The question then is not the existence, but the prevalence of this practice. According to an internal statistical check performed by the Tabulation Center, 21 percent of the votes received by one presidential candidate were fraudulent. This was enough to eliminate him from the race. President Préval pressured the electoral commission to restore enough of his votes to put him back in, which eliminated candidate Michel Martelly.¹ The Haiti Democracy Project obtained a copy of the vote database and found these improperly-restored votes.² A month later the U.S.-led Verification Commission found them, too, and had them removed, requalifying Martelly for the second round.

The administrator of the electoral commission who was successfully pressured by Preval to restore the fraudulent votes was Pierre-Louis Opont, the president of the current commission.

The method developed worldwide by electoral observation to deal with this situation is the parallel count—enlarging the spot check into a representative sample that would answer the question of prevalence. Some parallel counts were done in Haiti during 2010, but the MINUSTAH urged the population to ignore them and wait for the official results. Yet MINUSTAH knew the value of a parallel count because it had earlier planned to do one itself.³

In meetings of Haitian electoral observation organizations in Port-au-Prince during April and May 2015, which the Haiti Democracy Project joined, the ambition of Haitian civil society to do a parallel count and document it by the precise photography and internet connectivity that is now possible with smartphones was very evident. There will be parallel counts and photographs. The only question is whether they will be standardized, coordinated, and transparent enough to offer an effective yardstick alongside the official one, which will be subject to the tampering and political pressure discussed above.

The chances are that without a little tough love the Haitian organizations may end up with many little counts instead of one big one, making their effort once again easy to dismiss.

That’s where the plan of the Haiti Democracy Project comes in. The eleven grassroots electoral organizations represented at those meetings would supply 1,350 observers – one for


²http://www.haitipolicy.org/Celestin_vote.html?PHPSESSID=03407594dde0be8e3fcec0657604057c

every ten polling places in the country. Ten percent is the right ratio for a transition country like Haiti. They would deploy these observers anyway. Our contribution would be to prepare them for a standardized parallel count, properly training and incentivizing them so that they would all carry out the same procedure in photographing and uploading to one place the images of the returns and authenticating their presence.

The photographs and resultant tallies would be shared with the electoral commission before publication, enabling the conscientious members of the commission to check the validity of the proposed official count and if necessary correct it in time. Thus the observers would act as the external eye that the commission created when it accredited them.

In addition to the parallel count, the observers would also perform quantified incident reporting – Haiti’s first. There’s a long history of good narrative reporting by Haitian electoral observation, but it begs the question of prevalence–are these isolated incidents or dominant practice? On-line fillable forms would collect the data from 1,350 polling places, quantifying the extent of issues such as violence, impaired voting access, or polling-worker partiality.

The second layer of organization would be forty-five field managers, one for every thirty observers. Fifteen would come from the diaspora and they would have cars.

Finally, a collection center to which the images from 1,350 polling places would be e-mailed or WhatsApped. An accounting firm near downtown Port-au-Prince has made space available for this purpose.

Financial Proposal

Type of support requested: (1) A per-diem on election day for domestic observers. Given the numbers involved, this is over half the budget (2) To deploy one manager for every 30 observers, or 45 managers (3) Of these, 15 diaspora and 30 domestic (4) Travel. Total request: $517,656

Personnel cost for training and evaluation U.S. personnel, 16, $21,250. Of them, 15 diaspora. Haitian co-director, 6 months full-time $23,600. Observer training, one day @ $10, 1,350 observers, $13,500.

Personnel cost for project execution, 1,350 observers, 3 elections
Election-day per diems @ $50 x 1,350 x 3 = $202,500

Personnel cost for post-electoral evaluation. Observer per diems @ $10 x 1,350 x 3 = $40,500

Personnel cost 30 domestic field managers @ $30/day for 7 days, 3 elections = $18,900

Overseas Travel $22,932
Domestic Travel & Lodging $41,733
Supplies $17,169
Meetings $2,355
Contingencies @ 10 percent $47,060

Grand Total $517,656
Diaspora note
Using the diaspora added $52,335 to the cost. Without them, it would be $465,321

Of the $517,656 grand total, 93 percent would be spent in Haiti.

If the planned three elections are reduced to two, the cost of this operation would shrink by nearly one-third, i.e. to a grand total of $345,104