

CHAPTER FOUR

The Basics of Monitoring:

Quantitative Measurements, Qualitative Assessments, Data Collection & Data Analysis

Once decisions have been made about which outlets, programs and subjects to focus on, a methodology for accurately measuring the coverage of the subjects must be adopted. The methods used by the project will largely depend on what types of outlets are being monitored. Monitoring television, radio and newspapers require different approaches. This section will address the methodological considerations applicable to these media.

There are numerous aspects of media performance that could be monitored, such as the amount of time or space devoted to each candidate, party or government activity and whether media statements about a party or candidate are accurate and/or based on credible sources. Generally, these issues require one of three types of analysis: quantitative, qualitative (or content) or a combination of the two.

For training purposes, tapes of radio and television news broadcasts and copies of the newspapers that the project intends to monitor should be used. Monitors should go through a typical news story several times and examine a variety of matters until they are comfortable with the process. After watching, listening or reading the whole news event once, monitors should discuss the program as a group and then go back and evaluate each story. Impressions likely will change after closer examination. Chapter 5 of this handbook discusses designing

forms to record observations and suggests answers to some of the questions that typically arise.

QUANTITATIVE MEASUREMENTS

The most straightforward and easily understandable data that can be collected are simple quantitative measurements of the amount of media coverage offered to political subjects. For broadcast media, this means measuring with a stop-watch the length of time devoted to stories about each political party or candidate and comparing them. This answers questions, such as: What was the story about? How long was it? These are fairly simple data for monitors to record on forms. Furthermore, these data translate into pie charts or other graphic presentations that are easily understood. These charts can show amounts of coverage in numeric form and what percentage of coverage a certain political competitor received in relation to others.

In addition to measuring and recording the amounts of time dedicated to particular political subjects (political parties, candidates and top government officials) on television, monitors can also measure factors that highlight more subtle problems, such as the way different political subjects are portrayed. For example, some parties' candidates or representatives may always appear on the air and speak in their own voices, while others may be quoted or

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their statements paraphrased or summarized by an announcer. For broadcast news programs, time measurements can be subdivided as follows:

- Total time in seconds of a story on each relevant political subject (discussed above);
- Total time in seconds that the candidate/party appears and speaks on screen;
- Time in seconds the image of the candidate or party representative appears without speaking (e.g., even when a political subject might not be presenting his or her own version of events, he or she is shown on camera);
- Time in seconds the voice of the candidate or party representative is heard (even if there is no film or photograph);
- Order of the placement of the news item in the broadcast (first, second, etc.).

The results will offer quantitative data that on comparison illustrate the differences in amounts and several aspects of the quality of coverage for particular subjects in different media outlets. Consider that if all news outlets made similar decisions about the newsworthiness of the various political events,

then amounts of coverage devoted to these political subjects would be similar. When significant differences appear among the media, it may indicate bias, and that possibility should be examined over time in light of patterns that may emerge in coverage. If such differences appear consistently as the elections approach, it will become clear that voters are getting different information depending on which outlet they consult for news. If the differences consistently favor one political contestant on a particular media outlet, that bias will be apparent and documented through careful and accurate monitoring.

Quantitative data tell only part of the story. It might be legitimate to give more coverage to some contestants over others, while numerically equal coverage could mask disparate treatment.

Quantitative data tell only part of the story. Certainly, a substantial difference in the amount of time offered to different political subjects (including differences in the amount of time, image and voice, etc.) can sharpen the focus on what might be a major problem, but the amount of coverage offered does not give full information about whether the coverage is fair. It might be legitimate for a television channel, radio station or newspaper to give more coverage to some contestants by virtue of their relevance to the race, the power of their ideas or the possibility that they could win seats or not. On the other hand, a television channel could numerically offer equal amounts of coverage to all parties, but consistently present opposition figures in a damaging light, while touting positive elements of others. News reporting might be full of lies or distortions and quantitative measurements would not indicate that. Be aware of the environment, and be prepared to tell the truth about what is really going on in light of the political context in which news coverage takes place.

