrate the abuse of social spending to manipulate marginalized voters in Guatemala. In 2015, Acción Ciudadana[14] (AC) in Guatemala[15] asked LTOs to interview different types of voters about changes to their social benefits during the campaign period. By analyzing interview data from different voter types, AC was able to detect and demonstrate that women belonging to ethnic minorities received unexplained increases in their social benefits during the campaign period.

Tracking illegitimate development projects between a general and runoff election in Georgia. In 2018, teams at ISFED and TI Georgia identified more than 10 illegitimate development projects that began or were announced immediately prior to the run-off campaign. ISFED/TI Georgia identified these projects as illegitimate because: they occurred immediately before the campaign period for the run-off election; they were not previously planned or announced; they were ad-hoc and not part of a strategic, publicly discussed social development plan; and they targeted specific constituencies of voters, including military members, teachers, people receiving social benefits, internally displaced persons and urban dwellers.[16]

Analyzing the official budget to show unplanned spikes in government spending around elections in Uganda. The Alliance for Campaign Finance Monitoring (ACFIM)[17], a group of 16 anti-corruption and budget monitoring organizations in Uganda, conducted an in-depth study of the official budget and spending using case studies of select ministries in 2016. This analysis complemented other aspects of their monitoring plan, which included legal analysis, analysis of political party financing, campaign monitoring, including abuse of institutional resources, and estimated election expenditures of candidates. ACFIM showed that within key ministries supporting the president and another candidate, both the official budget and the rate of spending increased significantly compared with non-election years, especially in non-wage categories, such as travel and donations.

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[14] https://accionciudadanagt.org

[15] Mirador Electoral/Acción Ciudadana, "Informe Agosto" (2015), www.accioncuidadana.org.gt

[16] See Programs announced by the authorities ahead of the runoff election amount to abuse of administrative resources.

[17] https://accionciudadanagt.org

Monitoring Campaign Financing, Expenditures and Finance Reports

Related to state budget monitoring, some election groups track and analyze party and campaign finances to look for illegal financing or spending, evidence of corruption, abuse of state resources, or misreporting. The approaches discussed in this section may also be applied to campaign finance monitoring. This includes analyzing data, monitoring expenditures, or investigating money trails to unveil:

- Anomalies in party/campaign financing or spending — including unusual trends of contributions from civil servants, cronies, or other sources;
- Misreporting of campaign resources — including failing to claim state resources used for campaign purposes; and/or
- Kick-back schemes, which may link to official bidding practices or state expenditures seen in budget monitoring.

VIII. Other Types of Abuse of State Resources

Monitoring abuse of traditional media resources. State communications resources, including using state-run or state-controlled media to promote incumbents, disparage opponents, or otherwise unfairly influence voters, is common in many countries. Such abuse may include overly positive or high volume coverage of the ruling party or incumbent candidate or disproportionately negative or low volume coverage of opposition candidates. This may also include unusual or unjustified promotion of incumbent government achievements during the election period. ***Unequal or biased coverage of political parties/candidates is best monitored through systematic media monitoring conducted by a well-trained, full-time team.*** *For more information about media monitoring, see the resources listed in Appendix B.*

Monitoring abuse of legislative resources. In many countries, legislative power is abused by leveraging parliamentary/legislative majorities to pass laws favorable to incumbents or unfavorable to opposition parties/candidates. This may include changes to electoral laws, candidate requirements, campaign rules, safeguards to prevent the use of state resources in elections, or other regulations. In some cases, those in power may seek to pass legislation that makes detecting and regulating corruption more difficult. Such legislation can weaken transparency requirements and obscure potential abuses of state resources, or weaken the authority of anti-corruption bodies. Efforts to weaken transparency may also include restrictions on observer rights. Sometimes, the legislative majority subverts parliamentary procedures to limit the power or stature of opposition candidates in parliament. In some contexts, abuse of legislative power includes passing laws favorable to certain industries/elites in exchange for campaign donations or other political favors. ***Parliamentary monitoring is a strong methodology that may show whether parliamentary proceedings are unfairly or illegally used to diminish the role of opposition members in parliament or to pass laws favoring the majority. Legal tracking and analysis can also be used to review new, amended or revoked laws that overtly benefit political competitors or weaken transparency and anti-corruption measures.*** *See Appendix B for resources on these methodologies.*

