

Step 5. Set delimitations for monitoring

Focus of this chapter: How to delimit a CFM project so that the work follows criteria set down before the start of monitoring, rather than what seems most interesting once the monitoring is underway.

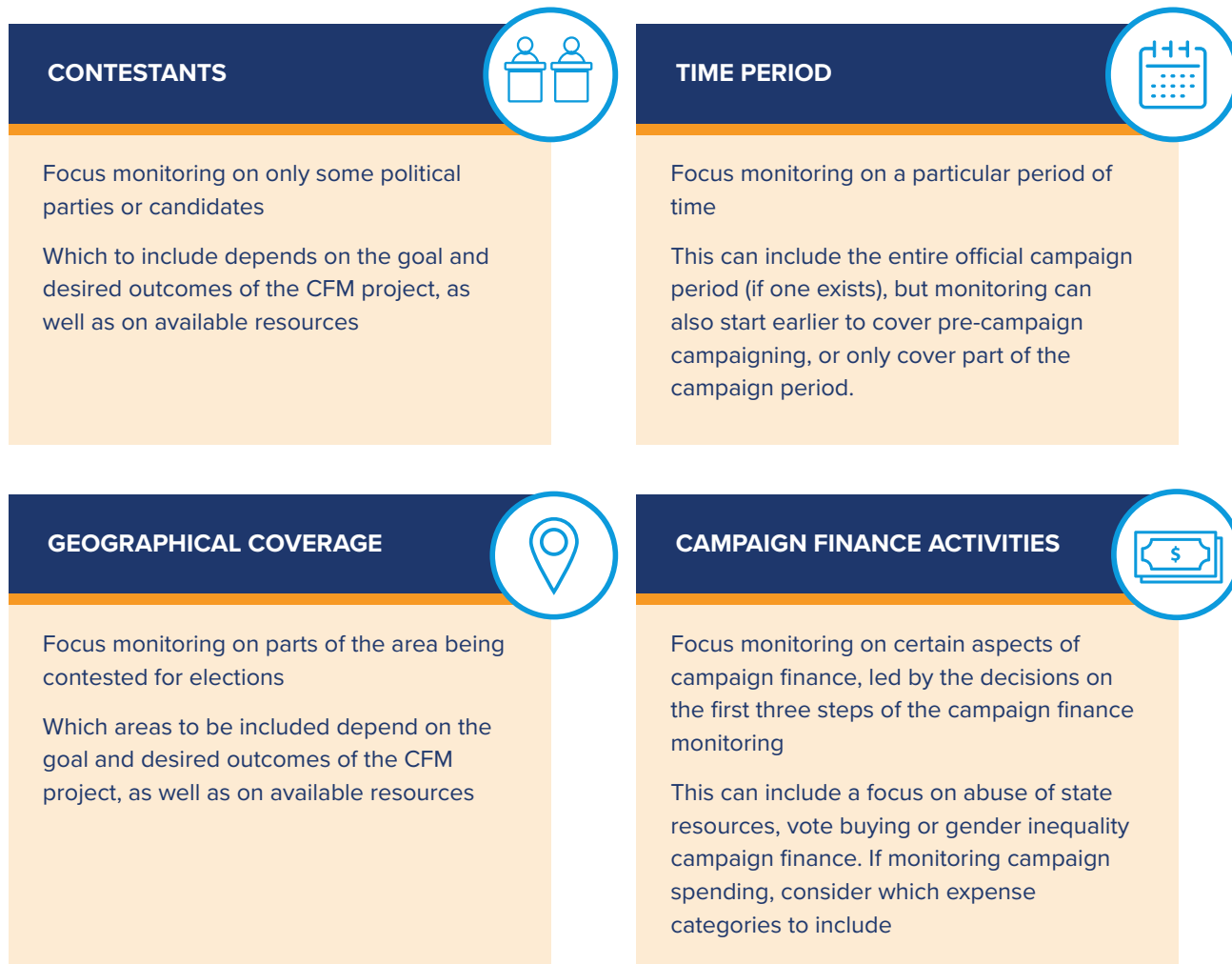
Content of this chapter:

- Delimiting contestants
- Delimiting the monitoring period
- Delimiting the geographical coverage
- Delimiting campaign finance activities to be monitored
- Practical examples of delimitations

No project can cover everything, and CFM projects that try to cover too much are highly likely to fail. The experience from different monitoring projects is that it is much better to carefully delineate the monitoring approach in advance than accepting limitations on an ad hoc basis once the monitoring has started. By determining the delimitations in advance, the risk of bias or wasted resources can be reduced significantly, and project members can be flexible without being distracted by issues that emerge that ultimately prove unimportant to the monitoring.

