

# Domestic election observers and election day fraud in Malawi's 2014 elections\*

George Ofosu<sup>†</sup> and Daniel Posner<sup>†</sup>

<sup>†</sup>University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

September 18, 2015

---

\*Corresponding authors: George Ofosu, ofosu@ucla.edu, and Daniel Posner, dposner@polisci.ucla.edu. We thank Omer Ali, Sarah Brierley, Chad Hazlett, and Mike Thies for their comments and suggestions. We gratefully acknowledge the collaboration of the Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN) and the National Democratic Institute. We also thank the Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA) - Malawi office for their support in the recruitment, training, and deployment of research assistants (RAs). We also thank our 200 RAs for their help in data collection. Pericles Kalande and Sammar Smesme provided research assistance. This report is made possible with support from the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID; the United States Government; or the Democracy Fellows and Grants Program implementer, Institute of International Education (IIE). This experiment was approved by UCLA IRB#14-000553 on May 13, 2014.

## **Abstract**

We present findings from a field experiment that estimates the causal effect of election observers on election day fraud and administrative irregularities in Malawi's 2014 general elections. Our analyses use data from roughly 900 polling stations located in a nationally representative sample of 90 constituencies. We use reported turnout and candidate vote share as our markers of fraud. Our results are threefold. First, we find that the more election observers deployed to a station the lower the rates of fraud. Second, we find that the magnitude of this reduction in fraud incidence is not constant across constituency types. Specifically, we find that an increase in observer presence reduces fraud more in urban compared to rural constituencies. Similarly, our treatment reduces the presidential vote share of the party that appeared to benefit the most from fraud more in competitive than in non-competitive legislative constituencies. The latter suggests a connection between fraud in the presidential and parliamentary elections that are held simultaneously. Lastly, we find that while an increase in observer presence reduces fraud, it increases administrative irregularities. Specifically, we find that election officials are less likely to post polling station results publicly when more observers are present. We find empirical evidence that suggests not posting election results may be purposeful as it allows officials to manipulate results during the vote aggregation phase.

## 1 Introduction

Over the past thirty years, millions of citizens have participated in nonpartisan election observation efforts to safeguard electoral integrity and to promote accountability in over 90 developing countries around the world.<sup>1</sup> These efforts form part of civil society activities aimed at consolidating democracy in their respective countries —sometimes at the risk of their lives. Compared to international election monitoring, scholars credit domestic groups with the ability to deploy to a large number of polling sites on election day, and their local knowledge of the political context that place them in a unique position to detect and deter fraud (Carothers, 1997). However, most of the empirical literature on election observation has focused on international observation. Recent advances in domestic observation such as the random assignment of observers to stations allow for both the detection of fraud and an estimation of the causal effect of deploying observers on fraud. Moreover, careful research designs could help unpack the micro-dynamics of fraud, including the adaptation strategies of parties to interventions, and the role of voters and election officials in electoral fraud. Findings in this area of research have both theoretical implications for our understanding of the local dynamics of electoral fraud and practical implications for its prevention. Our research contributes and extends the emerging literature in this area.

Specifically, we extend the current literature by studying domestic election observers in another African setting— Malawi— that is relatively poor and less democratic—factors often associated with more fraud (e.g., Stokes, 2005; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Simpser, 2013).<sup>2</sup> While civil society groups routinely deploy domestic observers in many African countries including Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, and Mali, current research has focused solely on Ghana, a relatively stable and democratic country (e.g., Ichino and Schündeln, 2012; Asunka et al., 2013). These studies find that observers reduce fraud at polling stations to which they are deployed. Our study builds on this finding in a different economic and political context. Specifically, our study takes place in a setting where multiple international donors sponsored different domestic groups to deploy observers to polling stations on election day. In our case, in addition to the intervention we study, two other civil society groups received funding to deploy observers to the universe of the country’s polling stations. Accordingly, our study examines the effect of an increase in the number of ob-

---

<sup>1</sup>See <http://www.gndem.org/aboutgndem>, accessed January 3, 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Assessment of the work of local and international election observers generally and in other parts of world has been conducted by Carothers (1997), Hyde (2010), Sjoberg (2012), and Enikolopov et al. (2013).

servers at a polling station by *one*. In this study, we refer to the increase in the number of observers as higher levels of *observer intensity* at polling stations. To our knowledge, this is the first study to measure the effect of more than one observer at polling stations. Second, following Asunka et al. (2013), we examine whether the effect of increasing observer intensity at a polling station differs by constituency types within a country. The literature on electoral fraud suggests that there is a correlation between election fraud and factors such as levels of local electoral competition and urbanization. Accordingly, the effect of observers may be shaped by these local political and socio-economic conditions. Evidence that the effect of increasing the number of observers at polling stations varies with constituency types would have theoretical implications for our understanding on the micro-dynamics of election fraud. It would also have the practical implication of how observer groups may effectively deploy their observers to achieve maximum impact. Third, we investigate the relationship between election observation and potential fraud in the legislative polls. Scholars have paid less attention to this in the literature.<sup>3</sup> However, in many cases, presidential and parliamentary elections are held simultaneously. Accordingly, fraud in the presidential election may be tied to manipulations aimed at influencing outcomes in the parliamentary race. We examine this connection. Lastly, we examine whether an increase in observer presence may have an “unintended effect” of displacing the fraud that they prevented at the polling station to manipulations during the results aggregation process (Simpser, 2008).

We report findings from an experimental study of domestic election observers in Malawi’s 2014 general polls. We leverage the assignment of observers to a random set of polling stations by the country’s prominent independent election observation group, Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN), to estimate the causal effect of increasing the number of observers at a polling station by one. In the country’s 2014 polls, the country’s National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), and the Malawi Election Information Center (MEIC) both deployed their observers to all the country’s 4445 polling stations. NICE is a public institution in charge of civic and voter education. MEIC is a consortium of civil society group that was formed in 2014 to help with voter verification and organize the so-called Election Situation Room (ESR) on election day. The objectives of these two groups were to improve citizens participation in the election process and to alert the election authority of potential threats to the integrity of the election process (especially, the ESR).

---

<sup>3</sup>To our knowledge, only Enikolopov et al. (2013) have conducted research in this area during Russia’s 2013 parliamentary polls. These scholars examine the effect of observers on fraud in the parliamentary polls at the polling station. We investigate the possible impact of observers at the electoral district level.

MESN, on the other hand, aimed to examine the election day processes at polling stations and to verify the presidential results through a parallel vote count. MESN highly publicized its objective of verifying the vote count to the election authority, parties, and other stakeholders. It is the impact of MESN's presence at the polling station in addition to these groups aimed at verifying the election results that we examine in this study.

We conducted our study in a nationally representative sample of 90 out of the country's 193 constituencies. In our sample of constituencies, MESN deployed observers to 1,049 out of the 2044 polling stations (about 51%). These stations served as our treated stations. We then randomly selected 806 of the remaining 995 stations to serve as our control. To test whether the impacts of election observers varies by constituency types, in assigning treatment, we blocked on levels of electoral competition in past legislative polls and level of urbanization. We used a standard instrument (i.e., checklist) to collect both qualitative and quantitative information on the election processes and the vote count in our sample of polling stations. This allows us to measure both administrative irregularities and ballot manipulation at polling stations. MESN observers provided data from observed stations. We trained and deployed over 200 research assistants to gather information from our control stations. Our research assistants completed the same check list as MESN observers.<sup>4</sup> They completed this check list through interviewing party agents and election officials on election day after all the election processes including counting had finished.

A subset of 60 of our research assistants also visited both treated and control stations during the period between the close of counting and two days after to record whether election officials had publicly posted the election results at polling centers. During this period, our assistants gathered data from 1,271 stations across our 90 constituencies. In addition to these data, we also gained access to the final polling station results submitted to Malawi's electoral authority by local election officials. In the absence of results manipulation by local election officials during the transmission of results from polling stations to the national tally center, these results should match with those collected by observers at polling stations. Thus, access to these transmitted results allows us to investigate potential aggregation fraud in the presidential polls, and explore possible mechanisms through which fraud occurs.

We use three measures of election fraud and one measure of administrative irregularities. Our

---

<sup>4</sup>Our research assistants were trained and deployed with help from the Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA)-Malawi and MESN.

measures of election day fraud are as follows. First, we use *overvoting* which captures whether more votes were reportedly cast at the polling station than the number of registered voters. By construction, overvoting is likely to underestimate the incidence of fraud because only stations that record turnout rates over 100 percent that we classify as fraudulent. However, some stations that record turnout rates below this threshold may not be free from fraud. Accordingly, we also study the impact of our treatment on reported rates of *turnout* (calculated by dividing the number of ballots cast by the number of registered voters). Both measures (i.e., overvoting and turnout) capture ballot manipulations through illegal voters casting ballots, multiple voting and ballot stuffing. Third, we use the *Vote Share of the Democratic People's Party* (DPP). We calculate vote share of the DPP by dividing votes obtained by the DPP candidate by the total number of valid votes cast at each polling station. To be clear turnout rates and candidate vote share are not bad outcomes in elections per se. These measures only signal possible manipulation when they vary systematically with randomly-assigned interventions such as the deployment of election observers. Finally, we use the *posting of presidential results* as required by Malawi's electoral law as our measure of administrative irregularities in our main report. We report results on other measures of administrative irregularities in Table G.1 in the Appendix. Since MESN observers were assigned randomly to polling stations, in the absence of election-day manipulation, their presence should not be systematically related to these markers of fraud (Hyde, 2009).

Our results are threefold. First, we find that an increase in the intensity of observers at a polling station reduces incidents of fraud. Specifically, we find that an additional observer reduces the rate of overvoting by 3 percentage points (a fourfold decrease) and rates of turnout by about 4 percentage points (a 5 percent decrease). Also, the presence of an additional observer reduces the DPP's candidate, Peter Mutharika's, vote share by 3 percentage points (a 10 percent decrease) suggesting fraud in the election may have been to his benefit. Twelve candidates contested in Malawi's 2014 presidential election. The next three candidates following the DPP were Dr. Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi's Congress Party (MCP), Joyce Banda of the People's Party (PP), and Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The incumbent president, Joyce Banda, started the PP two years ahead of the polls after her elevation to the post in 2012 following the death of DPP's then president, Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika. Joyce Banda had fallen out with the DPP regime over Dr. Mutharika's plan to impose his brother, Peter, as the party's candidate in the 2014 election. Thus, the only reason the DPP was not the incumbent party was because of the death of Dr.

Mutharika. Accordingly, the incumbent president (Joyce Banda), was perhaps not in a position to organize fraud at the polling station level, seems to benefit from the higher presence of observers. Similarly, we do not find a difference in the effect of the higher presence of observers in constituencies where the legislator is affiliated to Banda's PP compared to constituencies where the legislator is not affiliated. This further suggests that the president's party may not have conducted polling station fraud.

To be clear, we do not suggest that Banda did not engage in other forms of manipulative tactics. Indeed, some scholars and observers of the country's 2014 polls suggest that Banda engaged in pre-election fraud including vote buying and the abuse of the state media (e.g., Dulani and Dionne, 2014; Patel, Wahman et al., 2015). Our scope of the study does not allow us to speak to this type of fraud. However, our results suggest that Banda and her party may not have engaged in polling station level fraud, which requires local level party organization that she may have had less time to develop ahead of the polls.

Second, our results suggest that the impact of an increase in observer presence is not uniform across constituency types. In particular, we find that increases in observer intensity had a higher impact on reducing fraudulent activities in more urban constituencies compared to more rural constituencies. The effect of an increase in observer presence also differed by the level of competition in past legislative elections within constituencies. In non-competitive constituencies, we find that observers are more effective at significantly reducing overvoting, and artificially high rates of turnout compared to competitive constituencies. However, an increase in the presence of observers does not significantly reduce DPP presidential candidate's vote shares in non-competitive constituencies. This was not the case in highly competitive constituencies, where an increase in observers reduces DPP presidential candidate's vote shares by 6 percentage points compared to 3 percentage points in non-competitive areas. In interpreting these results, we suggest that fraud in the presidential polls may be a by-product of competition in the parliamentary polls, which are held concurrently. Indeed, our analysis of results in the parliamentary polls suggest that high concentration of observers in constituencies is associated with a lower re-election rate or a reduction in previous (2009) vote share of DPP incumbent legislators. This suggests that party's parliamentary candidates coordinate fraud on their party's presidential candidate behalf as part of their effort to win the polls.

Finally, contrary to our expectations, we find that an increase in observers reduces compliance by election officials with administrative regulations that are meant to promote the transparency of elections at

polling stations. In particular, election officials were 6 percentage points less likely to post the presidential results sheets as required by law at treated stations compared control stations (a 15 percent decrease). We find two empirical correlations that suggest that the non-posting of these results sheets may be purposeful. First, the correlation between reported vote shares of the DPP's presidential candidate collected by observers at the polling station and those received from Malawi's elections authority is higher for stations where results were posted ( $r = 0.989$ ) compared to stations where results are not posted ( $r = 0.877$ ). Moreover, this was the case for treated stations. In control stations, we find similar correlation coefficients for posting and non-posting stations. Second, stations that report higher DPP vote shares were also less likely to post their results. These correlations suggest that one way in which the DPP agents enacted vote manipulation was through not posting results in public at some stations, especially those under higher observer scrutiny.

A key limitation of our study that we would like to make explicit at the outset is that our research design does not allow us to explicitly estimate or correct for potential spillover effects of observers. Previous research in Ghana suggests that beyond deterring fraud at polling stations where they are deployed, observers may displace fraud to unobserved stations (Ichino and Schündeln, 2012). On the other hand, observers may also prevent fraud at proximate stations that are not observed (Asunka et al., 2013). The main reason, in the case of displacement, is that political parties are interested in electoral outcomes in a broad set of polling stations. Since, domestic groups deploy observers to a subset of stations, parties have incentives to relocate fraud to other stations. In essence, this increases the rates of fraud in unobserved stations beyond the level it may have been without observers deployed to other stations. Failure to account for this may unduly overestimate observers' impact. On the hand, if observers further deter fraud at unobserved stations, we may underestimate their impact. Since our study measures the impact of an increase in observer presence at polling stations, such spillovers may be of less concern because all stations are observed.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we describe the setting of our research. In Section 3 we present a literature review and our hypotheses on election observers and electoral fraud. In Section 4, we present the experimental design and model specifications. We present our data, and results in Section 5 and 6, respectively. We conclude in Section 7.



## 2 Malawi's 2014 general elections

We conducted our study in Malawi in sub-Saharan Africa for two principal reasons. First, similar to many partial democracies, Malawi is characterized by political institutions that are expected to increase politicians' incentives to manipulate the polls. The country operates a first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system for all its elections. That is, for its presidential and parliamentary elections, the country uses a simple plurality rule to decide winners for a five-year term, which makes a single (rigged) vote potentially consequential. Furthermore, candidates for parliament compete in single-member districts, which is associated with higher levels of fraud compared to other types of electoral systems (Birch, 2007). Political parties are institutionally weak and regional based, and often identified with their leaders rather than ideology— a situation that induces Chirwa (2014) to describe Malawi's political parties as "only vehicles to seize political power and gain access to state resources." (pg. 148.)