COUNTRY NOTE

Togo—Reporters Sans Frontières Quantitative Analysis

Reporters sans frontières (Reporters Without Borders) conducted a media monitoring project in Togo in 1998 that graphically and dramatically revealed media bias in favor of the incumbent president, General Gnassingbe Eyadema. In weekly public reports the project found that the television station devoted 99.8 percent of its relevant coverage to the government and ruling coalition parties, while opposition figures were mentioned only a scant 0.2 percent of the time. These data alerted the nation to a major problem and caused a debate that eventually resulted in slightly more balanced coverage as the election approached. (See Appendix 8D for a report from that project.)

Some context can be provided by:

- Comparing news coverage on different outlets;
- Comparing news coverage over a period of time; and
- Analyzing the amount of time particular subjects are covered in light of the importance of current events.

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Quantitative results can become much more revealing when presented alongside data about the way in which political subjects are portrayed by news outlets. Making a qualitative assessment, however, is more subjective and, therefore, more likely to raise questions about methods. Great care should be taken when developing these methods and when training the monitors who will employ them.

Qualitative measurements can be subdivided into two major categories, which will be discussed separately below.

- 1) The tone of the coverage (positive, negative or neutral). These data can be recorded for all stories and presented graphically to illustrate differences between outlets and differences over time.
- 2) Important additional comments relating to a content-based analysis that illustrate balance, fairness, accuracy or attempts to manipulate. These data are much more difficult to present via charts or graphs, but can offer more insight than simple positive and negative measurements. As conclusions are reached on these factors, they should be explained in public reports. If they are systematically documented and clearly presented, they can provide compelling evidence about media conduct.

Positive, Negative and Neutral Ratings

It is important to keep in mind that it is the behavior of media outlets that is being measured, not the political subjects. Monitors should seek examples of how specific outlets tend to portray the various subjects. If these data differ significantly among the

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Positive, Negative and Neutral Ratings

The following is an example of a conclusion about positive, negative and neutral ratings:

State Television consistently airs stories that portray the National Corngrowers Party in a positive light. Of 57 stories in the week beginning on July 14 about this ruling coalition party, 52 praised their exploits and 2 questioned their character (3 were neutral).

During the same week, independently owned TV Channel 3 offered a different perspective. They ran 32 stories mentioning this party: 22 portrayed them negatively; 7 positively; and 3 were announcements about the upcoming party convention and rated as neutral. This difference, even without further analysis that examines bias, indicates that television viewers should be cautious about drawing conclusions concerning political choices based solely on one of these sources.

various outlets, over time it will be apparent that not all outlets are following the same journalistic standards and/or that they are expressing different political biases.

Confusion sometimes may arise because a story can portray someone in a negative light, but this portrayal might be both balanced and fair. It is difficult to know if a story is fair or true. Positive and negative ratings therefore should refer to whether or not a viewer is offered a positive or negative impression of the subject, regardless of truth or balance, which should be measured separately.

This method does not mean that the concepts of "truth and balance" are unimportant or that they should be overlooked by monitors. Separating elements of stories offers the opportunity to disaggregate and compare elements of coverage. However, monitors also should report about lies, distortions, unbalanced coverage, unfairness and anything else that is important to presenting information to voters, but report these data separately, integrating them in comments and conclusions in the project reports.

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These judgments are by definition subjective, but if monitors are trained and practiced, the answers are more obvious than might first be apparent. If news coverage is unfair, it will not be difficult for trained teams of monitors to make these judgments. Keeping tapes and offering the public the opportunity to view these records and to offer challenges to the project's characterizations, will make the monitoring effort more credible. Encouraging monitors, during training and rehearsals, to meet and discuss decisions about difficult or highly subjective characterizations will help ensure quality and uniformity as the project progresses. Team leaders and the project director should be called upon to review controversial news reports and reports about which monitors strongly disagree.