Determining the most suitable delimitations for any CFM project is depends on the goal and desired outcomes of the project, as well as by the campaign finance problems that the project is designed to address. While naturally it will vary between projects, delimitations for a CFM project often tend to focus on one, two or all of the issues shown in Figure 20 – each type is discussed at length further on in this guide.

FIGURE 20. COMMON DELIMITATIONS OF CFM PROJECTS



Delimit contestants

Any delimitation of contestants should be guided by the overall focus and aims of the CFM project. In many cases, CFM projects would only include political parties and/or candidates with a chance of electoral success. This ensures that the normally limited time and resources of the CFM project are not devoted to contestants with limited popular support, and whom will have no impact on the electoral outcome. In countries where the electoral arena is dominated by one political party, this criterion may mean that only government parties would be monitored. However, with rare exceptions (such as if the sole purpose of the project is to monitor abuse of state resources), the contestant delimitation should create a balance between government and opposition. This means that all relevant sides are covered and reduces the risk of actual and perceived bias by the monitoring group.

If the intention is to monitor the financial gap between contestants, minor political parties and/or candidates should also be selected. However, if this is not the goal (or if that goal is limited to analyzing the gap between the government party and the main opposition parties), it is often better to monitor a smaller sample of contestants, which will allow for more time and effort to be devoted to monitoring each.

One difficulty with selecting a set of political parties or candidates to monitor is that it is not always possible to know in advance who will have a chance of electoral success, or in some cases who will actually end up participating in the elections. In such cases, it is often valuable to create a preliminary list of contestants to monitor which can be adjusted as soon as possible (for example, once the list of final candidates has been declared and coalitions have been decided.)

Table 15 below shows the selection of candidates in the CFM project in Afghanistan for the 2009 parliamentary elections.²⁰⁴ Note that political parties are largely irrelevant in Afghanistan, and that candidates can generally be seen as favoring the government or the opposition. It could be criticized that the share of female candidates monitored was low, though it should also be noted that only 15% of the candidates in Kabul in this election were women. If the goal of a CFM project is specifically to monitor campaign finance from a gender perspective, it would be reasonable to over-represent female candidates in the sample if they only represent a small share of the total candidates. In other cases, matching the gender balance among candidates in the selection of candidates to monitor may be reasonable.

TABLE 15. CANDIDATE SELECTION IN AFGHAN CFM PROJECT

Incumbent candidates		Pro-government/opposition			Gender	
Yes	No	Opposition	Impartial	Pro-government	Female	Male
45%	55%	47%	6%	47%	14%	86%

Delimit monitoring period

The monitor period depends to a large extent on the length of the official campaign period (if any), on other regulations regarding campaigning (such as if there is a ban on campaign spending before the start of the campaign) and on the resources available for the monitoring. There will often be a trade-off between the time monitoring can be carried out and the number of Field Monitors that can be used.

If the goal of the monitoring is to improve the campaign finance regulations by raising awareness about violations of existing rules, it may be valuable to monitor activities that take place shortly before the start of the official election campaign, assuming that the rules ban campaign spending before the campaign starts. It is common practice that electoral contestants incur significant spending during this period, either to avoid violating existing spending limits or to reduce transparency regarding their financial activities. The Moldovan CSO Promo-LEX noted 41 cases of campaign activities carried out before candidates opened their campaign bank accounts in the 2014 elections in violation of the regulations.²⁰⁵ The Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) in Serbia also found significant campaigning before the official start of the parliamentary election campaign in 2020.²⁰⁶

Delimit the geographical areas covered

Few CFM initiatives cover entire countries, and only in very small countries would doing so be a reasonable approach. The geographical delimitation tends to depend on the type of electoral system, the type of election being monitored, the resources available and the overall capacity of the monitoring group. It is normal to focus the selection of areas on ones which are expected to be particularly contested, although if you're monitoring for abuse of state resources and vote buying, you may also want to include party strongholds.

To study how campaign behavior varies in a country, it can also be valuable to include both urban and rural areas. Many organizations that want to carry out CFM consider focusing monitoring on the capital alone, but it may be wise to resist this temptation as campaigning often works very differently in capitals than in the rest of the country. This means that nationwide conclusions cannot be drawn from CFM in the capital city alone; even pilot programs may be unable to provide relevant information if only the capital is covered. If nothing else is possible, consider adding at least one rural area close to the capital.

²⁰⁴ FEFA (2010) page 9.

²⁰⁵ Promo-LEX (2014) page 7.

²⁰⁶ CRTA (2020a). See also CRTA (2022).