Another institutional feature that potentially undermines the country's quest for democratic elections is the substantial powers that Malawi's constitution grants the executive. Though the country operates a hybrid political system that vests legislative power in the hands of both the president and the legislature, in practice, the executive dominates the country's political system. In past elections, the president has used his position to tilt the electoral playing field by using state agencies such as the media to conduct its campaign (e.g., Smiddy and Young, 2009). However, to smoothly pass legislations, parties need to win the presidency and a majority of seats in the parliament. This raises the stakes in both races and ties the incentives of candidates in both races running on the same party's ticket. For example, on election day parties may have strong incentives to increase their vote share in their stronghold regions or constituencies through illicit tactics such as multiple voting or ballot stuffing, which artificially inflate turnout. This ensures that their presidential candidate has better chances of winning the national polls. Second, while assured of victory in their strongholds, candidates may continue to attempt to increase further their vote share in an effort to cripple opposition and signal the futility of opposition (See Simpson, 2013). On the other hand, in competitive constituencies, parties may engage in electoral fraud to boost their parliamentary candidates' chances of winning a plurality of the votes.

Furthermore, Malawi operates an election administration body that officially lacks independence from executive influence. In cross-national studies, the lack of independence of election management bod-

ies from the executive is shown to be associated with lower levels of electoral integrity (Hartlyn, McCoy and Mustillo, 2008). In Malawi, the chairperson and members of the election management body, Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), is officially appointed by the president and his party acting through Parliament's Public Appointments Committee (PAC). Moreover, MEC relies on civil servants such as the district commissioners, who act as returning officers at the district level; school head teachers, who act as returning officers at the polling station; teachers who act as personnel at the polling station; and various government clerks, police officers, and others to conduct the polls. Civil servants are under the direct control of the executive, which makes the election processes susceptible to manipulation (Pastor, 1999). Similar to previous polls, the 2014 election was replete with reports of bribery of these officials by parties and candidates in their bid to influence the polls at both the polling station and district levels.<sup>5</sup> This situation undermines the professional integrity of the election administration body (Chirwa, 2014).

Our second principal reason for selecting Malawi as our research site is that the country is one of the poorest countries in the world. It had a GDP per capita of \$220 in 2013. According to Malawi's 2010/2011 Integrated Household Survey (IHS), more than half (50.7%) of the country's population is poor and more than 80 percent lives in rural areas. Scholars often find an association between these conditions and election manipulation tactics such as with vote buying (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Stokes, 2005). Together, these political, institutional, and socio-economic factors provide a unique avenue for a *critical test* for domestic election observation because these factors may limit observers' ability to affect election fraud.

Malawi's May 2014 general election—the setting of our research—was its fifth following the country's transition to multi-party politics in 1994. For the first time since 1994 voters simultaneously cast ballots for president, members of parliament, and local government councilors—hence the election was dubbed Malawi's first *tripartite* elections.<sup>6</sup> Twelve candidates contested the 2014 presidential elections. Prominent among these parties were the DPP, PP, MCP, and UDF. Together these parties captured about 98 percent of

---

<sup>5</sup>Examples include: 1) *Daily Nation*, May 18, 2014: "MEC suspends (polling station) officials for alleged corruption" (in Phalombe Central) 2) *The Daily Times*, May 20, 2014: "Lilongwe CEO resigns as elections coordinator" (following fracas that erupted over suspicion of rigging).

<sup>6</sup>Previous general elections were held in 1994, 1999, 2004, and 2009. In these elections only the presidential and parliamentary elections were held on the same day. The only single set of local government elections was held in 1999. The president, who until 2012 held the power to determine when local government elections are held, had postponed these elections for several times. The president explained this postponement by citing the lack of funds, lack of a legal framework to guide the operation of the local government, and allegations of fraud against the national election authorities (Chirwa, 2014). Thus, the 2014 local government elections was the second since 1994.

the presidential votes.<sup>7</sup>

Before the re-introduction of multiparty elections, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda was president. He led the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) under a single party regime; a regime that had been in power since independence. In the May 1994 elections, Banda lost to the United Democratic Front (UDF)'s Bakili Muluzi. Muluzi won re-election in 1999. He was compelled to step down in 2004 after failing to change the constitutional provision limiting any president to a maximum of two five-year terms.<sup>8</sup> The UDF presidential candidate in the 2004 election, Bingu wa Mutharika, handpicked by Muluzi, won with 36% of the vote against a split opposition.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika left the UDF after his first year in office and formed the Democratic People's Party (DPP) following a fallout with his predecessor over the fight against corruption (Chirwa, 2014, pg. 39). Accordingly, the DPP became the *de facto* ruling party without contesting elections. In 2009, Mutharika won his second term in a landslide (i.e., about 65%).<sup>10</sup> Contrary to his first term, Mutharika leveraged his new majority in parliament to pass autocratic laws and suppress democratic rights (Wroe, 2012; Cammack, 2012; Dionne and Dulani, 2013; Chirwa, 2014). Also, he openly promoted his brother, Peter Mutharika, as his successor. This move caused animosity within the DPP and alienated president Mutharika from his then vice president, Joyce Banda. As a result of this rift, Banda was expelled from the party in December 2010. Backed by the constitution, Banda held her post as vice president and subsequently started her own political party, PP. President Bingu wa Mutharika died of a sudden cardiac attack on April 5, 2012. On April 7, 2012, two years ahead of the May 2014 polls, Joyce Banda was sworn in as Malawi's president despite attempts by the late Mutharika's supporters to install his brother, Peter, as president against the constitutional provision (Dionne and Dulani, 2013).<sup>11</sup> The May 20, 2014 presidential election was, therefore, Banda's chance to be popularly elected to the office of president on her party's ticket. However,

---

<sup>7</sup>See official results here: <http://www.mec.org.mw/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>, accessed January 25, 2015.

<sup>8</sup>See Section 83(3) of the Malawi Constitution, 1995.

<sup>9</sup>Muluzi recruited Mutharika into politics. Before then he was a Secretary General of the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA). For more on the 2004 election, see Dulani (2004).

<sup>10</sup>Scholars and observers described his victory as Malawi's first presidential polls with no clear regional patterns. Voting patterns in Malawi are notably regional with candidates obtaining the majority of their votes share from their birth region. Mutharika and his DPP won Malawi's 2009 presidential with about 65% of the valid votes cast and a majority of seats in the parliamentary elections. Scholars have attributed this landslide victory to his prudent economic reforms that triggered growth and reduced poverty (Smiddy and Young, 2009).

<sup>11</sup>Chapter VIII (83(4)) of Malawi's 1994 Constitution provides for the vice president to be sworn in as president following the death of the president (i.e., vacancy of the presidency).

few months before the polls, President Banda's government had to deal with corruption and theft of public funds that forced development partners to withhold support and decreased her popularity (Chirwa, 2014; Logan, Bratton and Dulani, 2014). Thus, Malawi's presidential race was expected to be close with the DPP attempting to regain power and the PP exploiting its incumbency to try to retain power.

In spite of some improvements since 1994, Malawi's elections have been characterized by weak administration and allegations of fraud (Patel, 2000). According to Chirwa (2014), these concerns were "sufficiently serious to have caused citizens to view the results of the 1999, 2004, and 2009 general elections as not reflecting the popular will of the majority of Malawians (pg. 108)." In the past, concerns about political bias and intolerance had also led to the removal of some MEC officials by the president while at least some have resigned under pressure from civil society groups and opposition parties. In 2009, the MCP and UDF argued that it would work with the Commission "under protest" suggesting they did not fully recognize its authority. Further, an Afrobarometer Dispatch based on a nationwide survey conducted between March 22 and April 5, 2014, showed some lack of confidence in the neutrality and capacity of the MEC. Specifically, the report states that while "a majority of Malawians are confident in the capabilities and neutrality of the MEC, a significant minority disagrees" (Logan, Bratton and Dulani, 2014, pg.4). About 40% of respondents say they trust the MEC "just a little" or "not at all".

Against this background, the MEC undertook steps to improve its integrity and that of the 2014 polls. Prominent among these interventions were the introduction of the inter-party forum, and the revision of the voters' register which was feared to be bloated with dead voters, those double registered, and those that have undergone multiple transfers between constituencies. The inter-party forum provided a platform for political parties to seek clarifications and make their concerns known and addressed by the MEC. It also provided a forum for the MEC to explain its decisions in a transparent manner and provide feedback on steps taken to guarantee the integrity of the election in response to parties' concerns. In 2013, the MEC adopted the Electronic Biometric Verification System, which was expected to effectively update and improve the verification of the voter's roll for the 2014 elections and beyond. However, this was not fully implemented.

In spite of MEC's attempts to conduct clean elections, Malawi's 2014 election was characterized by several logistical bottlenecks, administrative irregularities, and allegations of fraud. For example, though the voters' list was revised ahead of the polls, it was made available to parties and civil society groups only a few

days prior to the polls.<sup>12</sup> On election day, there were several hours delay in the delivery of election materials, late opening of polling stations, and the delivery of wrong ballots to some polling stations leading to violent demonstrations in Blantyre and Lilongwe, and the cancellation of the polls at some polling centers. In the post-election phase, political parties and candidates submitted several complaints to MEC alleging results manipulation. In his announcement of the results, MEC's chairperson, Justice Maxon Mbendera, conceded that there were serious irregularities, citing a number of polling stations that recorded more votes than the number of people registered. Similar findings were reported by MESN (MESN, 2014). These raised concerns about the credibility of the polls. Indeed, ahead of MEC's declaration of the results, some parties and candidates sought court rulings to either annul the presidential elections or obtain a recount of the ballots due to these alleged irregularities.

On May 24, 2014 Joyce Banda issued an order to annul the presidential polls alleging "serious irregularities" in the counting and announcement of results. She called for a fresh vote in which she would not contest.<sup>13</sup> MEC obtained a High Court order that declared the president's promulgation as unconstitutional and allowed MEC to continue tabulating the poll results. However, other parties and candidates followed with fresh court petitions. For example, while the MCP sought an injunction to call for a recount of the ballots before results were declared, the DPP and other candidates filed a counter-petition to stop MEC from doing so. These petitions placed MEC in a lurch. Under Malawi's law, MEC has eight days after the polls to declare the results. However, it was not clear hours before the deadline whether the results will be declared. In a dramatic High Court decision about 90 minutes close to this deadline, MEC was freed to and declared the presidential results on May 30, 2014. The DPP candidate, Peter Mutharika, won the presidency with 36.4 percent of the votes, but failed to gain a majority in the national assembly. Lazarus Chakwera (MCP) came second with 27.8 percent of the votes, while Banda received 20.2 percent of the vote in the third place.<sup>14</sup> Parties and candidates are free to contest the declared results in court. However, the executive often uses its position to frustrate such attempts once sworn into office making results petitions both expensive and a futile exercise for losing parties (VonDoepp, 2005).

---

<sup>12</sup>See *Sunday Times (National)*, May 18, 2014: *MESN to deploy 7000 monitors on elections day*.

<sup>13</sup>For example, see <http://www.voanews.com/content/malawi-president-annuls-election-orders-fresh-vote-in-90-days/1921639.html>, accessed May 23, 2014.

<sup>14</sup>In the parliamentary race, the DPP won 50 seats, followed by the MCP with 48. The PP won 26 and the UDF won 14. Independent candidates won 52 seats. The remaining 3 went to other smaller parties.

## **2.1 Domestic election observation in Malawi**

Malawi's largest domestic election observation group, MESN, was formed in 2003. MESN's aim is to strengthen democratic electoral processes and encourage citizen participation in democratic governance through non-partisan election observation. MESN is comprised of non-governmental, faith-based and community-based organizations. Following its formation, MESN has successfully observed Malawi's 2004 and 2009 general elections. Through its election observation work, MESN aims to ensure that elections held in Malawi meet both local and international standards.

Although Malawi has significant experience with both international and domestic election observation, only international monitoring is legally guaranteed in the country's constitution. Domestic observation groups can only monitor the election under the discretion of Malawi's election administration (Chirwa, 2014, pg. 143). This poses a potential challenge to domestic groups such as MESN and their engagement with the electoral process especially when it comes to what programs or activities to implement to safeguard the integrity of the country's elections. For example, in Malawi's 2009 parliamentary and presidential elections, MEC rejected MESN's request to the conduct of parallel vote tabulation (PVT) aimed at verifying the presidential result (MESN, 2014). Similar to other countries, MESN observers needs accreditation from the MEC to observe elections at polling stations. However, ahead of the polls, MESN has to provide the location of all the polling centers it will deploy its observers. While this is argued to facilitate the accreditation process, it provides an avenue for co-opted election officials and party agents to plan ahead of time as to where to rig the polls.

In spite of these challenges, MESN continue to work with the MEC, political parties, and other stakeholders to explore avenues to achieve its mission. In 2014, MESN undertook several activities in their bid to promote peaceful and credible elections. These activities included pre-election long term observation of party campaigns and activities by the election commission in all of Malawi's 28 districts; and media monitoring. On election day, MESN deployed observers to polling stations and conducted a parallel vote tally. MESN released reports on its observations throughout the day to keep voters and the public informed. Finally, MESN watched the vote tally at the district coalition centers. MESN's work on election day is the focus of our study (see details below).

MESN follows international standards in its observations.<sup>15</sup> All MESN observers receive formal training, which concludes with a public oath to act impartially and to support the conduct of free and fair elections. As mentioned above observers are accredited by MEC, which gives them the right to access information from election officials and observe proceedings at their assigned polling station or coalition center. Observers are not permitted to interfere with or assist in the election process. Each one of MESN's observers is deployed to a single polling station and remains at their assigned station from the opening to the close of the polls, when the ballots are publicly counted. MESN observers wear uniforms that identify their status and affiliation. They are recruited from MESN member organizations.

There were two other domestic election observation efforts in the country's 2014 elections. First, the country's National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) formed in March 2012 undertook activities aimed at increasing citizens' knowledge of and participation in the electoral processes. As a public institution, NICE worked closely with the election authority to undertake these activities. On election day, NICE also trained and deployed observers to watch activities at all polling stations. Second, the Malawi Election Information Center (MEIC), an initiative by key civil society organizations and academics, created a platform for citizens to verify their details on the voters' list and report on incidents of vote manipulation or violence at their localities through SMS technology. On election day, MEIC also trained and deploy observers to all polling stations across the country. MEIC's aim was to the receive timely information from all polling centers on the voting processes in their so-called Election Situation Room (ESR) and to alert MEC on possible threats to election integrity before it degenerates.

Our study examines the impact of MESN work on election day. MESN's deployment of observers to a random set of polling stations introduces an exogenous variation in the number of observers (i.e., observer intensity) at polling station that we leverage in their research. In our setting, this is important because polling stations were divided into streams and the deployment of more observers ensures that either all streams are covered or further increase the chances that fraud is detected.