Positive and negative ratings should refer to whether or not a viewer is offered a positive or negative impression of the subject, regardless of truth or balance, which should be measured separately.

When the quantitative and qualitative data are col-
lated about how each outlet portrays each political

subject, the data can be translated into pie charts showing the amount of coverage of each political subject and bar graphs showing the number of "positive, negative and neutral" stories about the subjects. The graphics help to present a more complete story about the coverage by a particular news outlet. (See the section below entitled, "Presentation of Results," for further discussion and sample charts.)

It is important to avoid drawing conclusions that are not supported by the data. Based on two graphs alone, for example, conclusions can not be reached about the integrity of the reporters, producers, editors and station owners. Rather, the data are simply offering comparative views of how different outlets tend to portray political subjects. The differences may demonstrate that something is amiss in reporting methods, or they may imply bias on the part of some news outlets. Other details about the fairness, balance and professionalism of the outlet, which are discussed below, can reveal more about specific shortcomings of news outlets.

Keep in mind that it might be proper to portray some subjects negatively. For example, if a party advocates views that are anti-democratic, then a good journalist reporting the truth would file a story that is likely to leave a negative impression. When different outlets portray the same subjects differently, however, a problem may be revealed. In



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Evaluating the positive or negative impact of a news story:

The question that monitors should address is whether or not a news story tends to make a viewer think favorably or unfavorably of the subject. Using this method, for example a story about a candidate accused of kidnapping and torturing a political opponent would be considered negative. No judgment about the accuracy of the allegations or about a television station's presentation of opposing views would be made by this assessment. If the story could lead voters to the conclusion that the candidate might be less fit for office, then it would be rated a negative story, even if the accused candidate was allowed to present his views. On the other hand, if the accused candidate offers a rebuttal to the accusation, and the news outlet presents the accusation as an unwarranted attack against "the distinguished frontrunner," the story would leave a favorable impression on the viewer, in which case it would be characterized as a positive story. This illustrates the need for thorough training, multiple media monitors reviewing each story and careful analysis of monitoring report forms.

countries where all television and possibly all radio broadcasting is state-controlled, it is unlikely that a comparative analysis of broadcast outlets will be fruitful. Comparison to print media and other analysis is required in such circumstances.

Positive, Negative and Neutral Ratings for Photographs

Confusion may arise as to how to rate a photograph on a positive and negative scale. How can a photograph tell anything but objective truth? The fact is that the newspapers and television stations airing photographs can choose photos to convey powerful messages. While the overall judgment of whether a photo conveys a positive, negative or neutral impression may be subjective, monitors should consider as many objective criteria as possible in reaching this judgment. For example, a picture of an opposition candidate walking away from the photographer or holding his hand up to his face could imply he is hiding something. A snap shot of a member of parliament sleeping at his desk could be used to imply lack of diligence to his job. Other questions also should be considered, such as: is the picture of one leader clearly an old file photo from years past when he or she was younger and more attractive; or does a picture of a candidate show him or her with an out of place scowl or a grimace or a frown? Is the picture of one candidate clear, while the other is fuzzy? Is one candidate's picture consistently larger than the other or more prominently displayed? The monitoring project

should note trends of certain television stations and papers to display unflattering or compromising shots of some subjects and flattering ones of others.

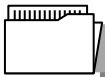
OTHER CONTENT-BASED FINDINGS

Some data should not be recorded in numeric form, but rather should be recorded by monitors in a "comments" section of their form. These comments should be compiled, analyzed and included in public reports to illustrate good performance or inadequacies of specific media outlets. Some examples of other content-based findings are discussed below.

Balance

One of the biggest responsibilities of a good journalist is to present more than one side of a story when appropriate, and this should be a focus of any monitoring project. When judging balance, monitors should ask whether all sides get a chance to tell their story.

