

Report on the

**Philippine General
Elections
11 May 1998**

by the

National Citizens' Movement for Free
Elections (NAMFREL)

Submitted to the

Commission on Elections
Republic of the Philippines

28 January 1999

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Introduction

The Filipino nation elected during the May 1998 Elections its second president after the ratification of the 1987 Constitution 11 years ago, and 12 years after the EDSA Revolution. Since 1986 when this peaceful “revolution” happened, the country has already undergone 10 electoral exercises and election-related activities.

Each of these exercises was logistically and administratively challenging due to the increasing number of precincts or polling stations, from 86,000 in 1986 to 174,000 in 1998. The logistical challenge for the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) was in deploying the required number of Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs), which by law was supposed to be primarily manned by public school teachers. In the 1998 elections, the required total number of members of the BEI was 522,000. There were 26 million registered voters in 1986 compared with 34 million in 1998. With the increased number of registered voters, educating the voters on new procedures and systems of voting that were introduced with every electoral exercise was likewise a big challenge.

Under the Philippine setting, the COMELEC is the constitutionally mandated institution to administer the elections. It is tasked to ensure that the elections are clean, honest, and credible. The Commission also makes sure that election laws are observed and election-related violence is kept to a minimum.

The peaceful manner by which the Filipinos regained their democracy remains an encouraging example to the whole world. However, vigilance was as necessary in 1998 as it was in 1986, not only to protect and preserve the freedom regained from the autocratic Marcos regime, but also to ensure that such freedom is nurtured and enhanced. The achievement of a credible election is beyond the interest and responsibility of any single institution, hence the contribution of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) to mobilize the people to actively participate in the election and guard the process.

One of the challenges faced by NAMFREL in the 1998 elections was to continue to earn its place in the heart of Filipinos as a highly-motivated, focused and non-partisan organization. NAMFREL continually aims to be the vehicle for citizens' involvement in the protection of democracy and democratic institutions. So, like in the past 15 years since its founding in 1983, NAMFREL served as a venue for Filipinos from all walks of life to participate in safeguarding the election process -- regardless of the result of the exercise.

To achieve the tasks it has set for itself, NAMFREL performs activities meant to educate the voters on the election process and to inform them of their rights and responsibilities in the election. Pollwatching and the conduct of a parallel vote tabulation or what is popularly known as Operation Quick Count (OQC) are also being undertaken.

The 1998 general election for national and local positions was probably the most challenging election for voters, BEIs, COMELEC officials, and to NAMFREL.

In this election, the number of positions to be voted for ranged from 20 to 39 -- a sad case for Filipino voters who had to write the names of the candidates of their choice. The Philippines remains one of two countries in the world that require voters to write the names of the candidates on the ballot. Likewise, the members of the BEI are also burdened with the responsibility of appreciating the intent of the voter and deciphering each and every name that was written on the ballot.

A total of 17,000 positions were contested in 78 provinces and in 1,608 cities and municipalities. More than 100,000 candidates vied for these positions for a ratio of close to six candidates for every elective position.

A Voter's Challenge - Positions Up
for Election

President	1
Vice-President	1
Senators	12
Party-List Representative	1
Representative	1
Provincial Governor *	1
Vice Governor*	1
Provincial Councilors*	2 to 5
Mayor	1
Vice-Mayor	1
Municipal Councilors	2 to 10
Total Positions	24 to 39

* For voters outside NCR and non-chartered cities

Ten major parties fielded national and local candidates in the May 1998 elections. However, at the regional and provincial level, there was a bigger number of political parties, a number of which coalesced with one or more parties, leaving the local race with a variety of hybrids and combinations, party-wise.

There were eleven presidential candidates, one of whom ran as an independent.

There were only nine aspirants for the Vice-Presidency, while there were 40 hopefuls for the 12-slot senatorial race.

A total of 123 organizations, coalitions and political parties vied for the party-list elections. This was the first time that the party-list system was implemented. Fifty-one slots were allocated for representatives under this system, equal to the Constitutional mandate which allocates 20% of representatives in the House to party-list representatives.

NAMFREL – 15 Years of Vigilance

The history of NAMFREL dates back to 1983 when a group of concerned men and women leaders was compelled to provide a venue for Filipinos to participate in protecting the sanctity of the ballot and the

COMELEC Accredits NAMFREL for...

Nationwide Voter Education, Pollwatching and
Operation Quick Count in the...