---

<sup>15</sup>MESN is a member of Global Network for Domestic Election Monitoring <http://www.gndem.org/aboutgndem>.

### 3 Election observers and election day malfeasance

The core premise of domestic (and international) election observation is that the presence of observers would promote democracy by *detecting* and *detering* fraud, and building citizens' confidence in the electoral process (Carothers, 1997; Bjornlund, 2004). Election fraud is defined broadly to include all activities aimed at influencing the outcome of an election (Lehoucq, 2003). Largely drawing on studies of individual behavior, scholars and practitioners believe that the physical presence of observers at polling stations may reduce election day fraud by decreasing the chances that party agents and co-opted election officials openly manipulate the polls (Hyde, 2009). This literature suggests that individuals behave differently when being watched especially when their actions are illegal or socially objectionable (Gerber, Green and Larimer, 2008). Since violations of election day procedures and fraud are illegal, the presence of *neutral* observers at polling sites for the entire duration of polls is likely to increase compliance with electoral regulations and reduce the level of fraud.

So far, empirical studies support these claims and various domestic groups seem to deploy observers to almost all polling stations during national elections in their bid to deter fraud—sometimes duplicating efforts within the same country. We investigate whether increasing the intensity of observation at a station further decrease the incidence of fraud. We assume observers deter fraud and that increasing their presence or intensity at stations will further decrease the incidence of fraud by increasing the probability of fraud detection. Moreover, in our context as described above, increase the number of observers at a station potentially ensure better coverage of all voting centers within polling stations. Thus, we hypothesize that *increase in observer intensity at polling places will decrease the incidents of fraud (H1)*.

Yet, a close reading of the current literature on the subject suggests that observers may have three additional effects on election day fraud. First, parties and candidates, and their agents who observers aim to scrutinize at the polls are interested in election outcomes in larger political units such as constituencies or districts rather than a single polling site. Moreover, in simple majoritarian presidential elections where the entire country serves as one district votes count equally in the determination of national results irrespective of where they are cast. Thus, parties would be interested in outcomes at all polling stations around the country. Since, observers are often deployed to a subset of polling stations during the day, politicians have an incentive to move their fraudulent activities to unmonitored stations. Thus, we expect that *observers may*



*displace fraud to unmonitored polling places (H2)*. The theoretical implication of such displacements of fraud to unobserved stations should it occur is that, it may artificially inflate estimates of observer effect. This is because the level of fraud in unobserved stations may be higher than it should have been without the presence of observers at monitored stations. Second, and contrary to the first, observers may deter fraud in nearby unobserved stations. That is, the deterrence effect of observers may extend to proximate polling sites as well. This is simply because party agents or election officials may simply abstain from manipulating the polls at other stations because the presence of an observer at a nearby station signals oversight by a third party. The potential deterrence of fraud by observers at nearby locations implies that if we fail to account for this effect, we may underestimate observers' effect on fraud. Lastly, observers may reduce the overall levels of fraud within the constituencies in which they are deployed. That is, after taking into account potential displacement or deterrence effects of observers on fraud, observers may reduce the overall impact within constituencies (Ichino and Schündeln, 2012; Asunka et al., 2015).

The preceding paragraph, however, assumes that parties and candidates have the *ability* to respond to observer presence at all times and places; but this may not be the case. To orchestrate local level fraud parties need local party activists, as well as the complicity of the local election officials (e.g., Ziblatt, 2009; Weidmann and Callen, 2013; Asunka et al., 2015). These actors may facilitate fraud by engaging in a number of activities including the transportation of illegal voters to unmonitored polling stations to either place their names on the voter list or cast illegal ballots. They may also co-opt or collaborate with local election officials who then allow illegal voting, ballot stuffing, or simply miscount the ballots. Also, the ability of a party and its agents to coordinate on such local level fraud may be shaped by the density of its local social network as well as the necessary physical infrastructure such as the road and telecommunication networks (Ziblatt, 2009; Weidmann and Callen, 2013; Asunka et al., 2015). Furthermore, the literature on electoral fraud suggests that the level of fraud itself may be determined by the level of urbanization and political competition. For example, in rural areas, collusion between the central government and elites may ensure lack of electoral competition and peer pressure could replace blatant forms of intimidation to ensure high levels of turnouts. While in urban areas we may witness all manner of electoral atrocities (See Lehoucq, 2003). Accordingly, variation in the density of party networks (i.e., proxied by the level of electoral competition) and level of urbanization (which may imply higher levels of infrastructure development) across constituen-

cies within a country may have implications for levels of electoral fraud, observer effect, and parties' ability to respond to fraud-reducing interventions such as election observation.

For example, Asunka et al. (2015) argue that observers may have a higher impact on fraudulent activities in parties' stronghold where the voter population is socially and politically homogeneous, and parties have higher social penetration. According to Asunka et al. (2015), these characteristics of stronghold constituencies may place social and political pressures on election officials to engage in fraudulent activities; but observer presence thwarts these efforts. While this may be true for Ghana's strong two-party system where parties have historical stronghold regions, this may not be entirely true for Malawi's fragmented and weak party system. Since 2009, incumbents, elected on Malawi's traditional parties' ticket have defected and formed their own parties and used their offices to mobilize support as discussed above. With the country's high level of executive dominance, we expect constituencies with parliamentarians affiliated with the president and thus have access to more resources to orchestrate more fraud. However, observer presence will greatly undermine such activities in incumbent-controlled constituencies. Accordingly, *we expect that an increase in observer intensity will have a greater impact in reducing fraudulent activities in constituencies with MPs who are affiliated to the president's party (H3).*

However, we expect the displacement of fraud in response to the presence of observers to be higher in non-competitive (i.e., stronghold) constituencies. As discussed above, stronger party networks that characterizes party strongholds implies observer displacement effects could be substantially larger in such environments, where the dominant party may find it easier to relocate fraud to nearby stations to avoid observers using its dense network of supporters. We thus hypothesize that *the effect of observers on the displacement of fraudulent activities to nearby polling places will be greater in non-competitive constituencies (H4).*

Finally, our research sought to test a hypothesis that falls directly from Asunka et al. (2013)'s research design and findings in Ghana. Asunka et al. (2013) employ a multilevel randomization design in which the proportion of polling stations (i.e., saturation) that are observed in a constituency is randomized across their study constituencies in the first stage. In the second stage, observers are randomly to polling stations within these constituencies. The design—*randomized saturation design*—enables Asunka et al. (2013) to directly estimate unbiased effects of observers accounting for potential displacement or deterrence effects (Baird et al., 2012). Further, the design allows them to estimate the overall effect of observers conditional

on the proportion of stations that are observed within the constituency. Using turnout as their measure of fraud, Asunka et al. (2013) find that higher observer saturation causes overall lower levels of fraud within constituencies. In other words, higher election integrity is recorded in constituencies with higher observer saturation. Thus, when randomized saturation design is implemented in election observation, it serves as a proxy for the level of election integrity within a constituency and enables us to test the impact of improved election quality on the electoral fortunes of incumbent MPs as well. Specifically, we hypothesized that *in higher election quality constituencies, incumbent candidates are less likely to be re-elected or at least experience a decrease in their vote shares (H5)*. This is because while incumbents may have the resources to rig the polls higher concentration of observers in their constituencies may significantly curtail such efforts.

To be clear, we are unable to directly test all these hypotheses as we anticipated in our study, especially those related to observer spillover effects (*H2* and *H4*). This is because all stations in our study are observed and while theoretically we may expect the displacement of fraud to stations with fewer observers, this may be empirically limited. Our design (discussed below) allow us to estimate the effect of an additional observer to a polling station. Also, we leverage a variation in observer intensity within constituencies that naturally falls out from our treatment assignment to make guesses about hypothesis five (*H5*). This is because our research collaborators, MESN, was unwilling to adjust its final deployment plan to accommodate our randomized saturation design (as explained above for Asunka et al. (2015)'s study). That is, we were unable to implement the first stage of our treatment assignment where we planned to randomize the proportion of stations that is treated with observers within a constituency. We discuss the implication of this deviation from our research design in Section 7. We discuss our research design next.

## **4 Research design**

There are two fundamental challenges to the study of electoral fraud. First, it is difficult to measure or quantify the magnitude of fraud in any particular election because perpetrators often wish to hide their fraudulent activities or losing parties and candidates may falsely accuse victors. Also, beyond the potential partisan bias in reporting, different electoral stakeholders such as parties, candidates, voters, and the media may use disparate approaches to assess and quantify fraud within and across countries that may not be nationally representative. Second, determining what factors could explain electoral fraud is saddled with

the well-known problem of endogeneity. That is, while some scholars often report of strong associations between incidents of fraud and factors such as the levels of electoral competition and urbanization, it is unclear which direction the causal arrow points. For example, parties and candidates' agents in competitive and urban areas may be more likely to file complaints with election authorities about alleged breaches of the law and fraud, and an unwitting analysis may lead us to conclude that these factors increase the levels of fraud. Similarly, a broader media coverage of elections in urban areas may lead to more reports of fraudulent activities in these areas compared to rural areas. Thus, the association between the level of urbanization and levels of fraud may be a pure of function different levels of media coverage in urban versus rural areas among other factors.

To overcome these two key challenges, we leverage recent advances in election observation by independent and professional domestic groups. First, to assess the quality of the electoral process and the validity of the election results on election day, some domestic groups train and deploy observers to polling stations and instruct them to stay for the entire duration of the election process.<sup>16</sup> Using a *standardized instrument*, observers collect both qualitative and quantitative information on voting processes inside the polling station. Second, to form a nationally representative opinion about the credibility of national results, domestic groups employ statistical sampling techniques to deploy its observers (Sjoberg, 2012).<sup>17</sup>

While the use of a statistical sample and a standardized instrument allow domestic observation groups to detect fraud by, for example, conducting a parallel vote tabulation (PVT), it is not clear from this whether observers *deter* fraud.<sup>18</sup> The random assignment of observers to polling stations that is achieved through statistical sampling provides an avenue to assess whether (and when) observers deter election day fraud (Hyde, 2009). Specifically, in the absence of fraud, there should be no statistically significant difference between the incidents of irregularities or in outcomes between observed and unobserved stations. When there are no differences, civil society groups who deploy observers can be confident about the generality of their findings on the entire process as their findings in monitored stations applies equally to unmonitored

---

<sup>16</sup>In the pre-election period some domestic groups also conduct voter registration audit to assess the credibility of the voters roll, and media monitoring to assess bias especially by the national broadcaster.

<sup>17</sup>Traditionally, observer groups had deployed their volunteers to location where they deemed election violence and fraud to be likely. This approach pose a challenge to inference about the impact of observers on fraud since outcome measures are perfectly correlated with observer presence. This inferential problem is solved by the random assignment of observers to polling stations.

<sup>18</sup>PVT (also known as Quick Count is an election observation methodology that is typically based on a representative random sample of polling stations and is employed for independent verification (or challenge) of election results (Estok, Nevitte and Cowan, 2002).

stations. This is adequately understood and documented in the literature. However, in our study setting, the near full coverage of all polling centers by other domestic groups allow us to answer whether adding an additional observer to a polling station has a marginal effect of further reducing incidents of fraud or irregularities.

Our study leverages MESN's assignment of observers to a random and nationally representative sample of polling stations in Malawi's 2014 general elections to examine the effect of monitors on election day fraud and administrative irregularities. As explained above owing to the presence of NICE and MEIC observers at nearly all polling centers, MESN's random deployment of their observers introduces an exogenous variation in the the level of observer saturation at polling stations. We estimate the impact of this random variation in observer saturation. We implemented our study in a nationally representative sample of 90 out of 193 constituencies distributed proportionally across Malawi's three regions (Northern, Central and Southern). Overall, 14 of our sample constituencies are located in the Northern region, 33 in the Central region, and 43 Southern region.<sup>19</sup>

In our sample constituencies, MESN deployed observers to 1,049 out of the 2044 polling stations.<sup>20</sup> MESN observers serve as our "treatment" to polling stations. To measure the impact of observers, we randomly selected 806 out of the 995 remaining stations to serve as our control units.<sup>21</sup> To test our hypotheses on the differential effect of observers in electorally competitive versus non-competitive places, and urban versus rural places, we blocked on vote margins in the 1999 and 2004 legislative polls (taking the average), and population density (i.e., population per kilometer square), respectively before our sample was drawn. The final sample is 1,855 polling stations. To verify that our randomization worked, we checked the balance statistics between treated and control stations on two pre-treatment variables: the number registered voters; and the number of streams. Table C.1 in the appendix shows that these two variables are balanced.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>We stratified by electoral competition, population density, literacy, percentage of rural population, and unemployment rates. Tables A.1 and A.2 in the appendix shows descriptive statistics of our sampling frame and sample. We used district level census data provided by Malawi's National Statistical Office.

<sup>20</sup>MESN classified its observers into two main groups. PVT observers and Short Term Observers (STOs). For monitoring purposes, these two types of observers received the same training and on election day stayed at the polling station for the entire duration of the polls. The only difference between the groups of observers is that PVT observers submitted their reports in real time using SMS technology while the STO used pen and paper to submit their reports. In our sample, 368 of the 1049 observers were PVT observers.

<sup>21</sup>This represents more that 90% of stations in these constituencies. We had not planned to cover as many stations but were compelled by MESN's high deployment rate of more than 51%. This served as a constraint on our resources to collect data from all these stations.

<sup>22</sup>See Tables A.1 and ?? for the distribution of our sample within regions and across different stream types.

To measure the level of irregularities and fraud at polling stations, MESN trained its observers on polling station procedures, and asked them to complete a standardized instrument (i.e., checklist). Using this election day checklist, observers provided qualitative information on election-day processes, and quantitative data on the presidential polls in their assigned polling station. The qualitative information observers gathered include whether the polls opened on time, the presence of voters' list, whether voters are verified on the list, and the availability of voting materials such as ballot papers, ballot boxes, ballot box seals, and indelible inks. The quantitative information included the number of valid and invalid votes, and votes cast for candidates. MESN provided us with access to the data collected by their observers at our treated polling stations.<sup>23</sup>

However, a central challenge to the experimental study of observers is to collect similar qualitative and quantitative information to those gathered by observers from the control stations. As mentioned above, to examine the impact of observers we need to compare outcomes in treated and control stations. One approach employed by most scholars with notable the exception of Asunka et al. (2015) is to use election data from the election management bodies, which is not always available, and if available susceptible manipulation. That is while observers may deter fraud at the polling station, these results may be manipulated during the results transmission and tabulation process.

