



# NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Suite 503, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 328-3136

■ FAX (202) 939-3166  
■ Telex 5106015068 NDIIA

**(DRAFT)**

## **NDI Pre-Election Report**

**Bujumbura  
May 21, 1993**

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a nongovernmental organization based in Washington, D.C. that works to support democratic institutions around the world, has completed monitoring the first phase of the upcoming election process in Burundi as part of a comprehensive election monitoring program. NDI's efforts in Burundi respond to the request of Prime Minister Sibomana and leaders of civic organizations and all the political parties. These efforts include a mission in December 1992 to advise on the preparation of the election law, two pre-election missions, an on-going training program for Burundi political parties and civic organizations and a continuous field presence since April 1993. For the June 1, 1993 elections, NDI plans to organize an 18-member international observer delegation that will visit all regions of the country.

This report covers the registration period that occurred from May 6-15, 1993. The report also outlines NDI plans to monitor the second phase of the electoral process, particularly focusing on the issue of media fairness, and the election day phase of the process, paying special attention on verifying the accuracy of the vote count.

To monitor the registration process, NDI observers Jean Lavoie and Kevin Johnson, under the authority of a laissez passer signed by the President of the National Election Commission, visited registration centers in 37 communes in 15 provinces. NDI observers were accompanied on these visits by members of the human rights league ITEKA, one of several civic organizations working with NDI to implement a nonpartisan parallel vote tabulation, who interpreted between French and Kurundi.

The observers selected a representative sample of urban and rural registration centers from a number of different communes in each province. At each center, questions were asked of registration officials, of party pollwatchers and of residents. The questions focused on the following issues:

1. Do most residents of the area intend on registering?
2. Will the allotted time period permit all to register?
3. What is the process for obtaining an attestation of identity and how well is this process working?
4. Have there been cases of foreigners registering?
5. Have there been cases of people under 18 registering?
6. Have political parties been able to observe the process?
7. What concerns have party observers presented and how have they been addressed?
8. Has the registration been conducted in an atmosphere of cooperation and transparency?
9. Has the integrity of the registers been respected?



In most provinces visited, observers also conducted interviews with government officials and party representatives. In many cases, specific allegations of irregularities presented by party representatives were investigated.

By compiling the data obtained from these inquiries, the NDI team has been able to develop a general analysis of the registration period. This analysis does not provide an exhaustive, definitive report of the registration period. However, NDI believes that the impressions gained through this monitoring can be useful in the preparation for elections in Burundi by providing a neutral point of view on this important aspect of the election process.

## II. SUMMARY

The general impression of the NDI team is that the registration was conducted in a peaceful, cooperative atmosphere, and was implemented in accordance with Burundi's electoral code in an orderly manner.

The team was particularly impressed by the constructive role played by the National Election Commission, which responded in a timely and flexible manner to a range of issues that could have threatened the process.

The team was also impressed by the spirit of the cooperation and the seriousness of purpose that characterized almost all of the registration stations visited. In most cases, the team found that registration was being conducted in an open and honest manner by the natives of the colline or quartier, with the close cooperation of colline chiefs and other authorities. Under these circumstances the possibilities for fraud or manipulation appear to be very limited.

A small number of irregularities were noted in certain provinces, and these concerns have been brought to the attention of the National Election Commission. The team is particularly concerned that in three communes visited, residents supporting Uprona appeared to obtain attestations of identity more easily than those supporting FRODEBU. The team believes these are isolated incidents that do not reflect the general comportment of administration and election officials. Nevertheless, suggestions of favoritism can seriously undermine confidence in the electoral system. To put to rest any suspicion, NDI encourages election officials to act with neutrality and strongly urges civic organizations and political parties to monitor each phase of the election process.

The NDI team received several allegations of irregularities in the administration of the registration. Upon investigation of the charges, most were determined to be unsubstantiated or inaccurate. NDI is hopeful that as the process of monitoring Burundi's elections progresses, all Burundians will do their utmost to provide constructive, accurate and objective reports and will avoid misleading or inflammatory accusations. Accusations that are made without evidence or without substantiation may diminish the credibility of those who make the claims.

NDI has expressed its concern previously about the lack of provisions for copying the

registers. Copying the registers at the close of registration could provide a safeguard against damage or manipulation between the end of registration and election day. The handcopying or photocopying of all registers may present logistical difficulties, but it is an option that should be considered. In the absence of backup copies, election officials should be particularly vigilant in protecting the integrity of the registers. In addition, polling station officials should have on hand the original registration tally sheet, which will prove to observers and pollwatchers that the number of names in the register has not changed since the closing of the registration period.

### III. COMMENTS ON THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

NDI would like to take this opportunity to comment on one other aspect of the electoral process: the role of state-owned media.

State-owned media is paid for with the taxes of all citizens of the country. It has an obligation to provide coverage and reporting that is not biased toward one part of the population or toward one political party. The coverage on television and radio news programs and in the pages of *Le Renouveau* raises questions about whether the standards of unbiased and equal coverage are being met in Burundi. To ensure that NDI is in a position to substantiate or refute allegations of undue bias or unequal coverage of the campaign, NDI has begun a systematic analysis of the content of *Le Renouveau*, and of radio and television news broadcasts. This analysis will record the amount of coverage given to each candidate and whether this coverage presents the candidate in a positive, negative or neutral light. The results of this study will be included in our post-election report.

Although it is difficult to determine the influence that biased or unequal coverage can have on the electorate, the degree of bias on state-owned media often reflects intentions to carry out an open, democratic contest. In order to prevent any allegations that undue advantage is being made of the state-owned media, the minister of communications and the Communication Council should insure that journalists and other news officials strive for a position of neutrality.

### IV. INTRODUCTION OF PARALLEL VOTE TABULATION

NDI intends to conduct a systematic analysis of the election process and the tabulation of results. This analysis can add to the transparency of an election by providing a non-partisan verification of the accuracy of the election proceedings.

To conduct this analysis, a nonpartisan domestic monitoring operation will statistically select a representative sample of 10 percent of the polling stations in Burundi, which will be monitored closely from the opening of the polling station to the counting of the votes. Observers assigned to monitor these polling stations will watch the vote count and then transmit the results to the NDI office in Bujumbura.

If the voting and counting processes have been conducted fairly, the results obtained through the parallel vote tabulation will reflect, within a small margin of error, the officially

announced results and should be available in advance of the official results.

This parallel vote counting system has been used by nonpartisan election observers to verify election results in more than 20 countries, including Zambia, where it confirmed the victory of the opposition candidate, and most recently during the presidential elections in Paraguay, where the ruling party candidate won.

This tabulation is designed to enhance confidence in the election and counting process and to provide neutral assessment of the results. It can also detect fraud, should it occur, and can verify or disprove allegations of fraud.

NDI will assist in this effort a group of non-partisan organizations including the Catholic Church, the United Protestant Churches, the Catholic Jurists Association, and the human rights groups Iteka and Sonara. These groups have requested and received accreditation from the Minister of the Interior as nonpartisan election observers. NDI will train and coordinate most of the national observers from these groups. Toward that end, NDI commends the decision to accredit national observers as an important step in the development of a civil society in Burundi.

## V. CONCLUSION

NDI is honored to support this historic stage of Burundi's political development. Having reviewed and reported the events of the registration period, we now turn our attention to monitoring the campaign environment and preparations for the administration of the vote. NDI is greatly impressed by the general level of dedication and cooperation it has witnessed thus far in Burundi's democratization process. It is our sincere hope that, in the periods that precede and follow elections, all Burundais will continue to demonstrate this commitment to the democratic process.