1. Election of members of the Batasan Pambansa **(1984)**
2. Snap Presidential Election **(1986)**
3. National Plebiscite on the 1987 Constitution **(1987)**
4. National Elections for Local Positions **(1988)**
5. Congressional Elections* **(1988)**
6. Plebiscite on the Organic Act of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)* **(1990)**
7. Plebiscite on the Organic Act of the Cordillera Autonomous Region* **(1990)**
8. First Regular Elections of the ARMM* **(1990)**
9. General Synchronized Elections for National and Local Positions **(1992, with the Media Citizens' Quick Count)**
10. General Elections for Senatorial and Local Positions **(1995)**
11. General Registration in the ARMM* **(1995)**
12. Legislative Assembly Elections in the ARMM **(1996)**
13. Special Elections in Parang, Province of Sulu **(1996)**
14. General Registration of Voters* **(1997)**
15. Kalookan Recall Elections **(1997)**
16. General Elections for National and Local Positions **(1998)**

* - Limited or no Operation Quick Count (OQC) conducted

electoral process as non-partisan monitors. This they did under the regime of President Marcos who managed to establish a system of holding on to power and legitimizing this under the guise of democratic, but rigged elections.

The main motivation of these brave individuals, whose zeal and commitment and clear purpose were later on

May 1998

mirrored throughout the country by 500,000 volunteers, was to provide the atmosphere for people to express their true will through the ballot. NAMFREL, therefore, provided concerned citizens, who did not want to align or support a political party or candidate, to still participate in the process by ensuring safe and peaceful balloting and counting of votes. This they did without regard as to who would win because they believed that the people's mandate would prevail for as long as the elections were clean and honest.

NAMFREL evolved as a reflection and continuation of a tradition of many citizens' groups that have worked to preserve the sanctity of the ballot for the past 47 years. Many of the officers and participating organizations were the same ones that campaigned vigorously for electoral reforms in the past under the banners of the New Registrations Campaign Committee (NRCC) and the Citizens National Electoral Assembly (CNEA). Other organizations with which NAMFREL can trace its roots include the National Organization for Information and Civic Education (NOISE), the National Citizens Constitutional Convention Movement (NCCCM), and the Citizens National Committee on Referenda, Plebiscite and Elections (CINACORPE).

As a voluntary non-partisan, non-governmental organization, NAMFREL is funded neither by the government nor by any political party or partisan institution. It secures financial contributions from many civic-minded citizens and organizations that support the mission of NAMFREL.

The main forms of NAMFREL intervention are:

- assisting the COMELEC in the conduct of voter information programs;
- monitoring the conduct of voting, counting of the ballots and canvassing of votes; and
- conducting the Operation Quick Count.

NAMFREL's operational group is made up of municipal, city and provincial chairpersons and National Council members supported by participating organizations. It is the combination of time, talent, treasure and tenacity of these volunteer individuals and organizations that allow NAMFREL to perform its duty.

NAMFREL secures accreditation from the COMELEC to be its citizens' arm in order to be in a position to effectively assist the institution in the performance of its duties. To date, NAMFREL has been accredited by the COMELEC in 16 electoral or similar exercises, including several plebiscites and registrations of voters.

From 1996 to 1998, NAMFREL embarked on an aggressive campaign for the passage and implementation of the law that will modernize the counting and canvassing of votes nationwide.

On December 22, 1997, former President Fidel V. Ramos signed Republic Act 8436 -- "*The Election Automation Law.*" This law will forever change the way elections will be conducted in the country and will liberate the voters and teachers from the tedious process of voting, counting and canvassing of votes. Furthermore, the *dagdag-bawas*¹ that happened in the 1995 elections will be totally eliminated.

In the 15 years of continuous existence of NAMFREL, volunteers have worked as trainers, election observers and administrators and resource persons in 24 countries.