To circumvent this challenge, we trained and deployed 200 research assistants from Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA)-Malawi's pool of enumerators. With assistance from MESN trainers, we trained our research assistants on how to complete MESN's election day checklist through the conduct of interviews with political party agents and election officials. In addition, our enumerators received IPA's training on research protocols on subject interviews. At each station, we conducted two interviews to validate responses on the qualitative processes for each control unit. Several measures were put in place to ensure our enumerators do not appear as MESN observers and thus "contaminate" our control stations. First, our enumerators were instructed to visit four stations each in our control units after the polls had closed and counting is completed, and in some cases the morning after the polls to conduct interviews with party agents and election officials using MESN's checklist. Second, unlike MESN observers, our enumerator did not wear identifiable T-shirts. They only identified themselves through their issued cards from IPA and MEC's accreditation

---

<sup>23</sup>Currently, we have access to the random set of stations where PVT observers were deployed.

cards when it was appropriate to conduct their interviews. Finally, we obtained accreditation for our enumerators from the MEC's national offices in Blantyre and distributed them through our national coordinators. This ensured that unlike MESN observers who obtained their accreditation on election day at their assigned polling centers, polling officials did not know our enumerators will visit their centers after close of counting.

Finally, we trained 60 of our 200 research assistants to use Android devices to record geo-coordinates of all polling stations (treated and control) in our sample and to note whether results were posted at the polling stations as required by Malawi's electoral laws. Owing to resource and logistical constraints, we could only train 60 enumerators for this part of the study and they had to use 3 days to undertake this task. Our enumerators were able to cover 1, 271 stations (out of 1,855 stations) during this period.

## **5 Measuring election day irregularities and fraud**

Election fraud is defined generally to imply actions taken by electoral stakeholders to influence election outcomes or undermine the democratic tenets of "free and fair" elections. Accordingly, election fraud can take several forms, and may occur at different stages during the electoral process (i.e., during the pre-election or post-election periods, or on election day) (Svensson and Elklit, 1997; Schedler, 2002; Hyde, 2011). Pre-election fraud include actions aimed at biasing the official voters' list, vote-buying, unfairly excluding parties or candidates from the contest, and media bias. Election day maneuvers include actions that influence voters directly, such as the intimidation of sections of the electorate, and those actions that violate electoral laws and democratic practice by allowing illegal votes to be cast. Election officials may also deliberately undersupply ballot papers or administrative materials or equipments to certain polling stations or constituencies to influence election outcomes (Kelley, 2011). Other explicit election day fraud includes the falsification of election protocols, invalidating ballots for invalid reasons, and the miscounting of results. Lastly, post-election manipulation tactics can include manipulation of vote aggregation, repudiation of the election altogether, bias in the adjudication of election petitions or using violence against protestors.

Our research design and data collection protocols allows us to address possible election day vote manipulation during voting. These manipulations may occur through, for example, multiple voting, ballot stuffing, and illegal voters casting ballots. It also allows us to analyze possible manipulation of polling station results during the transmission of results sheets to the national tally center.

## 5.1 Measures of election day fraud

We employ two principal measures to investigate the impact of observers on election day fraud. The first relates to reported voter turnout, and the second relates to the reported share of votes obtained by candidates in the presidential election. In the former, we construct two measures: *overvoting* and *turnout*. To construct these measures, we added up the number of valid and invalid votes cast, and divide the total by the number of registered voters for each station. This measures reported turnout for each station. We obtained the total number of registered voters for each station from MEC prior to the polls. We code polling stations as exhibiting overvoting in the presidential polls if the number of votes cast exceeds the number of registered voters.

We note two possible limitations of our use of overvoting as a measure of fraud. First, as a measure of fraud, overvoting is conservative because it assumes no fraud occurred below our artificial threshold of 100 percent turnout. Hence, our use of actual reported turnout rates helps to alleviate this concern (Asunka et al., 2013). Second, as a robustness check, we adopt two outlier detection strategies. As a first approach, we code turnout rates at a polling station that exceeds two standard deviations away from the average reported turnout rates within its constituency as suspicious. As a second approach, we code the turnout rate of a polling station as suspicious if it exceeds the sum of the third quartile ( $Q3$ ) and  $1.5 \times$  interquartile range ( $IQR$ ) of the rates of turnout within its constituency.<sup>24</sup>

Our second principal measure of fraud is the reported *vote share* of presidential candidates. We construct this measure by dividing the votes obtained by each candidate by the total number of valid votes. By using these two principal measures of fraud, we follow the existing literature on electoral fraud (e.g., Beber and Scacco, 2008; Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin, 2009; Herron, 2010; Hyde, 2008; Sjoberg, 2012; Asunka et al., 2013). Moreover, these measures in themselves do not suggest vote manipulation nor do they suggest that higher turnout rates or vote share are bad. These measures only raise concerns about possible manipulation when they are systematically related to interventions such the presence of independent election observers.

---

<sup>24</sup>Table E.1 in the appendix shows our results. Our results are robust to these alternative measure artificially high turnout rates.



## 5.2 Measures of administrative irregularities

We also use qualitative reports on the election processes collected by observers and our research enumerators to measure the level of administrative irregularities at the polling station. Although we ask a battery of questions on the election processes, we provide an analysis of only one of these measures.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, in our analysis we use enumerators answers to the question: *Was the presidential result sheet posted at the polling station?* for which they answered *Yes (=1)* or *No* as a measure of administrative irregularities at the polling station. We emphasize this measure in our main report because this information was measured in a similar fashion in treated and control stations. As mentioned above, our 60 enumerators visited both treated and control stations to record this information after the election were closed and over the next two days after.

To assess the potential impact of election observers in the parliamentary race we conduct two forms of analysis. First, we divided our analysis of observers' effect on fraud in the presidential polls into competitive and non-competitive legislative constituencies. The level of electoral competitiveness of constituencies are coded using vote margins in the previous legislative elections. Second, we collected election data from the previous legislative election in 2009 and the outcomes of the 2014 election from the MEC. For each of our sample of 90 constituencies, we coded whether the incumbent changed between the two periods, whether the incumbent contested in the polls, and calculated the change in vote share of incumbents who contested for re-election.

## 5.3 Estimation strategy

Since MESN observers are randomly assigned to polling stations, their presence should not impact the level of reported turnout nor candidates' vote shares. Any systematic relationship between these two variables and the presence of observers suggests vote manipulation (Hyde, 2008; Sjoberg, 2012; Asunka et al., 2013). Thus, we estimate the average treatment effect of observers on fraud by comparing average outcomes in treated stations to those of in the control stations. To improve the precision of our estimates and control for chance imbalances, we use a linear probability model and control for polling station sizes. Accordingly, we define outcomes for polling station  $i$  as  $Y_i$  and  $T_i \in \{treated = 1, control = 0\}$  as our treatment variable.

---

<sup>25</sup>We present a comparison of means between treated and control stations for our other measures in the appendix. We find similar results for the measures of administrative irregularities. See Table G.1.

Thus, we estimate:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

where  $X_i$  is the number of registered voters for polling station  $i$ , and  $\varepsilon_i$  is our unobserved random error term. We also estimate possible heterogeneous effects of observers by disaggregating our analysis by levels of electoral competition and urbanization. That is, we estimate whether the impact of observers on our outcome measures differ by levels of electoral competition and population density (our measure of the level of urbanization).

### 5.3.1 Parliamentary elections

Finally, we explore a feature of Malawi’s election administration structure and MESN’s deployment strategy to analyze the relationship between the levels of observer concentration within constituencies and the electoral fortunes of candidates in the parliamentary race. Malawi divides its polling stations into *streams* (i.e., voting centers at a polling station) to ensure efficiency in the administration of the polls. A typical polling station is a school building complex with a number of classroom blocks, and classroom blocks normally serve as polling streams. The number of streams in a polling station is determined by the number of registered voters with each stream having no more than 800 voters.

While MESN deployed its observers to polling stations, during the polls, they were instructed to stay in one stream of their own choosing upon arrival at the polling station. This meant the level of observer oversight at polling stations varied across stations—stations with many streams, in theory, had little oversight and offered a higher opportunity for fraud than those with fewer streams. Moreover, when we aggregate by constituency, those with many streams ended up with a lower proportion of its total streams being monitored. We refer to the proportion of streams treated in a constituency as its *observer intensity*.

We analyze the association between observer intensity and incumbent candidates’ electoral fortunes. Since observer intensity is not random and is a pure function of constituency sizes, our analysis is only a measure of correlation. We expect that in low observer intensity constituencies, where fewer streams are monitored, election officials and political parties have a higher opportunity to manipulate the polls. We divide the proportion of streams monitored within constituencies in terciles. Accordingly, constituencies

are coded as having a low (14.7 percent), medium (20 percent), or high (27.8 percent) proportion of their streams monitored.

Our unit of analysis is the constituency. We model outcomes at the constituency level as a function of the level of observer intensity,  $Y_j(D_j = d)$ , where  $Y_j$  represent outcome in constituency  $j$  with observer intensity  $D_j = d, d \in \{high(3), medium(2), low(1)\}$ .

We estimate the following linear regression model:

$$Y_j = \alpha + \beta_1 D(d = 2) + \beta_2 D(d = 3) + \beta_i X_j + \varepsilon_j$$

where,  $\alpha$ , the constant of our linear model, is the re-election rate or change in vote share of incumbent legislators (see below) in low intensity constituencies ( $D(d = 1)$ ).  $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_2$  represent a change in the average re-election rates or change in vote share for incumbents in higher and medium compared to low level of observer intensity, respectively.  $X_j$  represent other the constituency level characteristic that may impact of our outcome variables, and  $\varepsilon_i$  is the error term. Our control variables (i.e.,  $X_j$ ) include the average margin of victory in two previous elections, size of constituency (proxied by the number of voters), and a dummy for whether the MP is a member of the DPP.

#### 5.4 Summary statistics of measures of fraud

Table 1 shows the summary statistics of our outcome variables at the polling station level.<sup>26</sup> We estimate the mean of reported turnout rates to be about 73 percent, and find that 3 percent of polling stations exhibits overvoting. The DPP received 32 percent of the valid votes cast.

Comparing outcomes in treatment and control stations, we find that turnout is 4 percentage points higher in control stations compared to that of treated stations. Similarly, the proportion of stations recording overvoting is 3 percentage points higher in control stations compared to treated stations. The DPP gained 3 percentage points more in its vote share in stations where there were no observers. These summary statistics provide preliminary evidence consistent with our first hypothesis (H1), and existing literature, that observers reduce the incidence of fraud where they are stationed. Lastly, our enumerators' reports indicate that results were posted in only about 42 percent of the 1271 polling stations they visited. Contrary to our expectation,

---

<sup>26</sup>We summarize our constituency level outcomes in the results section.

officials were less likely to post election results where there were observers. We present results of our analysis next.

Table 1: Summary statistics of measures of fraud and irregularities

<b>Indicator</b>	Full Sample (N=896)	Treated (N=349)	Control (N=547)
Turnout	0.73 (0.19)	0.71 (0.15)	0.75 (0.21)
Overvoting	0.03 (0.17)	0.01 (0.11)	0.04 (0.20)
DPP vote share	0.32 (0.29)	0.30 (0.29)	0.33 (0.29)
Posting results (N=1,271)	0.421 (0.494)	0.396 (0.489)	0.456 (0.498)

*Note:* Table 1 shows the summary statistics of our outcome variables. We present the mean and standard deviation (in parentheses) in the full sample and for treatment and control stations. *Turnout* is calculated by dividing reported total votes cast by the number of registered voters provided by the election authority ahead of the polls. Polling stations that record turnout rates over 100 percent are coded as exhibiting *overvoting* (=1). DPP represents the Democratic Peoples’ Party. Lastly, *Posting of results* is binary variable which codes whether the presidential result sheet was posted when our enumerators visited the polling station after counting was closed.

## 6 Results

We present our results in three sections. First, we show the effect of an increase in election observers on election day fraud at polling stations, focusing on the presidential polls. We display the results in the full sample, as well as heterogeneous effects. Second, we estimate the impact of observers on election day administrative irregularities and test whether irregularities are purposeful. Third, we analyze the parliamentary results and consider associations between election observer intensity at the constituency level and fraud in the parliamentary polls.

### 6.1 Effect of an increase in observer saturation on election fraud in the presidential polls

#### 6.1.1 Full Sample

Table 2 presents our results on the effect of treatment on our three measures of fraud at polling stations: overvoting, turnout rates, and candidates’ vote shares. In our regressions, we control for the number of registered voters (logged), because the size of the station may affect both the level of fraud and the impact of observers.

Consistent with our first hypothesis (*H1*), the results show that an increase in observer saturation at polling stations reduce fraud. In column (1), the coefficient on the treatment variable shows that an additional observer reduces the rates of overvoting by 3 percentage points, a fourfold decrease. Similarly, an additional observer reduces reported turnout rates by 3.6 percentage points (column (2)), a 5 percent decrease. These results are statistically significant at the one percent level. Our results are also robust to analysis using our two approaches to coding turnout rates of polling stations as suspicious as described above (see Table E.1 in the appendix). Finally, in column (3) the presence of an additional observer at the station reduces the reported DPP vote share by roughly 3 percentage points, a 10 percent decrease. This coefficient is significant at the 10 percent level. This result suggests that most fraud that occurred in this election may benefit the DPP, who are the party of the previous president.

Table 2: Treatment effect of an additional observer on measures of fraud

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Overvoting	Turnout	DPP vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Treatment (observer present)	-0.030*** (0.011)	-0.036*** (0.011)	-0.028* (0.015)
Log(Registered voters)	-0.020* (0.011)	-0.053*** (0.013)	0.054* (0.028)
Constant	0.183** (0.083)	1.134*** (0.094)	-0.059 (0.196)
Observations	896	896	896
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.010	0.038	0.012

*Robust standard errors in parentheses.*

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

*Note:* Table 2 reports the estimated treatment effect (Treatment (observer present)) on our three measures of fraud. We control for the log of registered voters at the polling station to account for the varying sizes of polling stations. Our unit of analysis is the polling station. We cluster the standard errors of our estimates by constituency.

### 6.1.2 Disaggregated sample

Hypothesis 3 states that an additional observer will have a greater impact on reducing fraud in constituencies where the MP is affiliated to the president (Joyce Banda's) party (the PP). Table 3 tests this hypothesis. The interaction term between the treatment and PP-incumbent MPs indicates the differential effects of an

additional observer across constituencies that do and do not have a PP-incumbent MP. Across Columns (1)-(3) we do not find that the effect of observers is significantly different in PP-incumbent constituencies. This leads us to reject our second hypothesis ( $H3$ ). As discussed above, this may be explained by the fact that Malawi's incumbent president in 2014 (Joyce Banda), having been in power for two years before the polls, was not in a strong position to execute fraud on election day.<sup>27</sup> To conduct local level fraud, parties need strong organizational capacity and also the complicity of local officials. As the results above and below suggest, such an ability seems to have been held by the DPP, who had been in office between 2004 and 2012.