IX. Communicating Findings

Communicating findings about state resource abuse can be more complicated than sharing other election monitoring findings: abuse of state resources may feel less relevant to citizens; findings may appear biased as they often focus solely on incumbents; reports of specific violations may bring retaliation against victims or whistleblowers; and/or organizations may face legal or other consequences for alleging corruption. Some organizations may rely on partners — such as journalists, influencers, or fellow advocacy organizations — to help disseminate findings. Some findings may be submitted to formal complaint mechanisms, while others may resonate better with public audiences. Adjusting communication strategies to consider the specific project goals, as well as the risks and challenges in a particular context, leads to more effective messaging.

Consider communication goals

Monitoring groups should develop an external communications strategy to support the specific goals of the project. For example:

To ***educate*** and ***shift culture*** around the abuse of state resources:

- Plan long-term outreach well before the campaign period or the program;
- Target at-risk communities (voters, civil servants) so they are aware of their rights;
- Message norms that resonate with cultural values — for example: fighting corruption to improve citizen lives; protecting the fairness of elections; having pride in the integrity of the civil service;
- Use peers, role models, influencers, and youth to promote behavior change and build a feeling of community and solidarity around new norms;
- If using a citizen or civil servant reporting tool, market aggressively and strategically so that those most likely to face problems know who to contact.

To ***deter abuse*** and ***promote accountability:***

- Begin well in advance of the campaign period (or start of the program);
- Target at-risk communities so they are aware of their rights;
- Put violators on notice. Alert relevant branches of government, civil servants, parties and candidates that activities will be monitored;
- Report findings while they matter, while the public is paying attention, and while there is still time to prosecute and/or deter future actions;

- Present actionable evidence of violations and show the relevant impact of abuse;
- Build public pressure to enforce (or create) accountability rules; and
- Target accountability institutions and other decision-makers to take action.

To ***strengthen institutions:***

- Use evidence, values-based story-telling, and strategic timing to compel decision-makers and institutions to act;
- Lobby reformers in parliament or ministries to create infrastructure for training, whistleblower protections, and/or accountability mechanisms; and
- Build partnerships with institutions (bureaucracies, universities that train civil servants, ombudsman offices, etc.) to cooperate on training, communication, internal reviews, etc.

To advocate for ***legal reform:***

- Communicate messages at strategic points/in-roads for reform: Immediately following elections; before new office-holders are sworn in; and during key points in the legislative session;
- Target decision-makers with motivating messages and actionable recommendations;
- Educate and activate powerful, engaged communities to pressure decision-makers to act; and
- Build public support with effective, creative messaging that holds decision-makers accountable. Don't be afraid to shame decision-makers into action!

Making the Message Impactful

Tailor to the audience. Effective messaging relies on tailoring messages to target audiences. Customize messages to those who need to hear it, rather than relying only on generalized information for a "general public." Consider different audiences – for example, law-makers, civil servants, youth — and how to effectively reach and inform them. What is their pre-existing knowledge on the issue? What are their underlying values? What finding or framing will resonate most with them? What is the most effective platform, medium or messenger to reach them? How should content be displayed – Formal report? One-off graphics? Stunning visuals? Catchy videos? Plan for *multiple* contacts with each audience to truly persuade.

Build interest and show relevance. Before diving into findings, convince the audience that the issue is relevant and important. "Abuse of state resources" is a dry concept that may not resonate with many audiences. Consider framing findings in more accessible and values-based concepts like "honesty", "fairness", "transparency", or "pride as citizens" which may be more compelling. In many

countries, public education may be needed to show why long-standing practices are illegal, unethical, and/or damaging to democracy and governance. Be creative about framing findings in a way that aligns with the audience's values, interests and sense of right and wrong.