Balance does not require that precisely equal time be given to all sides, but it does preclude inflated coverage of one side and/or disregard or omission of another. Issues related to balance become more clear if patterns of disparate treatment of political subjects emerge over time. Monitors should ask, for example: If a political party representative is shown denouncing another party's candidate, does that candidate have a chance to respond to the allegations? Monitors should also consider whether one



COUNTRY NOTE

Bangladesh – FEMA

Monitoring Manipulative Use of Headlines and Photographs

For the 2001 Bangladesh parliamentary elections, the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) sponsored a media monitoring project of electronic and print media. In their analysis of newspapers, FEMA focused particular attention to such qualitative aspects as positioning of articles, quality and number of photographs, use of color in photographs and selection of headlines to favor a particular political figure or party. During their six-week project, FEMA congratulated newspapers that provided balance in such qualitative aspects and criticized those that printed poor quality photographs or otherwise exhibited bias.

side refuses to cooperate. A reporter must still try to get the opposing views and if refused should report on these attempts. Monitors must use their knowledge of the situation in their country, the reputation of the outlet being monitored and common sense to make these determinations.

Balance does not require that precisely equal time be given to all sides, but it does preclude inflated coverage of one side and/or disregard or omission of another.

Manipulative Use of Film, Pictures or Sound

Consistent use of camera angles that make the crowds at certain parties' or candidates' rallies appear larger than reality, while angles at other contestants' rallies make them seem smaller is another example of a content-based finding. Additional examples include: broadcasting film footage that does not correspond with the events reported in order to favor certain parties or candidates; using background music or visual effects that lend an ominous, satirical, patriotic or light-hearted tone to the story; and the use of manipulative voice tones or sarcasm by radio announcers or news anchors.

Some manipulations may be subtle, such as: always showing one candidate from the side, while another is shown from the front; one is shown at a distance, while the other shown up close; an angle upward may be consistently used for one candidate to depict leadership; or the candidate may be shown walking forward with admirers, while others are presented as stationary. All must be noted and analyzed as trends having impact over time.

Opinion Polls

Opinion polling about political competition can have a powerful impact on potential voters. Media monitors should therefore examine the manner by which opinion polls are presented in the media. The following are among the questions that monitors should ask:

- Are opinion polls given undue prominence that could favor one party or candidate over others?
- Do polls come from reputable sources?
- Did the report reveal who commissioned the poll?
- Was the source revealed in the broadcast along with other contextual matters such as the margin of error, the time the poll was conducted, the size of the sample, the location of the sample and the actual questions?
- If gaps between political contestants were within the margin of error, was that reported?
- Were the results of other reputable polls on the same subject at about the same time included in the report?
- Were polling trends over time included in the report?

Missing Information

Monitors, team leaders and other project staff will tend to become very well informed about current events. Monitoring television, radio and/or newspapers as well as the knowledge of findings from other monitoring teams will allow monitors to make a judgment about the accuracy of stories they review. Monitors also must note the omission of news coverage that is relevant to voters making political choices (e.g., stories that would positively or negatively affect opinions about candidates or parties). Examples could include: a major opposition party has a rally, but there is no coverage on the state TV or state radio stations; or no coverage was presented about a scandal involving misuse of government resources.

Monitors also must note the omission of news coverage that is relevant to voters making political choices

Unsubstantiated News

It is difficult for monitors to determine whether or not stories are substantiated properly. However, trained monitors should ask themselves questions about each story, such as: Does a story assert as fact something for which no evidence is given? If the



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Aspects of media performance to monitor include:

- The amount of time or space devoted to each candidate or party (quantitative analysis for each and comparative analysis among and between them) and to government activities (this may allow advantage to a particular candidate or party);
- The way in which candidates and parties are presented (positive, negative or neutral rating);
- When in a news program a particular party or candidate is covered (is one party always the first story in the news?);
- The use of film and sound in a story and a comparative analysis to determine if there is a pattern favoring particular parties or candidates (e.g., are some candidates or parties always allowed to present their story in their own words while others are interpreted by a news reader?; do camera angles flatter or insult particular parties or candidates or distort crowd sizes at rallies and speeches?);
- Whether a journalist makes statements about a party or candidate which are based on questionable sources or which may not be factual (i.e., reporting rumor as fact);
- Whether live feeds or film footage of the actual event is used to cover certain parties or candidates, while others are covered by file footage;
- Whether there is an obvious bias by an interviewer or moderator;
- The manner of broadcasting opinion polls (e.g., are contextual data given like polling agency identification, who commissioned the poll, sample size, date of poll, questions asked, margin of error, polling trends, etc?);
- Whether relevant news stories about certain parties or candidates are omitted by a news outlet; and,
- Whether news stories are substantiated and whether opinion is presented as news.

answer to this question is yes, monitors should discuss whether the absence of evidence is significant or whether the factual basis is well-established common knowledge. Monitors also should ask whether editorializing is presented as news. For example: Does a journalist or announcer report as news his or her own opinion or the opinion of partisan or private interests? Does a reporter or news anchor use expressions, comments or descriptions that seem unfair, sarcastic, unsubstantiated, unprofessional or insulting?

DATA COLLECTION

After deciding on the subjects and coverage that will be monitored, and how to assess the way these subjects are portrayed, it is necessary to design a system for recording these data. Forms will differ depending on the type of outlet being monitored. Suggestions for forms designed for television, radio and newspapers are discussed in detail in Chapter Five: *Monitoring Instructions*. These forms should be

modified depending on the data that will be collected. In every monitoring project, team leaders should stress the importance of accuracy, consistency and clarity in data collection.

DATA ANALYSIS

After all forms are collected for a defined period of monitoring (for example, each day), the data should be compiled and reviewed by team leaders. Discrepancies between two monitors who reviewed the same story need to be reconciled. If it is a quantitative measurement which differs, consult the original paper or tape to determine the correct numbers. If it is a qualitative assessment that differs, monitors can review the story with their team leader and discuss the evaluations until a decision is reached.

Some differences in findings are bound to occur. If questioned about project methods, it is important to express confidence and acknowledge that the

project is aware of these potential differences and has addressed them directly as an integral part of the methodology. This will go a long way to convince skeptics of the project's credibility. Occasional differences in views are usually not significant when reporting on well-documented trends over the course of a monitoring project. If frequent differences occur among monitors, team leaders should discuss the issue with them and identify the source. Perhaps further training is required. It is even possible that a certain bias will be discovered among monitors that must be addressed.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Spreadsheet software makes it possible to digest the data quickly and efficiently and to transform them into easy-to-read graphic presentations. Most word processing programs also have some graph and chart capabilities that will allow for the preparation of simple bar graphs and pie charts.