Table 3: Effect of an additional observers on fraud in Peoples' Party incumbent constituencies

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Fraud indicators		
	Overvoting (1)	Turnout (2)	DPP vote share (3)
Treatment (observer present)	-0.033*** (0.012)	-0.034*** (0.012)	-0.027 (0.017)
PP candidate incumbent	-0.005 (0.022)	0.008 (0.022)	-0.013 (0.075)
Log(Registered voters)	-0.020* (0.011)	-0.054*** (0.013)	0.054** (0.028)
Treatment $\times$ PP	0.016 (0.032)	-0.009 (0.030)	-0.005 (0.034)
Constant	0.184** (0.083)	1.135*** (0.094)	-0.062 (0.194)
Observations	896	896	896
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.014	0.043	0.036

*Note:*

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

*Notes:* Table 3 reports our estimates of observer treatment effect (Treatment (observer present)) on our measures of fraud. We test whether the effect of observers differ significantly in Peoples' Party incumbent constituencies (i.e., MPs affiliated with the PP) from those affiliated with opposition parties and independents. Our unit of analysis is the polling station. We control for the log of registered voters at the polling station to account for the varying sizes of polling stations. We cluster the standard errors at the constituency level.

As we note above, we cannot directly test Hypotheses 2 and 4 which consider the possible spillover effects of observers generally and in different types of constituencies. Instead, we investigate whether the

<sup>27</sup>Of course, this does not rule out the fact president Banda may have leveraged her position as an incumbent to abuse the state media and buy voters in the pre-election period. Our argument is that the ability to rig the polls required a more decentralized efforts and the incumbent did not have this.

effect of an additional observer at polling stations varies across different types of constituencies. We consider possible varying impacts of observers across different levels of electoral competition, and between rural and urban constituencies.<sup>28</sup> We divide electoral competition and population density into terciles to capture any non-linearity in effects across each variable.<sup>29</sup>

The upper panel of Table 4 displays the effects of treatment across different levels of electoral competition. First, we consider the effect of an additional observer on overvoting. The coefficients on the treatment variable in Columns (1), (4) and (7) show these results. The coefficient in column (7) (−4.0 percentage points) is twice as large as that in column (4) (−2.1 percentage points) and a third higher than that in column (1) (−3.1 percentage points). This suggests that an increase in observer saturation are more effective in reducing overvoting in constituencies with low levels of competition. Similarly, in non-competitive constituencies an additional observer have a greater impact on reducing artificially inflated levels of reported turnout. The coefficient in highly competitive constituencies is −0.7 percentage point (Column 2) compared to −5.8 percentage points (Column 8) in constituencies that have low levels of competition. Finally, we consider the impact of an additional observer on DPP vote share and compare the coefficients in columns (3), (6) and (9). The results show that the presence of observers reduced DPP vote share twice as much in highly competitive constituencies (Column 3), −5.6 percentage points) compared to relatively non-competitive constituencies (Columns (6) and (9), − 2.5 percentage points and − 3.1 percentage points, respectively).

Next, we consider the effect of our treatment on markers of fraud across different levels of urbanization (lower panel of Table 4). First, we consider the effect of an additional observer on overvoting. The coefficients on the treatment variable in Columns (1), (4) and (7) display these results. The coefficient in column (7) (−6.3 percentage points) is roughly three times larger than the coefficients in columns (1) (−2.5 percentage points) and (4) (−1.3 percentage points). This suggests that an increase in observers have higher impacts on reducing overvoting in more urban compared to more rural constituencies. Indeed, we find similar stronger effects in more urban places concerning turnout rates. The coefficients in columns (5) (−5.8 percentage points) and (8) (−4.7 percentage points) suggest that adding an observer have roughly the same effect on reducing turnout in medium to high urban constituencies, but lower effects in rural constituencies (−1.1 percentage points in column (2)). Finally, the impact of observers on DPP vote share across different

---

<sup>28</sup>Population density, the population per kilometer square, is our proxy for the level of urbanization.

<sup>29</sup>In the appendix, Table A.3 provides the mean and standard deviation for these variables within each tercile.

levels of urbanization is shown by the treatment coefficients in Columns (3), (6) and (9). Again, the coefficient in Column (9) (−7.6 percentage points) is more than three times higher than those in Columns (3) (−2.1 percentage points) and (6) (−0.1 percentage points) suggesting an additional observer had a greater impact on reducing fraud in more urban constituencies.

The heterogeneous effects that we present above provide evidence that the effects of an additional observer at a polling station on reducing fraud are not constant across all types of constituencies. Instead, we find that an increase in observer saturation is better able to reduce fraud in politically competitive and more urban constituencies (in the case of DPP presidential candidate's vote share). We provide conjectures on what may explain these patterns. First, the distinction between competitive and non-competitive constituencies provides suggestive evidence of the relationship between fraud in the parliamentary and presidential elections. In many countries parliamentary and presidential elections are held simultaneously. In presidential elections, the entire country serves as a single constituency and votes count equally irrespective of where it is cast. Thus, the distinction between competitive and non-competitive electoral constituencies may have no bearings on the levels of fraud. However, as discussed above, Malawi uses a single-member district plurality rule in its parliamentary polls. Accordingly, in competitive districts, a single rigged vote has a high potential at swinging the elections in the cheating candidate's favor (See, Birch, 2007; Lehoucq, 2003). On the other hand, in non-competitive constituencies, candidates may attempt to boost their vote shares by, for example, stuffing the ballots that would artificially inflate turnout rates at these polling locations. The increase in the presence of observers may, therefore, reduce this fraud by raising the probability of fraud detection. This may explain the patterns we observe on the impact of an additional election observer across different levels of electoral competition. That is, candidates cheating in the parliamentary polls may also cheat on behalf of their presidential candidate. It also suggests that parliamentary candidates may be the orchestrators of fraud.

In the case of urban constituencies, the higher impact of an additional observer may be explained by the fact that observers may have easy access to the necessary infrastructure to transmit their concerns to their organizations quickly. The observers' organizations may in turn alert the relevant authorities to take the necessary punitive action against cheating officials. Thus, in urban constituencies observers present a higher threat to local officials.



Table 4: Heterogeneous effects of an additional observer: competition and population density

	<i>Level of Competition</i>								
	High			Medium			Low		
	Overvoting (1)	Turnout (2)	DPP (3)	Overvoting (4)	Turnout (5)	DPP (6)	Overvoting (7)	Turnout (8)	DPP (9)
Treatment	-0.031* (0.018)	-0.007 (0.021)	-0.056** (0.023)	-0.021 (0.023)	-0.039* (0.021)	-0.025 (0.026)	-0.040** (0.019)	-0.058*** (0.016)	-0.031 (0.022)
Log(Reg. Voters)	-0.003 (0.015)	-0.044** (0.017)	0.022 (0.035)	-0.005 (0.017)	-0.050* (0.026)	0.077* (0.044)	-0.060** (0.026)	-0.076*** (0.025)	0.110 (0.068)
Constant	0.063 (0.108)	1.043*** (0.118)	0.276 (0.252)	0.074 (0.122)	1.138*** (0.199)	-0.221 (0.319)	0.479** (0.197)	1.292*** (0.190)	-0.550 (0.473)
Observations	267	267	267	282	282	282	347	347	347
R <sup>2</sup>	0.010	0.031	0.013	0.004	0.037	0.023	0.043	0.065	0.049
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.002	0.024	0.005	-0.003	0.031	0.016	0.037	0.060	0.043

	<i>Level of Population Density</i>								
	Low			Medium			High		
	Overvoting (1)	Turnout (2)	DPP (3)	Overvoting (4)	Turnout (5)	DPP (6)	Overvoting (7)	Turnout (8)	DPP (9)
Treatment	-0.025 (0.017)	-0.011 (0.016)	-0.021 (0.017)	-0.013 (0.019)	-0.058*** (0.017)	-0.001 (0.024)	-0.063*** (0.024)	-0.047* (0.026)	-0.076* (0.042)
Log(Reg. Voters)	-0.031** (0.014)	-0.062*** (0.016)	-0.001 (0.043)	-0.022 (0.027)	-0.046 (0.030)	-0.012 (0.040)	-0.012 (0.021)	-0.028 (0.025)	0.175** (0.073)
Constant	0.256** (0.105)	1.201*** (0.112)	0.306 (0.296)	0.188 (0.200)	1.068*** (0.220)	0.377 (0.289)	0.156 (0.169)	0.946*** (0.195)	-0.870 (0.566)
Observations	375	375	375	304	304	304	217	217	217
R <sup>2</sup>	0.017	0.044	0.002	0.008	0.062	0.001	0.029	0.015	0.089
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.011	0.038	-0.004	0.001	0.055	-0.006	0.019	0.006	0.081

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

*Note:* The unit of analysis is the polling station. The table reports the estimated treatment effect (Treatment (observed=1)) on our measures of fraud across different level of electoral competition [upper panel] and population density (i.e., urbanization) [lower panel]. We measure the level of electoral competition at the constituency level by taking the average of the legislative elections in 1999 and 2004. We then divide the distribution into terciles. Population density is the population per square kilometer in the constituency. We also tercile this distribution to account for possible non-linearity. We control for the log of registered voters at the polling station to account for the varying sizes of polling stations. We cluster the standard errors at the constituency level.

## 6.2 Effect of treatment on administrative irregularities

Hypothesis 1 further suggests that the presence of an additional observer will reduce administrative irregularities at the polling station. That is, by increasing the presence of observers, election officials are more likely to comply with election regulations such as checking voters' names, inking their fingers, and publicly posting the election results. To test this hypothesis, we compare the rates of publicly posting the election results sheets at stations with an additional observer to stations with only NICE and MEIC observers. Column (1) in Table 5 displays our results in the full sample. At control stations, the results were posted 46 percent of the time. However, at treated stations only 40 percent of stations had the results posted. Columns (2) -(4) break the results by region. In Central and Northern regions, observer presence leads to a 9 percent (column (2)) and 12 percent (column(4)) reduction in the public posting of results, respectively. In the South, the presence of observers made no difference on the rates of posting of results. These results suggest that adding another observer to a polling station and thus increasing the level of scrutiny increases the chance that officials may not comply with administrative regulations that are meant to enhance election transparency.

Table 5: Effect of observers on the posting of presidential results sheets by region

	National (1)	Central (2)	Northern (3)	Southern (4)
Treatment (observer present)	0.40 (0.02)	0.42 (0.03)	0.42 (0.03)	0.36 (0.03)
Control (observer absent)	0.46 (0.02)	0.51 (0.03)	0.54 (0.04)	0.36 (0.03)
<i>ATE</i>	-0.059 (0.028)	-0.092 (0.047)	-0.111 (0.059)	-0.001 (0.043)

*Note:* Table 5 shows the mean outcome for the posting of presidential results sheets in treated and control stations in our the full sample (national) and by region. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Table 5 also shows the treatment effect of MESN observers on the posting of results in the full sample and by region.

While these results run contrary to our expectations (*H1*), there are theoretically plausible explanations for why we observe this counterintuitive relationship. For example, Ofosu (2014) suggests that in an attempt to facilitate election fraud in the presence of observers, election officials may engage in seemingly innocuous administrative irregularities, such as the failure to apply ink to a voter's fingers to allow multiple

voting or post election results. Such irregularities often go undetected because party agents or observers may not immediately know their intent (Hyde, 2009).

To understand whether such breaches are fraudulent, we need to know whether irregularities are beneficial to some candidates. In line with our analysis on the impact observers on DPP's vote share, we conduct two tests. First, we compare DPP's vote shares collected by observers at polling stations before officials transmitted them to the district and national tally centers to those we received from the MEC to test any significant departures. In theory, these results should be the same, and in a simple scatterplot should line up on a 45-degree line with a correlation of one. Thus, significant departures from a correlation of one (i.e.,  $r=1$ ) suggest potential fraud. We find the correlation between results collected by observers and those that we received from MEC to be 0.94. When we disaggregate these results by whether the results were posted or not, we find significant departures. Figure 1 shows our results. For our treated sample, the correlation between these two results are near 1 ( $r = 0.989$ ) where officials posted results, and  $r = 0.877$  where they did not post them.<sup>30</sup> This difference in correlation provides evidence to suggest that the non-posting of results may be fraudulent.

---

<sup>30</sup>In control stations, whether results were posted or not did not make a significant difference between results collected by observers and those received from MEC. See Figure F.1 in the appendix.

Figure 1: Correlation between DPP results collected by observers and those from MEC

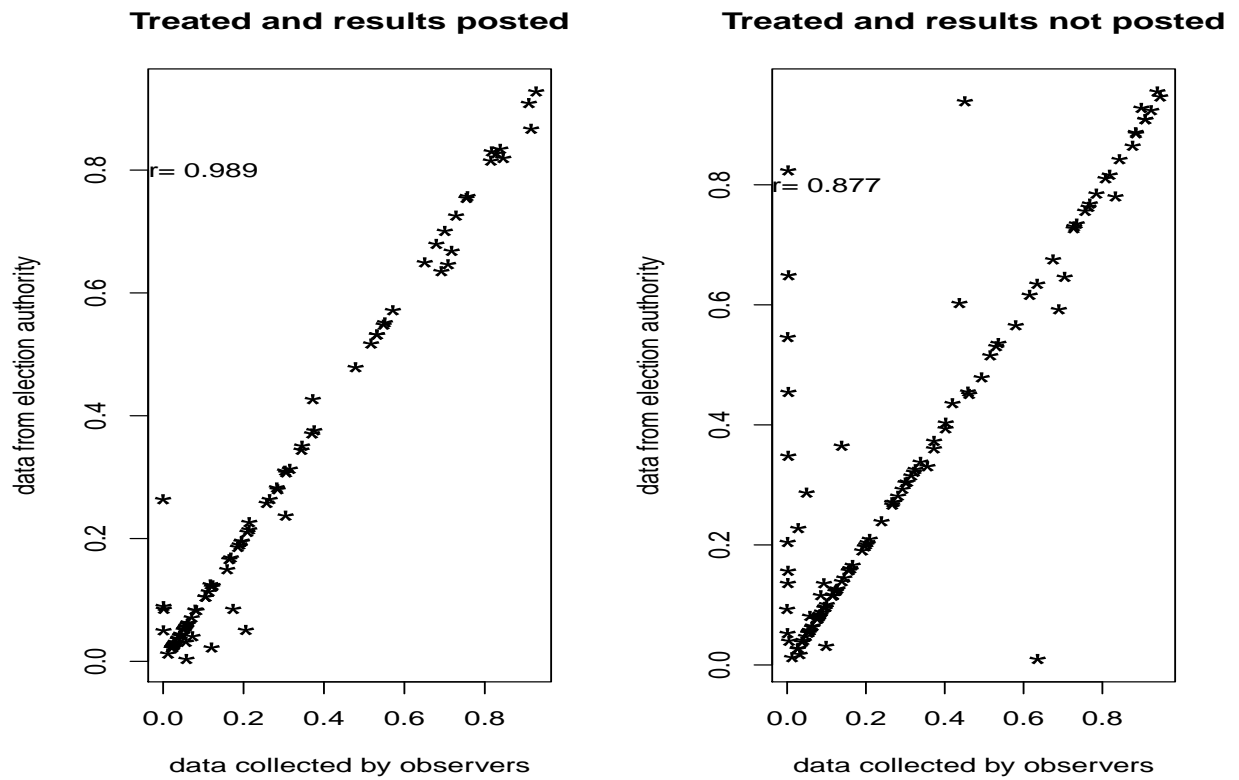


Figure 1, shows the relationship between DPP results collected at the polling station by observers and results received from MEC at the national tally center for stations where results were posted (left) and where results were not posted (right).