Present findings in a clear, compelling way. Abuse of state resources are often presented in observer reports as a list of incidents, which make it difficult for an audience to understand the scope, context, and impact of the problem. Instead, groups should aim to present findings in more intuitive ways. Some findings — such campaign rally observations, key informant interview data, analysis of official data, and/or systematic social media analysis – can be quantified and displayed in compelling charts and infographics. This might include displaying information about the cost of corruption in terms of lost access to social services or equal representation in government decision-making. Other information — such as findings collected through investigations and verified citizen reports — may be better shared as detailed case studies or story-telling. As a complement to quantitative data or detailed case studies, a list of individual incidents can be included in more detailed report annexes as evidence or actionable items for investigation by authorities. Be creative when presenting data – graphics, art, humor, irony, and even public shaming, can be highly effective methods to get findings noticed.

Show why it matters and how it can be fixed. It can be very useful to frame findings in the broader legal or political context. Demonstrating that laws are not being enforced can show the need for better public education, stronger accountability mechanisms, and rule of law. Demonstrating that deeply entrenched practices and unethical abuses (that may be perfectly legal) have a negative impact on the fairness of elections or the rights of voters, can demonstrate the need for legal reform. Finally, make sure that recommendations are relevant, actionable and targeted at actors who can be held to account.

For more guidance on designing a strategic communications plan, see *Raising Voices in Closing Spaces: Strategic Communications Planning for Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observer Groups*[18] by NDI.

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[18] https://www.raiseavoice.net

Appendix A - Sample Key Informant Interview Questions

The following is a menu of illustrative key informant questions that could be tailored to the specific abuses of concern, and phrased appropriately given the context. Some questions are designed to elicit the interviewee's opinions or perceptions about a particular topic, rather than strictly objective responses about their observations. Responses to these questions should not be taken at face value, but may be useful in understanding broader cultural perceptions about corruption and accountability. They may also serve as leads to new issues citizen observers could explore and triangulate with other objective sources of information. Structuring the questions in a way -- such as a multiple choice format -- that results in structured answers can ensure more systematic data analysis. (See Text Box "Tips for Systematic Long-Term Observation of State Resources Abuses" in Section IV for more information)

Candidate or Campaign Staff

Type of ASR	Sample Interview Questions
Institutional Resources	• Where are your campaign offices? • Where did you hold rallies this week? • Where do you store campaign materials? • How many campaign volunteers do you have? Where do you recruit them? How many are women and how many are men? Do you experience challenges recruiting women or members of traditionally marginalized groups to participate? • What data sources do you use to build a list of supporters/voters to target? • Who provides security for your campaign events?
Regulatory Resources	• Of rally permit requests, how many were submitted, approved and rejected this week? • Who is responsible for reviewing and approving these requests? • Are there clear criteria for approval of these requests? • In general, how many days prior to your rally did you receive approval? • Did you file any complaints about the rally permit process?

Type of ASR	Sample Interview Questions
Coercive Resources	• Did you face any problems campaigning in this area? If so, what kinds of problems? Consider asking whether: • The candidate/campaign staff or supporters have experienced any intimidation or use of force at campaign events; • The candidate/campaign staff or supporters have been subject to any harassment, threats of arrest, or threats of physical harm publicly or privately, in person, online, or in the media; • The candidate/campaign staff or supports have received any threats that they may lose their government jobs, current or potential contracts with the government?
General perception-based questions *(Note: Responses should not be taken at face value, but could serve as leads that observers could triangulate with other sources)*	• Have you witnessed or heard of any campaign behavior by other candidates, parties, or their supporters that you would consider corrupt? • Do you feel you have equal access to financial and institutional resources for your campaign as compared to other parties or candidates?
Other	• When and where are your planned campaign rallies this week? (Question to assist LTOs in rally monitoring planning)