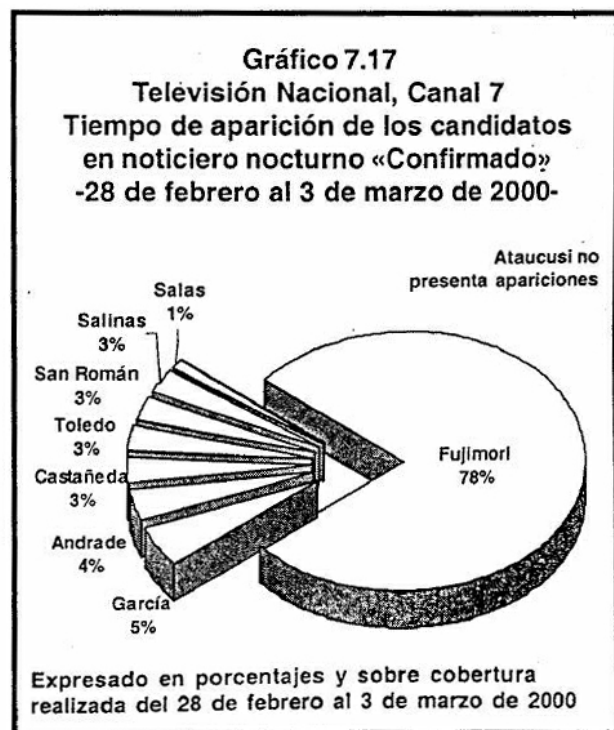
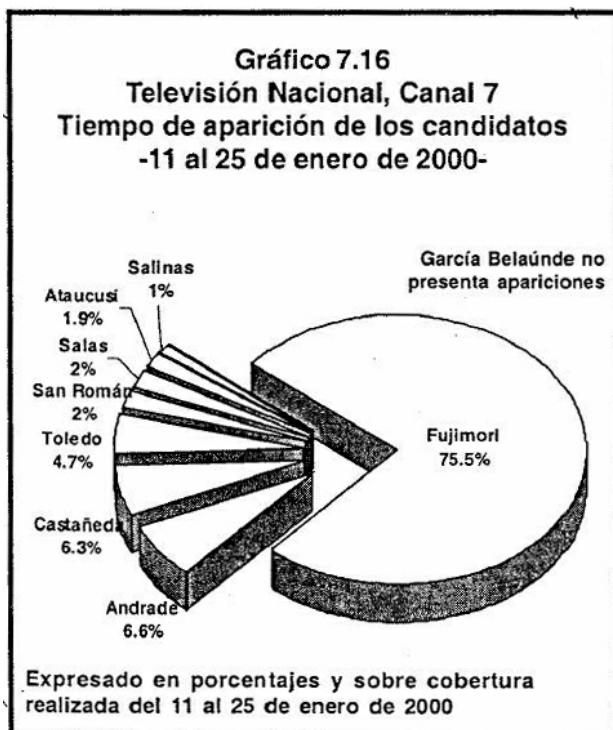
FIGURE 4-1: TWO CHARTS PRESENTED BY PERCENTAGES OF TRANSPARENCIA'S (TRANSPARENCIA'S) MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT DEPICTING COVERAGE OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON STATE-CONTROLLED NATIONAL TELEVISION CHANNEL 7.

Pie Charts

Each pie chart should show the relative time devoted to each political subject as a percentage of total relevant news coverage on one specific media outlet. As the election nears, monitors can track increases or decreases in coverage of each subject on each media outlet. If these percentages vary significantly, there may be an issue of bias on one or more of the outlets. (See Figure 4-1 presented below.)

The data from the time, space and positive and negative ratings can be entered as the monitors turn in their forms or according to a regular schedule that ensures that all data are ready prior to writing the reports. For data that will be presented graphically, the following information should be compiled and entered into the database:

- The political subjects that will be the focus of the monitoring (e.g., candidates, parties and government officials).
- The total time or space devoted to the political subject by each news outlet during the monitoring period.



COUNTRY NOTE
Slovakia—Five Point Scale

In Slovakia, MEMO'98 used a five-point scale to evaluate subjects. Grades 1 or 2 meant that a subject was presented in a positive light (1 being very positive and 2 being slightly positive). Grade 3 was a neutral mark. It meant that the coverage was unlikely to affect the views of a potential voter either favorably or unfavorably. Grades 4 and 5 meant that a political entity was presented in a negative light (5 being very negative and 4 being slightly negative.) A five-grade scale gave monitors more positive or negative marks to choose from, which tends to lower the number of neutral characterizations that result from a three-grade scale. These five values were converted into just three grades for reporting purposes. The number of positive, negative and neutral grades received by each subject were displayed with bar graphs for the reports.

- The number of positive, negative and neutral portrayals of that political subject during the monitoring period on each outlet.