NAMFREL's Engagement in the 1998 Elections

Seeking Accreditation from the COMELEC

On 9 September 1997, NAMFREL filed before the COMELEC its Petition for Accreditation as Citizens' Arm of the COMELEC to Conduct an Operation Quick Count (OQC) in Connection with the Elections on May 11, 1998. The prayer of NAMFREL was:

"Republic Act 8173 provides 'the sixth copy (of the election return) to a citizens' arm authorized by the Commission to conduct an unofficial count

- a) *NAMFREL, therefore, is seeking for the accreditation as the citizens' arm of the Commission in connection with the General Elections on May 11, 1998 with the responsibility to organize, manage, operate, and be accountable for the Operation Quick Count, including reporting of the results obtained from the sixth copy of the manually prepared official election return and/or the computer printed election return generated by the ballot counting machine, as prescribed by Sec. 6 of Republic Act 8173, duly authenticated by the board of election inspectors or the appropriate authority as determined by the commission."*

¹ *Dagdag-bawas* – a form of election fraud in which a certain number of votes are added to those of one candidate, while subtracting the same total number of votes from another candidate, keeping the number of votes cast intact.

On 10 March 1998, COMELEC approved a resolution with SPP No. 97-028 stating that “(COMELEC) RESOLVE to accredit the National Citizens’ Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) as a citizens’ arm of the Commission nationwide...”

However, the 10 March 1998 resolution contained stringent limitations imposed by the COMELEC on NAMFREL. One of the impositions (stated in Section “c”, Item “e”) was:

“That (NAMFREL) shall divest itself of officers and trustees (except as advisers), and other employees who are members of the clergy or ecclesiastics and religious of whatever sect, X X X, barangay² officials and kagawads³.”

Such condition in the resolution on NAMFREL’s accreditation was not stated in the COMELEC resolution that accredited as citizens’ arm of the poll body the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), whose responsibility was to “conduct pollwatching functions in the precincts, including assistance to voters and in the canvassing of the votes.”

The other imposition was (stated in Section “c”, Item “f”):

“That (NAMFREL) shall submit to the Commission a list of its responsible officials, trustees and other officers constituting its board of trustees, governors or directors, and other officials and there shall be no changes therein without the approval of the Commission.”

After a Partial Motion for Reconsideration filed by NAMFREL on 11 March before the COMELEC, and several letters of concern from various organizations and sectoral groups supporting NAMFREL, the COMELEC handed an Amended Resolution that revised Section “c,” Item “e.” The amended provision read:

“That (NAMFREL’s) members shall be non-partisan citizens of the Philippines without regard to religious affiliation...”

However, the ban on *barangay* officials and *kagawads* from being members of NAMFREL was still operative.

² *Barangay* - village

³ *Kagawad* - councilor

After several meetings with the COMELEC, the Commission issued on 31 March a Second Amended Resolution that finally revised Section “c,” Item “e” to read as follows:

“That (NAMFREL’s) members shall be composed of non-partisan citizens of the Philippines without regard to religious affiliation, sect or denomination. Members of deputized agencies, members of political parties or NGOs with political arm or involved in party-list organizations shall not be eligible; barangay officials and kagawads are covered by the prohibitions under Res. No. 2980 dated January 30, 1998.”

Core Operations

The objectives of the NAMFREL Operation Quick Count were:

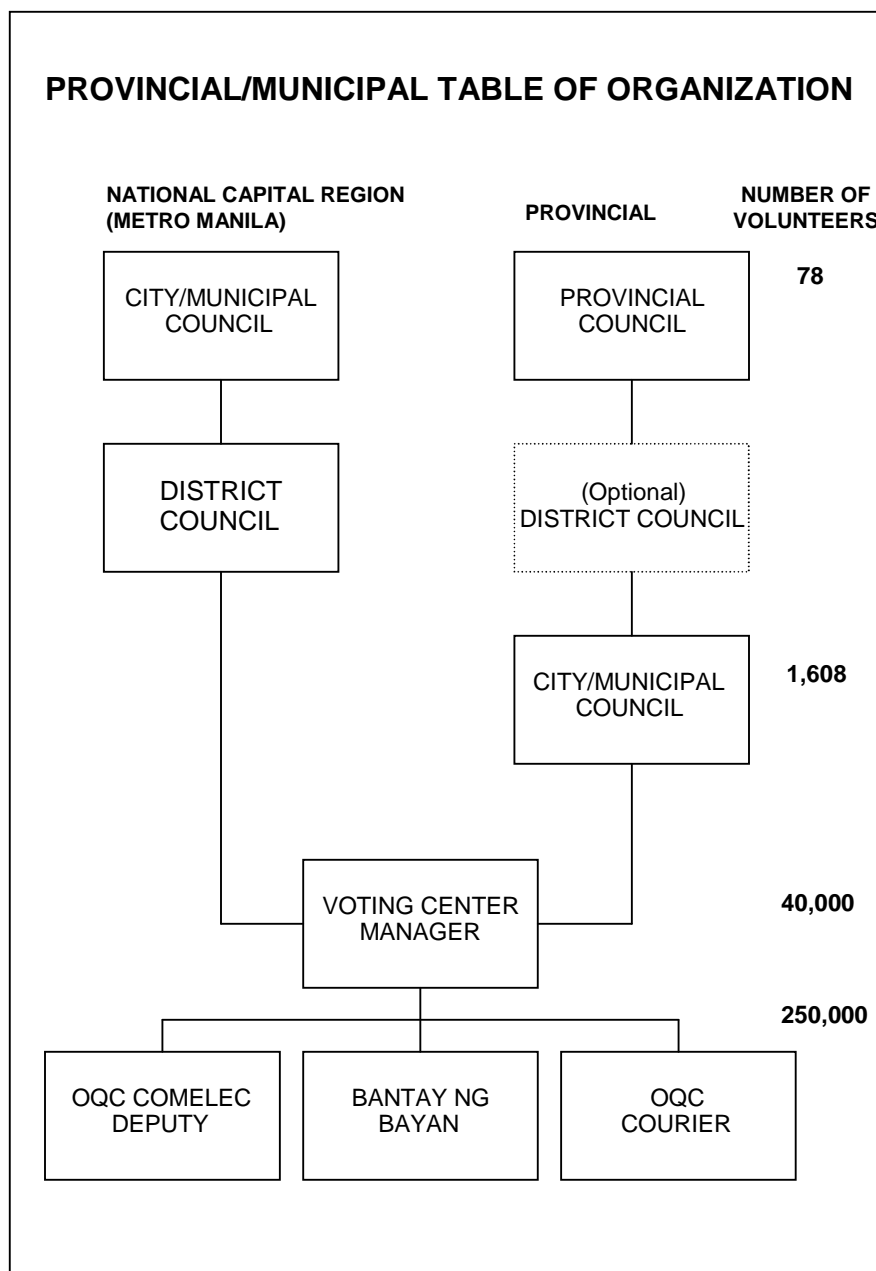
- 1) To provide the public with early and accurate (unofficial) election results; and
- 2) To minimize cheating and deter the manipulation of results.

These meant that NAMFREL at the national level would tally the results of the elections for national positions – President, Vice-President, Senators and Party-List representatives. Provincial and municipal NAMFREL chapters at their option tallied the results of the local elections.

Operationally, NAMFREL volunteers would pick-up the 6th copy of the election return (ER) from the BEIs, to which NAMFREL was entitled by law to use in the OQC. The 6th copies would then be brought to the municipal/city or provincial counting centers, tabulated, and the running total transmitted to the National Tabulation Center or NTC (at La Salle Greenhills). The various reports received from the counting centers by the NTC would then be consolidated to arrive at the national total that would then be released to the public through the media.

Organizationally, NAMFREL activated its chapters in the 1,608 cities and municipalities throughout the country through the 78 provincial chapters. The municipal or city chapters were tasked to field polling place supervisors who would take charge of the schools and the volunteers who would pick-up the election returns from each precinct in the school. All volunteers were issued NAMFREL OQC '98 identification cards and those volunteers who would collect the 6th copy of the election returns were designated by the COMELEC as “*NAMFREL Deputy Authorized to Collect the 6th Copy of the Election Return.*” NAMFREL was able to mobilize a total of 250,000 volunteers nationwide for the 1998 elections. (please see table of organization on page 11)

Also included in the core operations was the liaison and coordination work by NAMFREL with the officers of the COMELEC and with the officers of the Commission's deputized agencies. At the voting center level, this relational task was done by the NAMFREL Polling Place Supervisor and by his or her volunteers with the school's (voting center) principals and



election assistants. This networking and liaison work was also reflected at the provincial level, some at the regional level, and at the level of the Commissioners and their head-office-based senior staff and other COMELEC officials.

At the national level, the coordination with the military and the COMELEC was done through a pre-election Command Conference. It was through this conference that NAMFREL was able to present to the military and to the COMELEC its suggestions relating to the conduct of credible and peaceful elections.