Community Leaders, Marginalized Community Representatives and Other Neutral Sources

Type of ASR	Sample Interview Questions
Institutional Resources	• Have you observed party X using state vehicles or other state resources in their campaign? • Have you observed party Y using state vehicles or other state resources in their campaign? • Have you observed civil servants assisting with or attending campaign events during work hours? __ None; __ For Party X; __ For Party Y)
Budgetary Resources	• Have you seen any new or unexpected development projects arising in your community? If so, what kinds of projects, and who has been involved in publicizing them? • Have you noticed any change in distribution of social services or aid in your community, such as cash transfers, food distribution, or any other type of assistance? If so, who has been involved in the distribution and publicity around it?
Coercive Resources	• Do you think voters in your community face problems if they vote for certain parties or candidates? If so, what kinds of problems? • Have members of certain communities been told they will stop receiving government benefits if they do not vote for the ruling party/candidate?

Civil Servants, Union Leaders, etc.

Type of ASR	Sample Interview Questions
Institutional Resources	• Were you informed of the legal restrictions on conducting campaign activities in your official role? • Has any campaign compelled you to provide information about voters in the area/in your program that is not part of public information available to all candidates? • Have you seen any campaign materials produced/stored/distributed by your office? • Have you assisted in any political campaigns while you were in your official role? If so, when? For which party?
Coercive Resources	• Do you and your colleagues feel free to attend campaign events for the candidates you like during non-work hours? • Would you face problems if you openly supported a certain party or candidate? • Have you been told that your employment, salary, or promotion will be impacted by the results of the elections?

Open Government Champions or Potential Whistleblowers

Type of ASR	Sample Interview Questions
Budgetary Resources	• Have you noticed an unusual increase in your department's spending or budget around election time?
Regulatory Resources	• What is the process for managing complaints regarding violations of campaign procedures? Who has decision-making power over how regulation is managed, and what oversight mechanisms exist to promote fair regulation?
General perception-based questions *(Note: Responses should not be taken at face value, but could serve as leads that observers could triangulate with other sources)*	• If you witnessed or learned of an abuse of state resources, would you feel comfortable reporting it to the election commission or another independent body? If you did report such an abuse, do you believe it would be likely that those involved would be held accountable?

Voters, including members of marginalized communities, like women, youth, ethnic minorities, low-income and rural voters, voters with disabilities, and other voters dependent upon government services

Type of ASR	Sample Interview Questions
Budgetary Resources	• Have you been offered government benefits for voting for a certain candidate/party?
Coercive Resources	• Do voters in your community feel free to attend campaign events for the candidates they like? • Do you think voters in your community face problems if they vote for certain parties or candidates? If so, what kinds of problems? • Have you or someone you know been told you will stop receiving government benefits if you do not vote for a certain party/candidate?
General perception-based questions *(Note: Responses should not be taken at face value, but could serve as leads that observers could triangulate with other sources)*	• Do you believe that oversight institutions (election commission, ombudsmen, parliament, or other oversight bodies) are capable of holding officials who abuse state resources for electoral gain accountable?

Appendix B — Resources

Further Guidance on Abuse of State Resources and Campaign Finance Monitoring

Monitoring Election Campaign Finance: A Handbook for NGOs by Open Society Justice Initiative, (2004). See Chapters 5 and 6. Full document available here.[1]

Tools for Reviewing Legal Framework for Abuse of State Resources

Unfair Advantage: The Abuse of State Resources in Elections, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), (2017). Full document available here.[2]

Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections, National Democratic Institute (NDI), (2008), See Pages 71-77. Full document available here.[3]

"Joint Guidelines on the Misuse of Administrative Resources During Electoral Processes," Venice Commission/Council of Europe (2016). This document lays out helpful principles and commitments for Council of Europe countries. Guidelines can be found here.[4]