These numbers will be converted into separate pie charts for each media outlet. The positive, negative and neutral ratings of each subject also may be converted into separate bar graphs for each media outlet. Be sure to consult software instructions and prepare several practice reports prior to the first public report to make sure this can be done easily in order to avoid last minute crises in developing public reports.

For television monitoring, monitors can portray data in other ways. Monitors can enter the data and construct graphs that depict the amount of time each subject is presented on camera, in his or her own voice or otherwise. Depending on the number of outlets being monitored and the number of factors being measured, the project can present the data in a way that demonstrates the problems that the analysis exposes. However, the project message must be kept simple. A few easily understood charts and

graphs will be more compelling than a massive amount of confusing data. Also, presenting the same data in the same way in subsequent reports will help keep the message consistent, understandable and relevant. (See Appendix 8 for sample media monitoring reports.)

For newspaper monitoring, there are many options for charts. For instance, a chart could show the amount of coverage of a particular political subject on the front page and/or in the entire paper. Charts could show the number of references to a political subject on the front page and on other pages. They could illustrate the space devoted to photos or headlines on the front page and on other pages concerning each political subject. It is also possible to add headline, article and photo size charts and present one figure for total space of coverage for each subject. If, over time, there appears to be an intentional effort to use headlines and/or photographs in a manipulative manner, this data also could be shown in a chart.

Bar Graphs

Preparing bar graphs that show the number of positive portrayals and the number of negative portrayals of each political subject on each media outlet can demonstrate even more clearly than pie charts the possibility of bias in a particular news outlet. In the case of bar graphs, neutral ratings can be depicted numerically directly beneath the graph. It is also possible to represent positive and negative references by the total time of these portrayals, together with or instead of displaying the number of such instances.

Each graph should be labeled by media outlet and the time period in which the monitoring was done (e.g., State Television, Channel One, Evening News, week of June 1 through June 7). Consider making both color and black and white versions of each graph. The color graphs can be used in overhead projectors as props during a press conference and can be used on the project's website. The black and white versions are more easily photocopied and can

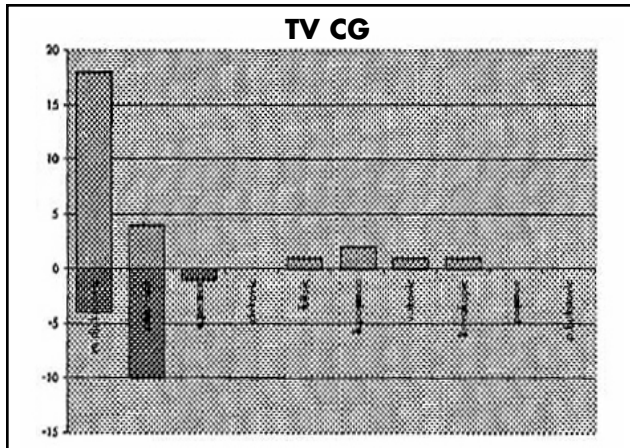


FIGURE 4-2: BAR GRAPH BY THE ASSOCIATION OF YOUNG JOURNALISTS OF MONTENEGRO DEPICTING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE COVERAGE OF THE 10 MOST MENTIONED POLITICIANS ON TV CG.

be printed with the reports distributed to the press and others.

Non-Graphical Analysis

While graphs are attractive, they can be misleading without accompanying explanation and analysis of other data that do not fit into graphs and charts. Recall that monitors should record comments on their forms regarding instances when they notice unbalanced or unfair news coverage. These issues should be analyzed and conclusions presented in reports when findings are significant. In such cases, monitor findings should be included in reports in a bulleted list or other format. These data might ultimately be more important to the conclusions reached in reports.

While graphs are attractive, they can be misleading without accompanying explanation and analysis of other data that do not fit into graphs and charts.

Remember that reports must present the context of the findings and should demonstrate trends over time as the project evolves. Reports nonetheless should be brief and the presentation crisp. It may be wise to prepare a one-page press release to accompany reports.

