

Electoral Observation

2006: 3x

2009

2010

2011



Two hundred accredited observers deployed, 2006–2011



Haiti Democracy Project

<http://www.haitipolicy.org>

I Will Have My Say



Kathie Scarrah

These voters would not be denied. They would wait all day to have their say about their country's future. It is the job of election observers to verify that their choice is made freely and peacefully and is accurately counted at the national level. Observers

can do this by their presence and careful notation at the polls and by rigorously comparing local to national returns. Finally, they can verify the exclusion of fraudulent votes from the national tabulation.

In the recent elections, the Haiti Democracy Project's electoral mission was the only foreign-sponsored one to provide detailed eyewitness reports of the violence at the polling places. We were the only one to produce photographic proof of the discrepancy between

polling place returns and officially-posted results. And we were the only one, until the arrival of the U.S.-organized Verification Mission, to sift the database of the presidential vote and find the fraudulent votes that had been reintroduced into the system.

Experience Counts

These successes were due first of all to the dedication of our observer corps, but they also owed to our long experience in observing Haitian elections since February 2006. Over that period, the Haiti Democracy Project deployed the largest contingent of Haitian-Americans ever to observe in Haiti. Altogether, the Haiti Democracy Project has sent two hundred accredited observers to six elections.

Most of our observers arrived at dawn for the opening and many stayed into the wee hours of the night to witness the turnover to MINUSTAH, the United Nations mission in Haiti. In one town, our observers had to brave a gang attack on the polling places which by late afternoon drove forty-five of fifty of them from the sites.

In a Haiti Democracy Project mission, each observer is tasked with filling out a detailed, twenty-page questionnaire that explores all aspects of the opening, the voting process, the closing, and the count. The results are tabulated into a database which generates

a detailed series of accessible charts measuring the procedural and security proficiency of the election. Consistency in questionnaire and database structure from election to election allows comparison between elections. The Haiti Democracy Project's missions are the only ones to achieve a quantifiable result by compiling their findings in a database.

The mission's research-in-progress is continually shared with the Provisional Electoral Council, local electoral authorities, and, where violence is concerned, the police. In the recent elections, the mission director visited CEP headquarters to brief the president and members on measures to prevent fraud, advice that was ultimately not taken because of the acute political pressure on the council.

The mission's findings are distributed at press conferences in Port-au-Prince, provincial towns, and Washington.

In Their Own Words

"A mob was running through the voting center . . . It returned and got worse around 3 p.m. The security agents told me to watch out because there were armed men shooting and vandalizing. I left at around 3:45 p.m. because there was no security."

"The poll workers tried to shut the doors but the voters screamed 'No!' There were shots coming from everywhere."

"Was MINUSTAH present? It was, physically, but despite the violence against the voters by partisans of the Unité party, it didn't do anything to protect the people trying to vote."

"The police arrested the Unité partisans and released them a few minutes later."

"The head poll worker let Unité voters in but not the others and told them to give up their cards."

"The supervisor of the voting center told me to leave. When



These Haiti Democracy Project observers encountered gangs overrunning the polling places.

I showed him my badge, he insisted and called the police."

"I am not necessarily against Unité. I am against troublemakers."

"At 3 p.m. there was stone-throwing and shooting. Even the police took cover. They told everyone to leave. I did."

"I returned later and knocked on the gate. There was no answer."

"There was a fight outside the polling place. I went out to look. I was hit. A policeman took me home."



"I saw men with pistols in their pockets."



ACHIEVEMENTS

Our recommendations for improved throughput are implemented in rounds 2 and 3 of 2006, making for smoother elections.

Our seminar in 2006 is the venue for top U.S. and other officials to persuade the electoral administrator to return.

Our photographic evidence of fraud in 2010 galvanizes the Obama administration into correcting the presidential count.

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