Liaison work with the COMELEC also involved securing election data like the Project of Precincts, number of registered voters, list of voters, schedule of delivery of ballots and election paraphernalia, etc. In some cases the COMELEC, when training the BEIs, invited the NAMFREL volunteers for a general orientation on the voting and counting processes. In other cases, COMELEC tapped NAMFREL by deploying volunteers in critical areas to deter commission of fraud.

NAMFREL as Member of the Ballot Printing Committee

NAMFREL was made a member of the Ballot Printing Committee through COMELEC Resolution No. 2947 dated 19 September 1997. This resolution gave authority to the Ballot Printing Committee to *“exercise...supervision and control over the printing and safekeeping of official ballots and forms of election returns for use in the national and local elections on May 11, 1998.”*

There were four members of the committee with Commissioner Julio F. Desamito as Chairperson and Director Mamasapunod M. Aguam as Vice Chairperson. The other two members were a representative from the Commission on Audit and Telibert Laoc, Executive Director of NAMFREL.

NAMFREL’s potential to contribute in determining the security measures for the printing of the ballots and other accountable forms was limited since it was not included in the decision-making process despite the fact that it was a member of the committee. The only meeting in which NAMFREL was invited was on 20 January 1998 when the committee consulted the various political parties and COMELEC’s citizens’ arm in the storage of the dandy roll at the COMELEC head office.

NAMFREL sent volunteers to monitor the printing of ballots and other accountable forms at the National Printing Office and at the Philippine Information Agency in Quezon City. NAMFREL also deployed volunteers to monitor the printing of the election returns for national positions at

Armvot Printing in Makati City. The volunteers observed the entire printing process on a 24-hour basis working in three shifts. This operation involved some 27 volunteers.

A Declaration of Commitment among Organizations

During the 1998 elections, NAMFREL worked with the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), Voters' Organization -Training and Education Towards Clean, Authentic and Responsible Elections (VOTECARE) and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP). PPCRV and IBP were the other organizations accredited by COMELEC to be its citizens' arms for the 1998 elections.

NAMFREL forged a Memorandum of Agreement with the other three organizations. The memorandum established the form of collaboration between and among the four organizations.

PPCRV and NAMFREL, which were responsible for pollwatching and quick count respectively, pooled their manpower together in areas where one or the other had limited manpower. This allowed the full monitoring of the electoral process from voter information and education to pollwatching and conduct of the OQC. VOTECARE did not seek accreditation with the COMELEC to conduct voter education but it gave all its manpower, organization and logistical support to NAMFREL in almost all areas where the former was present.

IBP, which was accredited by the COMELEC to "*disseminate legal information about provisions of the law on elections...give legal counseling/assistance to various Board of Election Inspectors and Board of Canvassers, especially where COMELEC lawyers are not available,*" provided legal assistance to NAMFREL and PPCRV.

Aside from NAMFREL, PPCRV and IBP, the Cebu Citizens' Involvement and Maturation in People's Empowerment and Liberation (C-CIMPEL) was also accredited by the COMELEC although its jurisdiction was limited within the Province of Cebu. C-CIMPEL and NAMFREL also forged a memorandum of agreement which determined the form of cooperation between the two organizations. The organizations combined their resources to ensure clean and honest elections and they specified each other's area of responsibility: NAMFREL in the conduct of the OQC and C-CIMPEL in voters' education and pollwatching.

Two television networks also sought accreditation as citizens' arm of the COMELEC to conduct an unofficial count of the results for the 1998 elections. However, they were denied by COMELEC and were advised instead to coordinate with NAMFREL.

The People's Television Network, Inc. filed a petition to be allowed to "*receive one (1) copy of the election returns and/or obtain results at the*

precincts level using PTV's own form and designate one (1) watcher at pre-selected polling places" as a citizens' arm of the COMELEC. In a resolution dated 11 March 1998, the network was authorized by the Commission to "link up with NAMFREL for purposes of the media-based operation quick count...in line with its (NAMFREL's) authority to organize, manage, operate and conduct as (sic) media-based quick count."

The same judgment was rendered by COMELEC in an order dated 27 April 1998 with regard to the Associated Broadcasting Company's Petition for Deputation.

Operational and Administrative Preparations - National Secretariat

Pre-Election National Assembly - 07 March 1998

Over 100 provincial and NCR chairpersons and OQC chairpersons gathered together in a one-day national assembly to finalize operational plans on the conduct of the Operation Quick Count. Representatives from the different participating organizations of NAMFREL were also present to help enhance the conduct of the OQC by providing manpower, logistical, and other forms of support to the provincial chapters. This conference was held at the EDSA Shangri-la Hotel in Mandaluyong City.