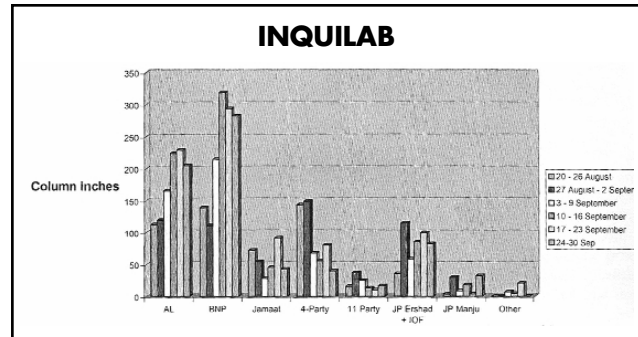


FIGURE 4-3: BAR GRAPH BY FEMA (BANGLADESH) SHOWING NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF POLITICAL PARTIES OVER THE SIX-WEEK PERIOD PRIOR TO THE 2001 ELECTIONS.

Where findings and conclusions identify significant problems in media conduct, the monitoring project should formulate and offer appropriate recommendations to the media outlets, governmental authorities and the political contestants. Such recommendations can lead to immediate improvements that benefit the electoral and broader political process.

Regular, periodic reports on media coverage of electoral competitors and other relevant subjects in the pre-election period are important to promoting democratic elections.

FINAL REPORTS ON ELECTION COVERAGE

Regular, periodic reports on media coverage of electoral competitors and other relevant subjects in the pre-election period are important to promoting democratic elections. These reports and their recommendations can lead to immediate improvements in the political environment, and they make an important contribution to those who are monitoring the overall election process.

The media monitoring project will also have presented its analysis of the legal framework surrounding media activity, including strengths and weaknesses in laws and regulations and their implementation. This and analysis of other factors, such as the history of press freedom or censorship and intimidation against the press should appear separately from periodic monitoring reports. When these

COUNTRY NOTE
Cambodia

COMFREL and other election monitoring organizations conducted an advocacy campaign around the 2002 local elections to amend regulations that required the election commission (NEC) to pre-approve all voter education materials and programming. The effort won a significant partial victory. The regulations were amended to make review of materials purely voluntary, however, the groups found that local officials in many provinces still required submission of all materials for approval.

Mexico

As a consequence of the highly regarded 1994 media monitoring project of the Mexican Academy for Human Rights (AMDH), which was conducted in association with Civic Alliance (an election monitoring coalition of over 400 civic organizations), Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) set up a commission to examine media conduct. The findings of the Academy and IFE's commission led IFE to call on the media to respect the public's right to information and to behave in a manner that is truthful, objective, balanced and fair. Following the elections, Civic Alliance presented media monitoring findings to President Salinas after which he called for implementing measures to ensure fair and objective media coverage. The two principal television channels responded by granting all political parties and candidates free media time to present messages.

Slovakia

MEMO'98 and other Slovak civic organizations mounted a successful post-election advocacy campaign to gain passage of a freedom of information act to ensure media and citizen access to government-held information. In addition, the Slovak parliament asked MEMO'98 to provide suggestions for a white paper on reforming laws governing broadcasting.

issues are combined, the media monitoring project will develop an indepth knowledge of conditions affecting media coverage of political processes.

Soon after the electoral process is completed, the monitoring project should prepare a comprehensive report on the media and its coverage of political processes. This report should synthesize the relevant monitoring findings and contextual analyses. The report should offer recommendations for improvements in the legal and regulatory framework. It should also offer broader recommendations for government action to protect and promote press freedoms, freedom of expression of political competitors and the right of the population to seek and receive information needed to participate effectively in public affairs.

The comprehensive report (sometimes called a "final report on the media in the elections") can provide a basis for inviting public discussion, organizing roundtables and setting the stage for advocacy and ongoing monitoring of the media's coverage of governmental and political processes.