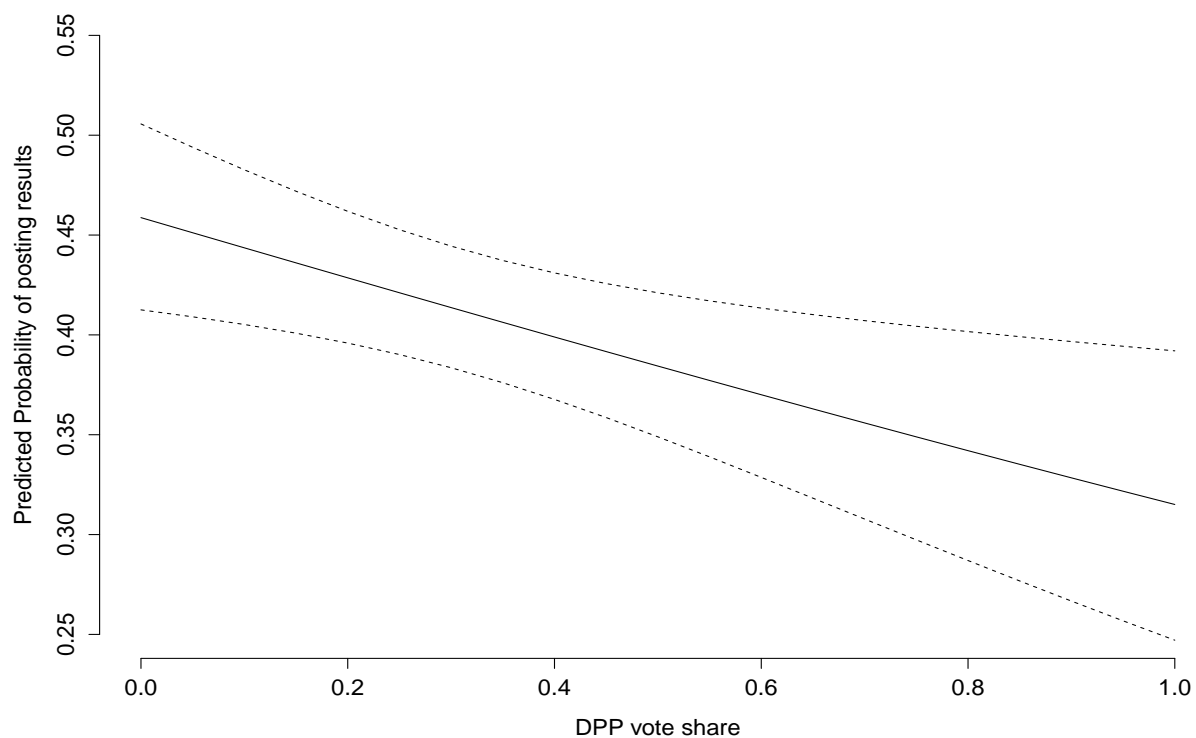
Second, we run a logistic regression in which the dependent variable is whether or not officials posted the results. We regress this on DPP presidential candidate's vote share.<sup>31</sup> Figure 2 plots the predicted probability that election officials will post the results at different levels of DPP candidate's vote share. Our results show that stations that report higher DPP vote shares were also less likely to post their results. This provides further evidence to suggest that one way in which the DPP enacted fraud was through not posting results in public in some stations that may allow the party to falsifying results sent to the central tally center.

Two empirical findings provide support for our belief the non-posting of results may have been a tactic employed by DPP agents to manipulate the polls. First, we find that officials were less likely to post the results in the Southern region, the stronghold region of the DPP, compared to the Northern and Central regions. Second, when we disaggregate the results on the impact of an additional observer on DPP's presidential vote share by region we find very limited effect, if any, in the Southern region (See column 3 in panel three of Table D.1 in the appendix). Together, this evidence provides further support for our conclusion that not posting results may have been a manipulative tactic employed by the DPP.

---

<sup>31</sup>In this regression, we control for electoral competition and number of registered voters in our regression. We control for electoral competition because it may influence the incidents of fraud. We control for the number of registered voters because one may argue that higher number of register voters will place an undue pressure on election officials at the polling station and may lead them to make genuine administrative errors.

Figure 2: Relationship between DPP vote share and the public posting of presidential results



*The plot shows the predicted probability that election officials posted the presidential results at different levels of DPP's vote share holding the number of registered voters and turnout at their mean.*

### 6.3 Relationship between observer intensity and re-election rates and vote share in the parliamentary polls

In this subsection, we provide a partial test of hypothesis 5 that, by reducing levels of fraud, observers lower re-election rates or vote shares among incumbent parliamentary candidates. We use variation in the proportion of streams (i.e., polling centers nested within stations) monitored by MESN observers within a constituency to analyze whether, other things being equal, higher levels of observer intensity within a constituency reduces the chance that an MP is re-elected or that they receive a smaller share of votes than in the previous election.

We obtained electoral data on MPs in 88 of our sample of 90 constituencies. In Table 6, we show the distribution of two characteristics of legislators in these constituencies. First, whether the incumbent contested for re-election (columns (1)-(2)), and second whether the incumbent changed (not re-elected)(rows (1)-(2)). The total in column (1) suggests that 26 out of the 88 legislators did not contest for re-election. The total in row (1 (No )) suggests that 21 out of the 88 constituencies had the same legislators after the 2014 polls. Of key interest for our analysis is column (2), which displays the percentage of legislators in our sample who contested in the 2014 polls (a total of 62) and were re-elected. Our results show only 33.87% were re-elected suggesting a very low re-election rate. We next analyze the relationship between observers' intensity and legislators' electoral fortunes in the 2014 polls.

In our regression analysis, we divide the proportion of streams monitored across constituencies into terciles. Our reference category is low observer intensity constituencies (where a lower proportion of streams were monitored).<sup>32</sup> We restrict our sample to incumbents competing for re-election. Our dependent variables are a) whether the *incumbent changed* and b) the *change in incumbent vote share* between 2009 and 2014 elections. Table 7 presents our results. Columns (1)-(2) of Table 7 present results for our first dependent variable. Columns (3)-(4) present the results for our second dependent variable.

---

<sup>32</sup>In the appendix, Table A.3 displays the mean and standard deviation of the proportion of streams observed in each tercile (i.e., High (27.8%(SD=6.1%)), Medium (20%(SD=1.4%)), Low (14.7%(SD=3.4%)) )

Table 6: Re-election rates among legislators

<i>Incumbent changed</i>	<i>Incumbent contested</i>		Total (3)
	No (1)	Yes (2)	
No (1)	0 (0%)	21 (33.87%)	21 (23.86%)
Yes (2)	26 (100%)	41 (66.12%)	67 (76.14%)
Total (3)	26	62	88

*Note:* The unit of analysis is the constituency. The table reports the re-election rate of MPs in our sample constituencies. We gathered information about 88 of our 90 constituencies. The columns indicated whether the incumbent contested in the polls and the rows indicated whether the incumbent changed (not re-elected) after the polls. Among incumbent MPs who contested for re-election only 34 percent were re-elected.

In columns (1)- (4), the coefficients on Observer intensity (Medium) and Observer intensity (High) helps to test Hypothesis 5. Across these columns, these coefficients suggest higher observer intensity (i.e., medium and high) is associated with higher re-election rates (columns (1) and (2 )) (i.e., legislators were less likely to change with higher observer intensity). Also, incumbents were more likely to have received a higher vote share compared to their vote share in 2009 (columns (3) and (4)). Hence, these results suggest the presence of observers was beneficial to incumbents contrary to Hypothesis 5. However, our results further show that among DPP incumbents, increases in the proportion of streams observed are, on average associated with lower re-election rates and a reduction in their vote share. Across columns (1)-(4), the coefficients on Observer intensity (Medium/High)  $\times$  DPP show these results. Again, these results suggest that fraud may have been conducted by DPP legislators because high observer intensity reduces their re-election rate or a reduction in their vote share.



Table 7: Relationship between observers' intensity and fraud in parliamentary polls

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Incumbent Change		Change in incumbent vote share	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Observer intensity (Medium)	-0.271*	-0.552***	0.098**	0.208***
	(0.140)	(0.119)	(0.048)	(0.050)
Observer intensity (High)	-0.251*	-0.478***	0.126**	0.153**
	(0.137)	(0.142)	(0.056)	(0.066)
DPP candidate incumbent		-0.328**		0.179***
		(0.153)		(0.049)
Log(Constituency reg. voters)		0.135		-0.037
		(0.149)		(0.058)
Log(Average vote margin(1999,2004))		-0.213***		-0.070***
		(0.054)		(0.021)
Observer intensity × DPP		0.669**		-0.327***
		(0.307)		(0.079)
Observer intensity × DPP		0.310		-0.145
		(0.291)		(0.118)
Constant	0.842***	-0.767	-0.305***	-0.115
	(0.086)	(1.604)	(0.035)	(0.624)
Observations	62	62	62	62
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.033	0.195	0.059	0.275

*Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

*Note:* Table 7 reports regression estimates of the relationship between the proportion of streams observed in a constituency and the probability of incumbents' not being re-elected (columns 1 and 2), and the change in the vote share of incumbent between 2009 and 2014 (columns 3 and 4). Our unit of analysis is the constituency. To account for the different constituency sizes, we control for the log of registered voters in the constituency and margin of victory in the 1999 and 2004 parliamentary elections.

## 7 Discussions and conclusion

Our findings corroborate and extend recent empirical work that suggests that domestic election observers reduce the incidence of fraud at polling stations where they are deployed. Our results suggest that deploying additional observers to polling stations decreases attempts of fraud. We argue that more observers increase independent scrutiny at polling stations, and this in turn deters illegal votes from being cast or election officials inflating party vote shares. Also, in our setting, where polling stations comprise of multiple individual voting centers (i.e. streams), our treatment increases the chances that all polling streams are under the watch of observers at treated stations. Thus, the presence of more observers increases observer coverage at stations and diminish opportunities for fraud.

The context in which we conduct our research also underscores the substantive importance of our findings. Malawi scores poorly on various democracy indices and economic indicators—factors often associated with electoral fraud. Our findings suggest that the effect of domestic observers and civil society on promoting electoral integrity, extends beyond relatively more democratic and economically-advanced countries such as Ghana and Indonesia—the setting of recent empirical work.

Our findings present four insights that advance the literature on domestic election observers and electoral fraud in emerging democracies. First, we show that the magnitude of the effect of an additional observer at an observed station on reducing fraud may not be constant across all types of constituencies. We find that an increase in the number of observers reduces fraud in more urban and politically competitive constituencies. An increase in observer intensity at polling stations also reduces artificially high rates of reported turnout in more urban areas. In competitive constituencies, an increase in observer intensity reduce reported vote share of DPP presidential candidate. Our distinction of competitive and non-competitive constituencies by past legislative elections, and the patterns of treatment effects we find in these constituency types highlight the connection between electoral fraud in the presidential and parliamentary elections. It suggests that on the ground, fraud in the presidential election may be coordinated by party agents working on behalf of parliamentary candidates. Subsequent studies should consider this connection more directly by collecting information on both races.

Second, our findings further highlight a recent emphasis on the importance of party organization in the conduct of local level fraud by scholars (Ziblatt, 2009; Weidmann and Callen, 2013; Asunka et al.,

2013). Specifically, our results suggest incumbents may not always be in a position to conduct election day fraud. Parties need strong organizational capacity and also the complicity of local election officials to conduct local-level fraud, when parties are young, as the PP were in this election, they may not have the ability to conduct election day fraud. Thus we find that in Malawi the presence of observers at polling stations increases the vote share of incumbent party candidates. Our results suggest that the party that was in a position to engage in fraud was the party of the previous president– the DPP.

While we emphasize the importance of organizational strength on parties' ability to conduct election day fraud, we do not discount the ability of the incumbent to engage in pre-election manipulation. In fact, some observers of Malawi's 2014 polls report incumbency abuse before the polls. For example, scholars report that Banda distributed cash and abused her access to the state media (e.g., Dulani and Dionne, 2014; Patel, Wahman et al., 2015). Accordingly, when Joyce Banda lost the polls, Dulani and Dionne (2014) suggested that "incumbency and handouts" was not all that it takes to win elections in Malawi. Our research design does not allow us to study fraud or abuses of incumbency in pre-election period and its impact on Banda's electoral fortune. It is plausible that her vote share increased because of pre-election handouts. However, since Banda and her party had not contested in national polls in the past, she may not have been able to take up other benefits of incumbency. Our findings suggest, that the DPP lacked the organizational strength to conduct fraud on election day. This supports the idea that Banda may have instead resorted to pre-electoral manipulation to gain an edge in the polls.

Third, our study highlights an important measurement issue in the study of the impact of election observers. Specifically, if scholars use data transmitted to the election authority by local election officials in their analysis, they may underestimate the impact of election observers at polling stations. Transmitted results are susceptible to manipulation during the aggregation process. Since election officials can re-introduce fraud, prevented by observers at polling stations, during the aggregation phase, scholars may underestimate observers effect.

Finally, we provide evidence to suggest that the scrutiny of observers may induce election officials to shift evasive tactics to the aggregation phase of the results process. In our case, we find that by adding an observer to an observed station, and thus increasing the level of scrutiny, officials were less likely to post the election results publicly as required by Malawi's electoral laws. Moreover, such incidents seem to

correlate with electoral variables (candidate's vote share) in ways that suggest that non-posting was a purposeful tactic. Also, our findings run contrary to Ichino and Schündeln (2012) who suggest that the possible mechanism driving the artificial inflation in the number of registered in unobserved electoral areas may be explained by activities of party activists and not the behavior of election officials. Our research suggests that local officials may be co-opted to turn a blind eye to electoral procedures or contravene electoral laws that in turn allows for fraud.

Perhaps, a key limitation of our findings is that our design does not allow us to estimate the extent of observers' spillover effects on unobserved stations. Failure to account for spillover effects, if they exist, tends to bias one's estimates of treatment effects upward, in the case of negative spillover effects, or downward, in the case of positive spillover effects (Ichino and Schündeln, 2012; Asunka et al., 2015). That is, because political party agents may respond to the presence of observers by displacing fraud to unobserved stations (or deterred from doing so), the assumption of stable unit treatment value assumption (SUTVA) required for estimating unbiased treatment effects is violated (Rubin, 1978). However, we believe that this may not be a problem for our study. First, there are no unobserved stations in our case. While it is possible for parties to displace fraud to stations with less scrutiny, we do not have any theoretical basis to believe so in this context. Also, contrary to Ichino and Schündeln (2012), Asunka et al. (2015) do not find evidence of spillover effects in their full sample on election day in Ghana's 2012 elections. This evidence suggests that parties' ability to respond to observers may be limited to the pre-election period. These pre-election activities such as voter registration take place over a longer period. Such longer periods of electoral activity allow parties to respond to fraud-reducing interventions such as election observation. Moreover, while Asunka et al. (2015) find that the direction (i.e., negative or positive) of spillover effects may differ in competitive compared to non-competitive constituencies, their findings are suggestive, and are not statistically significant.