A memorandum issued by the NAMFREL National Executive Director to the provincial and National Capital Region chairpersons and coordinators on 14 March 1998, summarized the discussions during the Pre-Election National Assembly:

- "1. *Agreement for coordination among NAMFREL, PPCRV, VOTECARE Volunteers* - *The agreement for coordination among NAMFREL, PPCRV, and VOTECARE volunteers clearly delineates the functions of each group.*

VOTECARE's primary mission shall be Voter Education before and after elections. During elections, VOTECARE Volunteers shall join NAMFREL for purposes of the Quick Count or PPCRV for Pollwatching, wearing the appropriate ID of either NAMFREL or PPCRV.

PPCRV's primary mission shall be pollwatching, which shall encompass the periods before, during, and after the actual voting periods to include witnessing the counting at the precinct level and the canvassing at the municipal/city, and provincial level.

NAMFREL's primary mission shall be the conduct of Operation Quick Count. The functions covered here encompass the witnessing of the counting at the precinct level; picking up of Election Returns from the BEI; transporting the Election Returns to the NAMFREL Tabulation Center; actual tabulation and transmission to OQC Center at La Salle Greenhills; picking up of the Municipal/City Certificates of Canvass and Provincial Certificates of Canvass for cross-checking against dagdag-bawas; and posting of results. Please take note that all these functions require a volunteer to wear a NAMFREL ID and to report to the City/Provincial chairperson.

In any area or function where one group is short of volunteers, the other group will second or endorse its volunteers to the first group and ask its volunteers to wear the appropriate ID and report to the appropriate chairperson (e.g., PPCRV for Pollwatching and NAMFREL for Quick Count). All Quick Count data will have to be tabulated and processed at the NAMFREL Tabulation Center.

- 2. Operation Quick Count (OQC) - Operation Quick Count shall cover both the national positions (President, Vice President, Senators, and Party-List organizations) and local positions (Congressmen down to Municipal Councilors). The source document for the OQC will be the 6th copy of the official precinct results or the election returns, as mandated by Republic Act 8173. Only national position data need to be transmitted and posted at OQC Center in La Salle Greenhills. Local position results will be posted locally by the Provincial and City Chairpersons. For purposes of making sure the count proceeds quickly, Chairpersons are advised to tabulate national data first since this still have to be consolidated with reports from all over the country.*

Software for national positions will be prepared in DOS and Windows formats by mid-April. Minimum hardware requirements will be any personal computer with a 3.5 inch disk drive and 100 MB of hard disk capacity (basically a 386 or higher level PC). Software will also be prepared for local positions but will not contain the names of the local candidates. Chairpersons will have to have those names encoded at each locality.

Please note that the OQC simulation is supposed to contain mistakes in the documents so as to train your volunteers how to spot mistakes. Please make sure to have a thorough discussion of the process before and after training.

3. Checking of Computerized Voters Lists - *The Computerized Voters Lists are supposed to be posted at each municipal/city hall. Kindly advise all registered voters to check if their names appear on the list and if they are correctly spelled and assigned to the precinct where they registered. In the event that precincts have been split and a voter has been assigned to a new precinct, the voter should receive that notice in writing from the COMELEC.*

As the exclusion/inclusion period has passed, this mechanism cannot be used to remove names from the list. If you feel that your local voters' list is padded and you can verify this through random house-to-house checks or some other means, your only recourse now is to place the suspected names on a watchlist and look out for those persons on election day and challenge them on voting day.

4. Communication Facilities Survey - *Kindly fill out the Communications Facilities Survey forms, which were distributed to all provincial chapter heads during the Assembly. This will enable us to determine what facilities must be made available at the National Tabulation Center in La Salle and the telephone numbers that will be used to receive messages from and send messages to each chapter during Operation Quick Count.*
5. Issuance of IDs - *NAMFREL Volunteer IDs were issued at the end of the meeting. In issuing out the IDs in the field, kindly list down the names of your city/ municipal chairpersons as well as other volunteers to whom the IDs are issued. Chairpersons are also requested to please countersign the IDs so you can verify your own volunteers and cards. Kindly supply us a list of names as this will facilitate the preparation of certificates of appreciation and a roster of 1998 volunteers.*