Further Guidance on Effective Communication Strategies

Raising Voices in Closing Spaces: Strategic Communications Planning for Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observer Groups, National Democratic Institute (NDI), (2019). Available here. [5]

Further Guidance on Monitoring State Media

Media Monitoring to Promote Democratic Elections: An NDI Handbook for Citizen Organizations National Democratic Institute (NDI), (2002). Full document available here.[6]

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[1] https://www.justiceinitiative.org/publications/monitoring-election-campaign-finance-handbook-ngos

[2] https://www.ifes.org/publications/unfair-advantage-abuse-state-resources-elections

[3] https://www.ndi.org/publications/promoting-legal-frameworks-democratic-elections

[4] https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2016)004-e

[5] https://www.raiseavoice.net

[6] https://www.ndi.org/publications/media-monitoring-promote-democratic-elections-ndi-handbook-citizen-organizations

Handbook on Media Monitoring for Election Observation Missions
OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), (2012). Full document available here.[7]

Disinformation and Election Integrity: A Guidance Document for NDI Elections Programs. National Democratic Institute (NDI), (2019). Available here. [8]

Parliamentary Monitoring Resources

Strengthening Parliamentary Accountability, Citizen Engagement, and Access to Information: A Global Survey of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations
National Democratic Institute (NDI), (2011). Full document available here.[9]

Political Process Monitoring: Activist Tools and Techniques
National Democratic Institute (NDI), (2010). Full document available here.[10]

Portal for Parliamentary Development - Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations
Agora, (2012). Website available here.[11]

Resources on Anti-Corruption Investigations

Corruption Fighters' Toolkit: Civil Society Experiences and Emerging Strategies.
Transparency International (2002). Available here.[12]

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[7] https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/0/92057.pdf

[8] https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Disinformation%20and%20Electoral%20Integrity_NDI_External_Updated%20May%202019%20%281%29.pdf

[9] https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/governance-parliamentary-monitoring-organizations-survey-september-2011.pdf

[10] https://www.ndi.org/political-process_monitoring_guide

[11] https://www.agora-parl.org/resources/aoe/parliamentary-monitoring-organisations

[12] https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/corruption-fighters-toolkit-civil-society-experiences-and-emerging-strategi

Global Investigative Journalism Network

- Collection of Resources for Corruption Investigations[13]
- Reporting Tips and Tools[14]
- Resources for finding and working with Whistleblowers[15]

Bellingcat

- Online Investigating Toolkit[16]

[13] https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1kHQUH8RvfUNrQuH3NWYMq8BzraEFF4QaG_XbfAcFV9k/edit#gid=0

[14] https://helpdesk.gijn.org/support/solutions/articles/14000036502-reporting-tips-and-tools

[15] https://gijn.org/whistleblowing/

[16] https://bit.ly/bcattools

Appendix C: International Commitments on Countering Political Corruption in Elections

GLOBAL

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)

Article 25

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
(b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
(c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

Article 26

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

General Comment No. 25: The right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service (CCPR Art. 25)

Persons entitled to vote must be free to vote for any candidate for election and for or against any proposal submitted to referendum or plebiscite, and free to support or to oppose government, without undue influence or coercion of any kind which may distort or inhibit the free expression of the elector's will. Voters should be able to form opinions independently, free of violence or threat of violence, compulsion, inducement or manipulative interference of any kind.

United Nations Convention Against Corruption

Article 7. Public sector
[...]
2. Each State Party shall also consider adopting appropriate legislative and administrative measures,

consistent with the objectives of this Convention and in accordance with the fundamental principles of its domestic law, to prescribe criteria concerning candidature for and election to public office.

3. Each State Party shall also consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures, consistent with the objectives of this Convention and in accordance with the fundamental principles of its domestic law, to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office and, where applicable, the funding of political parties.

4. Each State Party shall, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its domestic law, endeavour to adopt, maintain and strengthen systems that promote transparency and prevent conflicts of interest.