Finally, while we find that adding additional observers to polling stations reduces election day fraud, we are unable to test the mechanism through which they may do so. The literature suggests that observer presence will deter party agents or election officials from committing blatant forms of fraud such as ballot stuffing or outright fabrication of the results. However, our findings suggest that by increasing observer scrutiny at station officials may engage in other fraud-inducing activities. The main goal of future research

should be to investigate the mechanism through which observers impact the extent of fraud.

## References

- Asunka, Joseph, Sarah Brierley, Eric Kramon and George Ofori. 2015. "Do Election Observers Reduce Fraud? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Ghana." Unpublished paper.
- Asunka, Joseph, Sarah Brierley, Miriam Golden, Eric Kramon and George Ofori. 2013. "Protecting the Polls: The Effect of Observers on Election Fraud."
- Baird, Sarah, Aislinn Bohren, Craig McIntosh and Berk Ozler. 2012. Designing experiments to measure spillover and threshold effects. Technical report Working Paper. < <http://cu-csds.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/2012-EID-McIntosh.pdf> > Accessed 20.09. 12.
- Beber, Bernd and Alexandra Scacco. 2008. What the numbers say: A digit-based test for election fraud using new data from Nigeria. American Political Science Association.
- Birch, S. 2007. "Electoral Systems and Electoral Misconduct." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(12):1533–1556.  
**URL:** <http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0010414006292886>
- Bjornlund, Eric. 2004. *Beyond free and fair: Monitoring elections and building democracy*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press.
- Cammack, Diana. 2012. "Malawi in crisis, 2011–12." *Review of African Political Economy* 39(132):375–388.
- Carothers, Thomas. 1997. "The observers observed." *Journal of Democracy* 8(3):17–31.
- Chirwa, Wiseman Chijere. 2014. *Malawi: Democracy and Political Participation*. AfriMAP; Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa.
- Dionne, Kim Yi and Boniface Dulani. 2013. "Constitutional provisions and executive succession: Malawi's 2012 transition in comparative perspective." *African Affairs* 112(446):111–137.
- Dulani, Boniface. 2004. "The Elections under Scrutiny: Process-Results-Lessons." *The Power of the Vote: Malawi's* pp. 7–28.
- Dulani, Boniface and Kim Yi Dionne. 2014. "Presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections in Malawi, May 2014." *Electoral Studies* 36:218–225.
- Enikolopov, Ruben, Vasily Korovkin, Maria Petrova, Konstantin Sonin and Alexei Zakharov. 2013. "Field experiment estimate of electoral fraud in Russian parliamentary elections." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110(2):448–452.
- Estok, Melissa, Neil Nevitte and Glenn Cowan. 2002. *The quick count and election observation: An NDI handbook for civic organizations and political parties*. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.
- Gerber, Alan S, Donald P Green and Christopher W Larimer. 2008. "Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102(01):33–48.

- Hartlyn, Jonathan, Jennifer McCoy and Thomas M Mustillo. 2008. "Electoral Governance Matters." *Comparative Political Studies* 41(1):73–98.  
**URL:** <http://cps.sagepub.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/content/41/1/73.abstract>
- Herron, Erik S. 2010. "The effect of passive observation methods on Azerbaijan's 2008 presidential election and 2009 referendum." *Electoral Studies* 29(3):417–424.
- Hyde, Susan D. 2008. "The Obsever Effect in International Politics:Evidence from a Natural Experiment." *World Politics* 60(1):37–63.
- Hyde, Susan D. 2009. How Internation Observers Detect and Deter Fraud. In *Election fraud: detecting and deterring electoral manipulation*, ed. R Michael Alvarez, Thad E Hall and Susan D Hyde. Brookings Institution Press pp. 201–215.
- Hyde, Susan D. 2010. "Experimenting in democracy promotion: international observers and the 2004 presidential elections in Indonesia." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(2):511–527.
- Hyde, Susan D. 2011. *The Pseudo-Democrat's Dilemma: Why Election Monitoring Became an International Norm*. Cornell University Press.
- Ichino, Nahomi and Matthias Schündeln. 2012. "Deterring or displacing electoral irregularities? Spillover effects of observers in a randomized field experiment in Ghana." *The Journal of Politics* 74(01):292–307.
- Kelley, Judith. 2011. "Data on International Election Monitoring: Three Global Datasets on Election Quality, Election Events and International Election Observation." ICPSR1461-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Kitschelt, Herbert and Steven I Wilkinson. 2007. *Patrons, clients and policies: Patterns of democratic accountability and political competition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lehoucq, Fabrice. 2003. "Electoral Fraud : Causes, Types, and Consequences." *Annual Review of Political Science* 6(1):233–256.  
**URL:** <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.6.121901.085655>
- Logan, Corolyn, Michael Bratton and Boniface Dulani. 2014. Malawi's 2014 Elections: Amid Concerns About Fairness, Outcome is Too Close to Call. Technical report Afrobarometer.
- MESN. 2014. Election Report: 20 May, 2014 Tripartite Elections in Malawi. Technical report Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN).
- Myagkov, Mikhail G, Peter C Ordeshook and Dimitri Shakin. 2009. *The Forensics of Election Fraud: Russia and Ukraine*. Vol. 100 Cambridge University Press Cambridge & New York.
- Oforu, George. 2014. "Electoral Malpractices and Fraud." *Available at SSRN 2530048* .
- Pastor, Robert A. 1999. "The role of electoral administration in democratic transitions: Implications for policy and research." *Democratization* 6(4):1–27.
- Patel, Nandini. 2000. "1999 elections in Malawi: Challenges and reforms." *Malawi's Second Democratic Elections: Process, Problems and Prospects. Blantyre: CLAIM* .

- Patel, Nandini, Michael Wahman et al. 2015. "The Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Elections in Malawi, May 2014." *Africa Spectrum* 50(1):79–92.
- Rubin, Donald B. 1978. "Bayesian inference for causal effects: The role of randomization." *The Annals of Statistics* pp. 34–58.
- Schedler, Andreas. 2002. "The Menu of Manipulation." *Journal Of Democracy* 13(2):36–50.
- Simpser, Alberto. 2008. "Unintended consequences of election monitoring." *Election Fraud: Detecting and Preventing Electoral Manipulation* pp. 216–34.
- Simpser, Alberto. 2013. *Why Governments and Parties Manipulate Elections: Theory, Practice, and Implications*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sjoberg, Fredrik. 2012. "Making Voters Count: Evidence from Field Experiments about the Efficacy of Domestic Election Observation." *Columbia University Harriman Institute Working Paper* .
- Smiddy, Kimberly and Daniel J Young. 2009. "Presidential and parliamentary elections in Malawi, May 2009." *Electoral Studies* 28(4):662–666.
- Stokes, Susan C. 2005. "Perverse accountability: A formal model of machine politics with evidence from Argentina." *American Political Science Review* 99(03):315–325.
- Svensson, Palle and Jorgen Elklit. 1997. "What makes elections free and fair?" *Journal of Democracy* 8(3):32–46.
- VonDoepp, Peter. 2005. "Institutions, Resources, and Elite Strategies: Making Sense of Malawi's Democratic Trajectory". Chapter 8 in L. Villalón and P. VonDoepp." *The Fate of Africa's Democratic Experiments: Elites and Institutions* .
- Weidmann, Nils B and Michael Callen. 2013. "Violence and Election Fraud: Evidence from Afghanistan." *British Journal of Political Science* 43(01):53–75.
- Wroe, Daniel. 2012. "Donors, dependency, and political crisis in Malawi." *African Affairs* 111(442):135–144.
- Ziblatt, Daniel. 2009. "Shaping Democratic Practice and the Causes of Electoral Fraud: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Germany." *American Political Science Review* 103(1):1–21.



## Appendix

### A Sampling of constituencies

Table A.1: Distribution of constituencies

Region	National (%)	Sample (%)
	(n)	(n)
Northern	17 (33)	16 (14)
Central	38 (73)	37 (33)
Southern	45 (87)	48 (43)
Total	100 (193)	100 (90)

*Notes:* This table shows the distribution of constituencies across Malawi's three regions and in our sample. It reports the proportion of constituencies in each region at the national level and in our sample. There are 193 constituencies across the three regions and we select 90 as our study sample. To select our constituencies, we stratified on literacy rates, unemployment rates, population density, urbanization, and electoral competition. In our stratified sampling, the probability of inclusion for constituencies is equal to the probability of sampling within each region.

Table A.2: Summary statistics of constituencies

Variable	National		Sample	
	Average	SD	Average	SD
Registered voters	39090.2	17703.2	39050.3	19557.2
# Polling stations	23.0	9.3	22.8	9.3
#Polling streams	60.2	24.5	60.1	26.7
Males with primary education (%)	72.2	7.4	72.2	7.5
Percentage of rural pop.	96.1	3.7	96.1	3.8
Male literacy	67.1	7.2	67.1	7.1
Female literacy	57.1	9.9	57.0	9.6
Population density(pop per 1KM <sup>2</sup> )	160.2	85.7	160.4	82.9
Male unemployment	12.6	8.9	13.1	9.1
Female Unemployment	16.4	10.9	16.3	10.9
Legislative vote margin (2004)	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Legislative vote margin (1999)	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.2
Average Vote Margin(99&04)	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2

*Notes:* Table shows the summary statistics of constituencies in the population and in our sample. We use electoral data collected from the MEC. Demographic data was obtained from Malawi's National Statistics Office website (<http://www.nsomalawi.mw/>). The summary statistic shows we have a representative sample of constituencies.

Table A.3: Summary statistics of constituency level variables

	Mean	SD
<i>Competition</i>		
High(competition)	0.139	0.068
Medium (competition)	0.334	0.043
Low (competitive)	0.525	0.086
<i>Population Density (PD)</i>		
High(PD)	260.31	61.38
Medium (PD)	163.43	29.13
Low (PD)	81.41	29.13
<i>Observer intensity</i>		
High(observer intensity)	0.278	0.061
Medium (observer intensity)	0.20	0.014
Low (observer intensity)	0.147	0.034

*Note:*The unit of analysis is the constituency. Table shows summary statistics of the levels of competition, population density and observer intensity that we use in our analysis.

## B Sampling of polling stations

Table B.1: Sample polling stations

Region	Control stations(%) (n)	Treated stations(%) (n)
Northern	40.94 (330)	40.42 (424)
Central	19.23 (155)	19.35 (203)
Southern	39.83 (321)	40.23 (422)
Total	(806)	(1049)

*Note:* Table shows the distribution of polling stations between treated and control across the the regions of Malawi.

## C Balance Table

Table C.1: Verification of randomization

	Control	Treated	Mean difference	P-value
Number of Voters	1699.69	1694.30	-5.39	0.928
Number of polling streams	2.63	2.63	0.01	0.905

*Notes:* Table shows the balance balance between treated and control stations on our pre-treatment variables (i.e., number of registered voters and the number of polling streams). Data was collected from the Malawi Electoral Commission.

## D Effect of election observers on fraud by region

Table D.1: Regional analysis: effect of observer on fraud measures

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Fraud indicator				
	Overvoting	Turnout	DPP vote share	MCP vote share	PP vote share
<b>Central region</b>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Treatment(observed=1)	-0.049*** (0.015)	-0.055*** (0.016)	-0.027* (0.015)	0.003 (0.021)	0.004 (0.011)
Log(Registered voters)	0.0002 (0.018)	-0.029 (0.021)	0.044 (0.031)	-0.041 (0.042)	-0.032*** (0.010)
Constant	0.047 (0.133)	0.955*** (0.155)	-0.142 (0.222)	0.918*** (0.308)	0.363*** (0.083)
Observations	367	367	367	367	367
<b>Northern region</b>					
Treatment(observed=1)	-0.016 (0.024)	0.002 (0.028)	-0.043*** (0.017)	-0.001 (0.012)	0.028 (0.020)
Log(Registered voters)	-0.047** (0.023)	-0.053*** (0.020)	-0.040 (0.032)	0.067*** (0.017)	-0.032 (0.035)
Constant	0.354** (0.167)	1.163*** (0.136)	0.507** (0.235)	-0.316*** (0.102)	0.794*** (0.254)
Observations	179	179	179	179	179
<b>Southern region</b>					
Treatment(observed=1)	-0.016 (0.020)	-0.033** (0.017)	-0.029 (0.023)	-0.003 (0.002)	0.009 (0.012)
Log(Registered voters)	-0.035* (0.020)	-0.041* (0.024)	-0.001 (0.036)	0.012 (0.010)	-0.013 (0.011)
Constant	0.299** (0.151)	1.029*** (0.184)	0.541** (0.263)	-0.061 (0.072)	0.248*** (0.087)
Observations	350	350	350	350	350

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Notes: Table shows results of the treatment effect of observers on our measures of fraud in Malawi's three regions. DPP, MCP, and PP stands for Democratic Peoples' Party, Malawi Congress Party, and Peoples' Party, respectively. Robust standard errors (HC2) in parentheses are clustered at the constituency level. The results show that observers significantly reduced the rate of overvoting and turnout in the Central and Southern regions (the coefficient on the overvoting in the Southern region is not significant). The effect of observers on these variable in the Northern region is not statistically significant. Consistent with our finding in the full sample, the presence of observers tends to reduce the votes share of the DPP candidate in all the three regions. However, this effect is not statistically significant in the Southern region.

## E Effect of election observers on alternative measures of suspicious turnout

Table E.1: Effects of observers on turnout (outlier stations)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Suspicious turnout 1 (1)	Suspicious turnout 2 (2)
Treatment	-0.029*** (0.011)	-0.028** (0.014)
Log(Reg. Voters)	-0.024** (0.012)	-0.030** (0.014)
Constant	0.218** (0.089)	0.277*** (0.105)
Observations	896	896
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.011	0.009

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

*Notes:* Table shows the treatment effect of observers on our alternative measure of fraud. We note that overvoting is conservative measures of fraud as turnout below a 100 percent may not necessarily indicate the lack of fraud. As an alternative measure of fraud we code outlier stations within constituencies. Within each constituency, we code outliers in two alternative ways. First, whether the station recorded a turnout that is two standard deviation away from the constituency mean turnout (*Suspicious turnout 1*, and second, whether the stations turnout was greater than the  $Q3 + 1.5 \times IQR$  (where Q3 is the third quartile of turnout rates distribution within constituencies and IQR is the interquartile range *Suspicious turnout 2*. In the former, 3.2% stations turns out to be suspicious while in the later 4.9% of stations are outliers. The results of the former is reported in Column (1) and the later in Column (2). They are both consistent with your results in the main report.)