Delimit campaign finance activities to be monitored

The type of campaign finance activities to be included in any monitoring project should, to a considerable extent, follow from the second step of the eight steps in developing a monitoring methodology (that is, the campaign finance problems to address in the project). If the focus is on abuse of state resources or vote buying, these issues will naturally be central to the monitoring design. If focus is on compliance with campaign finance regulations in a country with spending limits, seeking to monitor total spending levels is indicated.

There are also other delimitations of activities to be considered, such as the types of campaign spending areas to include. Monitoring television advertisements can, in some countries, be sufficient to explore the lion's share of campaign spending, while in other cases such advertisements may be prohibited by law. In such cases, whether or not campaign activities such as posters and leaflets should be monitored needs to be considered. Spending on door-to-door campaigning and campaign administration can be particularly difficult, though it has been attempted as part of several monitoring efforts.²⁰⁷ Spending on online advertising is increasing in many countries. Approaches to monitoring spending on this type of advertising is discussed starting on page 28.

Practical examples

Table 16 shows the delimitations decided on for past CFM projects in different parts of the world (some, though not all, of these projects were supported by IFES). Table 16 shows the delimitations decided on for past CFM projects in different parts of the world (some, though not all, of these projects were supported by IFES).

TABLE 16. DELIMITATIONS IN PAST CFM PROJECTS

Country	Year	Org.	Election type	Contestant delimitation	Time delimitation	Geographical delimitation	Activities delimitation
Afghanistan	2010	FEFA	Parliamentary	22 candidates	4 months	16 Kabul districts & one rural district	Spending, compliance, abuse of state resources, vote buying
Bangladesh	2009	TI Bangladesh	Parliamentary	All candidates	3 months	40 constituencies nationwide	Spending, compliance
Czech Republic	2021	TI Czech Republic et al	Parliamentary	9 political parties	5 months	None	Spending, especially on advertising
Ghana	2004	GII, CDD-Ghana and GACC	Parliamentary	Incumbents	8 months	30 constituencies	Abuse of state resources
Georgia (spending monitoring)	2016	Transparency International Georgia	Parliamentary	Nine qualified subjects (parties)	3 months	Capital city only for outdoor advertising	Outdoor and television advertising, abuse of state resources

²⁰⁷ See, for example, Transparency Serbia (2014).

Country	Year	Org.	Election type	Contestant delimitation	Time delimitation	Geographical delimitation	Activities delimitation
Georgia	2016	PMMG	Parliamentary	-	2 months	9 constituencies	Abuse of state resources
Nepal	2017	Samuhik Abhiyan	Parliamentary (FPTP constituencies)	30 candidates from 5 parties	1 month	Capital city (10 out of 165 seats nationwide)	Spending, compliance (especially with spending limits)
Nigeria	2020	JPDMC	Gubernatorial elections	Candidates from 4 parties	2 months	Edo state	Campaign spending, abuse of state resources, vote buying
Nigeria	2020	JPDMC	Gubernatorial elections	Candidates from 3 parties	2.5 months	Ondo state	Campaign spending, abuse of state resources, vote buying
Poland	2009	Stefan Batory Foundation	European Parliament	5 political parties	4 months	-	Campaign spending, abuse of state resources, vote buying
Serbia	2012	TI Serbia	Presidential and parliamentary	15 political parties	Around 2 months	Selected cities	Spending, abuse of state resources
Serbia	2020	TI Serbia	Parliamentary	Participating parties (large-scale opposition boycott)	2 months ²⁰⁸	All localities with more than 1,000 inhabitants	Spending, compliance, abuse of state resources
Sri Lanka	2015	TI Sri Lanka	Presidential	2 main candidates	1 month	None	Abuse of state resources
Tunisia	2014	IWATCH	Parliamentary	6 political parties	2.5 months	6 governorates (25% of the total)	Spending, compliance, abuse of state resources, vote buying

²⁰⁸ A two-month break was necessary because of the COVID-19 outbreak, as the elections were postponed, and a State of Emergency was introduced.

Country	Year	Org.	Election type	Contestant delimitation	Time delimitation	Geographical delimitation	Activities delimitation
Uganda	2016	ACFIM	Presidential and parliamentary	-	10 months	74 constituencies (17% of the total)	Spending (especially rallies and outdoor advertising), abuse of state resources
Ukraine	2012	OPORA	Parliamentary (FPTP seats)	3, 4 and 5 candidates in the different election districts	Around 2 months	3 election districts ²⁰⁹	Spending

²⁰⁹ These election districts covered between 147,000 and 172,000 voters each.