AFRICA

African Union (AU) Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption

[...] The diversion by a public official or any other person, for purposes unrelated to those for which they were intended, for his or her own benefit or that of a third party, any property belonging to the State or its agencies, to an independent agency, or to an individual, that such official has received by virtue of his or her position [...]

ECOWAS - Protocol on the Fight against Corruption

1. This Protocol shall be applicable to the following acts of corruption:
[...]
a public official diverting from its initial purpose, either for his own benefit or for the benefit of another person, any assets, whether moveable or immoveable, or deeds and securities belonging to the State, an independent agency or an individual, given to the public official by virtue of his position and for the needs of the State for safe-keeping and for other reasons.

SADC - Protocol Against Corruption

This Protocol is applicable to the following acts of corruption:

[...]
the diversion by a public official, for purposes unrelated to those for which they were intended, for his or her own benefit or that of a third party of any movable or immovable property, monies or secu-

rities belonging to the State, to an independent agency, or to an individual, that such official received by virtue of his or her position for purposes of administration, custody or other reasons.

SADC - Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections

2. PRINCIPLES FOR CONDUCTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS
2.2 SADC Member States shall adhere to the following principles in the conduct of democratic elections:
[...]
2.1.5 Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media;
2.1.6 Equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;

AMERICAS

OAS - Inter-American Convention Against Corruption

This Convention is applicable to the following acts of corruption:
[...]
Any act or omission in the discharge of his duties by a government official or a person who performs public functions for the purpose of illicitly obtaining benefits for himself or for a third party.

ARAB STATES

League of Arab States - Arab Convention Against Corruption

Article 4:
Considering that the description of acts of corruption, criminalized by the present Convention, is subject to the laws of the State Party, each state, according to its domestic legislation, shall adopt the necessary legal and other measures to criminalize the following acts when committed intentionally:
[...]
5 — Influence-peddling.
6 — Abuse of public office.
7 — Illicit enrichment.
[...]
11 — Misappropriation of public property and its unlawful acquisition.

ASIA

ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025

A.2.3. Instil the culture of integrity and anti-corruption and mainstream the principles thereof into the policies and practices of the ASEAN Community

[...]

iii. Promote ASEAN cooperation in implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption;

iv. Strengthen the implementation of domestic laws and regulations against corruption and of anti-corruption practices in both the public and private sectors within ASEAN, including through capacity building programmes.

EUROPE/EURASIA

Council of Europe / Committee of Ministers - Recommendation to member states on common rules against corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns

Article 5. Donations by legal entities

[...]

c. States should prohibit legal entities under the control of the state or of other public authorities from making donations to political parties.

Council of Europe / Venice Commission - Joint Guidelines on the Misuse of Administrative Resources During Electoral Processes

These Guidelines cover the actions of civil servants in their official duties. This includes how civil servants may misuse their duties and public means or, conversely, be pressured to support or vote for certain electoral contestants. These Guidelines also cover the actions of elected incumbents, particularly while campaigning. These two categories do not usually overlap, as such.

[...]

Some of the elements in the Guidelines may require a formal constitutional or legislative basis in national orders, while other elements can be achieved through codes of ethics or public/civil service codes or practice and interpretation of national legislation by competent courts. In all cases, it is important that legislation, regulations and judicial decisions, are well aligned, avoiding gaps, ambiguities and contradictory provisions.

[...]
The Guidelines include three parts. The first one recalls the applicable fundamental principles (part II. A.). The Guidelines proper deal with the way to prevent and sanction the misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes, first by suggesting improvements to the electoral or general legal framework (part II. B.), and then by suggesting concrete remedies and sanctions (part II. C.).

OSCE - Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE

(5) They solemnly declare that among those elements of justice which are essential to the full expression of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings are the following:
[...]
(5.4) — a clear separation between the State and political parties; in particular, political parties will not be merged with the State;

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ISBN: 978-1-880134-44-3