## F Correlation between DPP results collected by observers and those from MEC

Figure F.1: Correlation between DPP results collected by observers and those from MEC: control polling stations

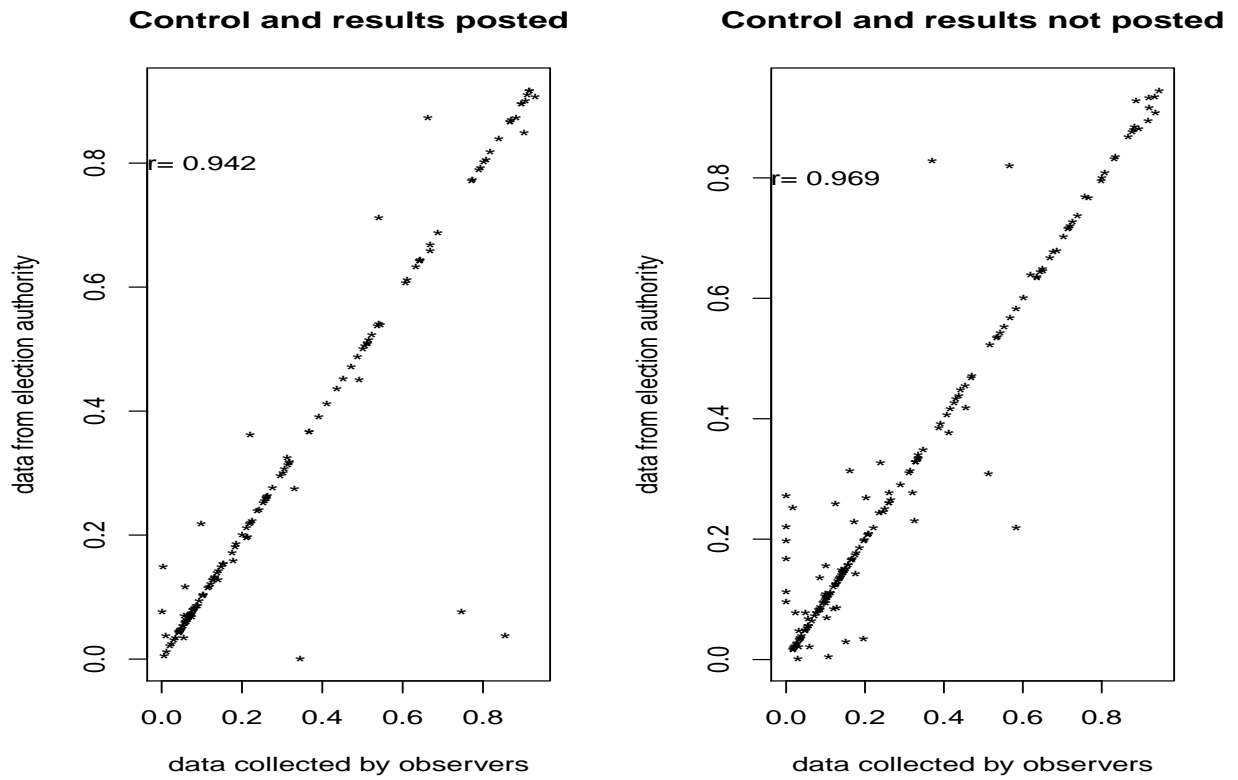


Figure F.1, shows the relationship between DPP results collected at the polling station by observers and results received from MEC at the national tally center for stations where results were posted (left) and where results were not posted (right).

## G Election administrative irregularities: difference between control and treated stations

Table G.1 presents result of our analysis of other administrative malpractices at the polling station. Consistent with our finding using the posting of presidential election results, we find that the presence observers seems to reduce election officials compliance with transparency enhancing administrative procedures at the polls. We have highlighted the relevant rows in grey. However, we note that the presence of observers reduce the incidence of reported attempts by individuals to disrupt the counting process by about 4 percentage points. This suggest observers reduce the incidence of violence at the polling station. We highlight the last row to suggest that between treated and control station, there were no difference with regards to the presence of monitors for the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), a government institution that carried out voter and civic education, and also deployed monitored to all stations on election day as discussed above. Thus, we have balance between treated and control stations. We are still waiting on data from MEIC, but their report confirms that they covered 100% of stations.

Table G.1: Effect of observers on administrative irregularities

Variable (1)	Coding (2)	Control (3)	Treated (4)	Treatment Effect (5)	T-Value (6)	P-Value (7)
Polling officials did not arrive by 5:30am	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.042	0.030	-0.011	1.174	0.241
Station opened late	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.189	0.238	0.048	-0.446	0.656
Number of polling streams	integer	2.773	3.080	0.307	-1.149	0.251
Number of officials at stream	integer	8.389	7.950	-0.438	0.836	0.403
Number of women officials	integer	3.439	3.238	-0.201	0.494	0.621
Number of party agents	integer	7.998	9.514	1.516	-2.198	0.028*
Set up of station did not allow for ballot secrecy	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.010	0.022	0.012	-0.289	0.773
Station not easily accessible to PWD	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.019	0.039	0.020	-1.962	0.050*
Station did not have a voters' list	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.017	0.041	0.025	-2.427	0.016*
Number of ballot boxes	integer	3.603	3.102	-0.501	1.748	0.081*
Ballot box not shown to be empty	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.006	0.017	0.010	-1.735	0.083+
Station did not have ballots for presidential election	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.002	0.008	0.006	-1.062	0.289
Station did not have ballots for parliamentary election	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.029	0.030	0.001	-0.629	0.530
Station did not have ballots for council election	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.046	0.058	0.012	-1.332	0.183
PWD and elderly were made to queue	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.012	0.064	0.051	-3.863	0.000*
Number of voters whose name were not on list (not allowed to vote)	ordinal	1.389	1.345	-0.043	0.454	0.650
Voters allowed to vote but name not in register	ordinal	1.453	1.655	0.201	-4.511	0.000*
No voters certificate but allowed to vote	ordinal	1.441	1.552	0.112	-3.094	0.002*
Voter inked but allowed to vote	ordinal	1.085	1.210	0.125	-3.281	0.001*
Ink applied to all voters	ordinal	2.931	2.923	-0.009	0.052	0.958
Number assisted to vote	ordinal	2.470	2.517	0.047	-0.927	0.354
Voters given three ballots	<i>Yes = 1, No = 2</i>	1.958	1.961	0.003	-0.001	0.999
Voting process disrupted at stream	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.044	0.036	-0.008	0.793	0.428
Voters intimidated at stream	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.023	0.036	0.013	-0.380	0.704
Attempted influence of polling official at stream	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.025	0.039	0.014	-0.725	0.469
Voters present at close of polls not allowed to vote	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.083	0.133	0.05	-2.401	0.017*
Counting not done openly	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.008	0.014	0.005	-1.116	0.265
Presidential ballots not sorted accurately	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.027	0.036	0.009	-0.958	0.338
Attempted disruption of counting	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.077	0.039	-0.038	2.112	0.035*
Attempted influence of PO during counting	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.071	0.052	-0.018	0.506	0.613
Observer/Interviewee agree with count	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.929	0.948	0.018	-0.506	0.613
NICE observer present	<i>Yes = 1, No = 0</i>	0.971	0.978	0.007	-1.000	0.318

Note: Table present the results of the difference in means in control and treated stations on various measures of election administrative irregularities. Column (1) describes the variables. Column (2) describe the coding of the variables. Columns (3) and (4) present the means in the control and treated stations, respectively. Columns (5) displays the difference in mean between treated and control stations. Columns (6) and (7) show the t-value of the test statistics and the corresponding p-value, respectively. Data for the treated stations were collected by observers who were station at the polling stream (station) during the entire day while those for control stations were collected through interviews with party agents. The mode of collection for control station was necessary because we did not want to contaminate our control station during the day.



**UCLA- MESN CHECKLIST – 2014 Tripartite Elections**

Emumerator	
Constituency/Ward	
Polling Station	

**ARRIVAL**

Upon arrival answer Question 1

1	Had the polling officials arrived at the polling station by 5:30am? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)
---	--	---------	--------

**SETUP**

2	What time did the polling stream open? (tick one)	By 6:00 (1)	6:01 to 6:30 (2)	6:31 to 8:00 (3)	Not Open by 8:00 (4)
3	What was the code for the entire polling station? (write in number – five digits – may start with a zero)				
4	How many polling streams were there in total at the polling station? (write in number)				
5	How many polling officials were at the polling stream? (write in number)				
6	How many polling officials at the polling stream were women? (write in number)				
7	How many party agents were at the polling stream? (write in number)				
8	Was the polling stream set up so that voters could mark their ballot in secret? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)		
9	Was the polling stream located in a place easily accessible to persons with disabilities? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)		
10	Did the polling stream have a voters' register? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)		
11	How many ballot boxes were at the polling stream? (write in number)				
12	Was the presidential ballot box at the polling stream shown to be empty before being sealed closed and placed in public view? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)		
13	Did the polling stream have presidential ballot papers? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)		
14	Did the polling stream have parliamentary ballot papers? (tick one)	No (1)	Yes, but Wrong Ones (2)	Yes, and Correct Ones (3)	
15	Did the polling stream have councillor ballot papers? (tick one)	No (1)	Yes, but Wrong Ones (2)	Yes, and Correct Ones (3)	

**VOTING**

At 6:00pm answer Questions 16 to 28 (not before)

16	Were persons with disabilities, the elderly and nursing mothers allowed to come to the front of the queue and vote without waiting at the polling stream? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)		
17	How many people at the polling stream could not find their name on the voters' register and were not able to vote? (tick one)	None (0) (1)	Few (1 - 10) (2)	Some (11 - 50) (3)	Many (51+) (4)
18	How many people at the polling stream were allowed to vote even though their name was not in the voters' register? (tick one)	None (0) (1)	Few (1 - 10) (2)	Some (11 - 50) (3)	Many (51+) (4)
19	How many people at the polling stream were allowed to vote even though they did not have their Voter ID Card? (tick one)	None (0) (1)	Few (1 - 10) (2)	Some (11 - 50) (3)	Many (51+) (4)
20	How many people at the polling stream were allowed to vote even though they had indelible ink on their finger? (tick one)	None (0) (1)	Few (1 - 10) (2)	Some (11 - 50) (3)	Many (51+) (4)
21	Was indelible ink applied to a finger of every voter at the polling stream before he/she voted? (tick one)	No Indelible Ink (1)	No, Not Applied (2)	Yes, Applied (3)	
22	How many people were assisted to vote at the polling stream? (tick one)	None (0) (1)	Few (1 - 10) (2)	Some (11 - 50) (3)	Many (51+) (4)
23	Were assisted voters at the polling stream allowed to select someone of their own choosing to assist them to vote? (tick one)	No Assisted Voters (1)	Yes (2)	No (3)	
24	Was every voter at the polling stream issued three ballot papers (presidential, parliamentary and local councillor)? (tick one)	No, Fewer Ballots (1)	Yes, Three Ballots (2)		
25	Did anyone attempt to disrupt the voting process at the polling stream? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)		
26	Did anyone attempt to intimidate voters at the polling stream? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)		
27	Did anyone attempt to influence the polling officials at the polling stream? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)		
28	Was everyone in the queue at 6:00pm given an opportunity to vote? (tick one)	No One in Queue (1)	Not Allowed to Vote (2)	Allowed to Vote (3)	

**COUNTING**

29	Where were the presidential ballot papers for the polling stream counted? (tick one)	Presidential ballot papers counted at the polling stream	Ballot box moved to a central location and ballot papers for each polling stream counted separately (ballot papers not mixed together)	Ballot box moved to a central location and ballot papers for all polling stream counted together (ballot papers mixed together)
----	--	--	--	---



30	Did the polling official count the presidential ballot papers so that any polling agents and observers present could see how each ballot paper was marked? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)
31	Were the presidential ballots correctly sorted into different piles by candidate? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)
32	Did anyone attempt to disrupt the counting of the presidential ballots? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)
33	Did anyone attempt to influence the polling officials during the counting of the presidential ballots? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)
34	Did you agree with the announced results for the presidential election? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)

**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS FOR ENTIRE POLLING STATION – These are the official posted results.**

Record the official presidential election results FOR THE ENTIRE POLLING STATION (not for a single polling stream) as announced by the Presiding Officer. Answers Questions 35 to 60.

35	Polling Station Code? (write in number – five digits – may start with a zero)					
36	Votes for Dr. Joyce Hilda <b>BANDA (PP)</b> ? (write in number)					
37	Votes for Dr. Lazarus McCarthy <b>CHAKWERA (MCP)</b> ? (write in number)					
38	Votes for Kamuzu Walter <b>CHIBAMBO (PETRA)</b> ? (write in number)					
39	Votes for Prof. John <b>CHISI (UP)</b> ? (write in number)					
40	Votes for Friday Anderson <b>JUMBE (NLP)</b> ? (write in number)					
41	Votes for Aaron Davies Chester <b>KATSONGA (CCP)</b> ? (write in number)					
42	Votes for Mark <b>KATSONGA PHIRI (PPM)</b> ? (write in number)					
43	Votes for Atupele <b>MULUZI (UDF)</b> ? (write in number)					
44	Votes for Prof. Peter <b>MUTHARIKA (DPP)</b> ? (write in number)					
45	Votes for George <b>NNEA (MAFUNDE)</b> ? (write in number)					
46	Votes for James Mbowe <b>NYONDO (NASAF)</b> ? (write in number)					
47	Votes for Abusa Helen <b>SINGH (UIP)</b> ? (write in number)					
48	Total Valid Votes? (write in number)					
49	Null and Void Ballots? (write in number)					
50	Total Votes? (write in number)					
51	Total number of Register Voters for the <u>polling station</u> ? (write in number)					
52	Did a DPP Agent sign the official results form for the presidential count for the <u>polling station</u> ? (tick one)	No DPP Agent Present (1)	DPP Agent Present, but did not Sign Form (2)	DPP Agent Present and Signed Form (3)		
53	Did a MCP Agent sign the official results form for the presidential count for the <u>polling station</u> ? (tick one)	No MCP Agent Present (1)	MCP Agent Present, but did not Sign Form (2)	MCP Agent Present and Signed Form (3)		
54	Did a PP Agent sign the official results form for the presidential count for the <u>polling station</u> ? (tick one)	No PP Agent Present (1)	PP Agent Present, but did not Sign Form (2)	PP Agent Present and Signed Form (3)		
55	Did a UDF Agent sign the official results form for the presidential count for the <u>polling station</u> ? (tick one)	No UDF Agent Present (1)	UDF Agent Present, but did not Sign Form (2)	UDF Agent Present and Signed Form (3)		
56	Do you believe the announced presidential results for the <u>polling station</u> were accurate? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)			
57	Were there any other MESN observers present at the <u>polling station</u> ? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)			
58	Was there a NICE observer present at the <u>polling station</u> ? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)			
59	Were there any other observers (not from MESN or NICE) present at the <u>polling station</u> ? (tick one)	Yes (1)	No (2)			
60	What gender was the Presiding Officer for the entire <u>polling station</u> ? (tick one)	Male (1)	Female (2)			

61	Which political party do you represent?	DPP	MCP	PP	UDF	INDP
62	How long were you at the polling stream?	Only for opening	Only for voting	Only for Counting	All Day	