

Report compiled by  
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## **DHPI International Electoral Observation Delegation To the Democratic Republic of the Congo November 24<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> 2011**

**Introduction:** A delegation comprising of Archbishop Jabulani Nxumalo Archbishop of Bloemfontein, Fr. Jean-Paul Cirhakarhula, a priest from the DRC working in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg and Fr. Seán O'Leary, Director of the DHPI travelled to the DRC as International Observers of the November 28<sup>th</sup> Presidential and National Assembly elections. Elections are not an event but rather a process. As far back as March 2011, DHPI in partnership with the Justice and Peace Department of the Archdiocese of Bukavu in the South Kivu Province embarked on an ambitious project of not only observing the elections but the run up to the elections and the post election period as well. For the Province of South Kivu there were 958 voting centres in 641 sites with 3,707 actual voting booths. In Bukavu where the delegation was based there were 38 voting centres, where the number of booths varied from centre to centre. 214 local Electoral Observers had been trained and were identified by t-shirts with the Justice and Peace and DHPI logo. In all over 500 had been trained and deployed around the Province. There is no doubt that in the run up to the elections incidences of violence and or intimidation were very few but recorded all the same. One could clearly say that in the run up to the elections all was free and fair in that part of the DRC.

**Election Day.** The DHPI delegation split up with the Archbishop and Fr. Cirhakarhula working together and Fr. Justin Nkunzi head of the Archdiocese Justice and Peace Department and Fr. Seán working together. This allowed for two separate experiences to be had. In the afternoon of the day before polling we visited a number of voting centres. The staff was on hand and they were awaiting the material. Apparently the material was to be delivered to the outline areas first. An air of optimism prevailed that all would be in order and that voting would start at 6am the next day and indeed that is precisely what happened. The next morning long queues formed at all voting centres. Voting booths were in classrooms divided into alphabetical order. Lists of names were displayed on the walls and voters could check they were at the correct centre. Registration had taken place before and voters came with a voting identity card. The process was slow and caused much tension and at times there was pushing and shoving as voters tried desperately to vote. There were two voting papers. The first was for the presidential candidate and had 11 names with the party logo and a photo of each candidate to facilitate illiterate voters. The National Assembly list proved more problematic. In the City of Bukavu, where we were observing there were 153 candidates vying for 5 seats in the National Assembly. Nationally there were 19,010 candidates vying for 500 seats. As you can imagine the voting paper was huge and voters took time to locate the candidate of their choice, especially those illiterate who had to examine 153 photos. There is no doubt that the time it took to vote and the subsequent long hours of waiting were the cause of much frustration. The police did a good job in general but in one voting centre as Observers we had to call for police reinforcement and in another centre voters stormed the voting centre to gain access, breaking down the door and in the process causing chaos. With this exception there was little or no violent incidences that

either of the two international observer teams witnessed. The staff of the voting centre were well identified, well trained and carried out their task in a professional manner.

What we did not like was to see the UN roaming the streets of Bukavu in heavily armed military tanks. This was uncalled for in a city where everything was running smoothly.

Nationwide 18 people were reported killed and numerous irregularities were recorded by some 30,000 Church observers.

**The Count** Counting took place immediately after voting had finished. The cut off time was 5pm but if there were still people queuing then they were accommodated, which meant counting started at different times depending on the local circumstances. In all the centres we visited people had voted within the allotted time, though nationally this was not the case. In some places voting took place the following day. Party political observers, Church observers and at times international observers were present for the counting which was done on the spot in each voting centre. This system made cheating at that level virtually impossible. The counting was thorough but slow and done in an atmosphere verging on a church service. At the end of each count the results were announced to all present for each of the two counts, the Presidential and National Assembly. Church observers then forwarded these results to a Justice and Peace command centre in Bukavu where the South Kivu Province was correlated. By Tuesday evening we had a clear picture of who had won in South Kivu Province. This system was replicated throughout the country and the results of each Province were sent to a Justice and Peace command centre in Kinshasa where a national correlation could take place.

This church system of observations makes it very hard for anyone to cheat further up the line. As this report is being written the official results have not been announced. President Kabila does not have to cheat as a divided opposition will allow him to sail through. It must be remembered that he changed the constitution in January 2011 to avoid a French-style run off between the top two winners if no one received 50% plus one. A simple majority will accord him the Presidency once again. If violence is to occur it will be over the results of the National Assembly and therefore more sporadic than national.

**Conclusion** As regards what our small Church delegation saw great credit had to be given to the people of the DRC who queued for hours in a dignified fashion to exercise their democratic right. The elections on the day were run by well trained officials with very few logistic problems. The counting could not have been done better. The Church correlation process could not have been better. The final test of a process that began in March of 2011 is to see how the official results will be received by the people of the South Kivu Province and the nation as a whole on December 17<sup>th</sup>.

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