6. Party-list System - We received a number of written questions about the Party-list System. Your training kits contained some limited information about the Party-list System. We shall try to gather more detailed information for dissemination to all chapters.
7. Operation Against Dagdag-Bawas - There will be an audit of the official election returns, statements of votes by precinct, municipal certificates of canvass, statements of votes by municipality and the provincial certificates of canvass that will be received by NAMFREL in order to detect and prevent dagdag-bawas. Apart from the election returns, NAMFREL will also be entitled to the 4th copy of the certificates of canvass at the municipal and provincial canvassing boards. The audit of the above-mentioned forms will be undertaken by a volunteer group of accountants from the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants or PICPA, in close coordination with the municipal and provincial chairpersons.
8. Collection of Data on Number of Precincts, Number and Location of Voting Centers, and other Information from the COMELEC - After the General Registration in June last year and under the Continuing Registration System, the number of voters per precinct have been reduced from 300 (up until barangay elections in 1997) to 200. This means that there will be a new figure reflecting the number of precincts per municipality. Such information, together with the location of voting centers, is contained in a document referred to as the Project of Precincts.

We suggest that the municipal and city chairpersons secure this list from their respective election officers. This data will be vital in determining the actual manpower and logistical requirements for the municipal OQC.

9. Coordination and meeting with the COMELEC, Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) and Philippine National Police (PNP) officials - It will be best to already meet and establish linkages with your respective provincial election supervisors, DECS and PNP officials. You may wish to take up with them areas where the citizens' groups can assist in ensuring clean and honest elections. Such meetings can be replicated at the municipal level with your municipal chairpersons

meeting with the election officers and the DECS and PNP counterparts.

It will also be good for the NAMFREL municipal chairpersons to ask his/her respective Voting Center Managers to already introduce themselves to the school principals and meet with the members of the BEI. The COMELEC will be conducting orientation seminars for the members of the BEI and it will be good for the NAMFREL municipal chairperson to be with his/her Voting Center Managers to ensure understanding of roles and that the teachers will make sure that the data on the 6th copy of the election returns are legible.”

Regional Conference for the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) - 28 March 1998

The plebiscite on the CAR coincided with the National Assembly; thus not all the chairpersons from the provinces of Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mountain Province were present. This necessitated holding a conference for the chairpersons in the region.

Various Regional and Provincial Meetings and OQC Training

The National Secretariat also deployed Regional Directors and council members to assist in strengthening and, where necessary, re-organizing provincial chapters, like in Bulacan, Rizal, Surigao del Sur, Misamis Occidental, Pampanga, and in the cities and municipalities in NCR like San Juan, Pasay City, Mandaluyong City, Muntinlupa, and Kalookan City.

NAMFREL Regional Directors were also deployed to the following provinces to conduct OQC training: La Union, Urdaneta (Pangasinan), Cagayan Province, Aurora, Batangas, Cavite, Palawan, Quezon, Rizal, Romblon, Camarines Norte, Masbate, Northern Samar, and Sultan Kudarat.

Also, an orientation and training seminar on the OQC was held on April 1998 at the ACCEED Conference Center in Makati City for the NCR Chapters including chapters from the nearby provinces.

Covenant for Clean and Honest Elections (with presidential candidates) - 2 May 1998

The Secretariat also organized a presidential forum where presidential candidates signed a Covenant for Clean and Honest Elections. This event was arranged in cooperation with COMELEC and GMA-7.

PLEDGE OF COMMITMENT FOR ALL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

It is with deep desire to serve only the highest interests of my people that I have made myself available for election to the highest office of the land.

I have embarked on the rigors of this election campaign to win the mandate of the sovereign Filipino people in the sincerest belief that I am best qualified for this office.

It is my personal conviction that the duties of the President of the Philippines can be carried out fruitfully, legitimated and morally only through such a freely-given mandate according to our present Constitution.

Therefore, in the interest of free and honest election this May 11, 1998, and in the highest interest of the Filipino people, I now freely manifest.

That I will serve as President of the Philippines if and only if I receive the mandate to this office from the sovereign people through free and honest elections;

- That I am not party to no plan or scheme to usurp this mandate by fraud, vote buying, dagdag-bawas, coercion or terror;
- That I will work for the prosecution and punishment of any person or group of persons who would hurt me and the Filipino people by engaging in electoral fraud or terror to advance my candidacy;
- That for the rest of the election campaign, I will continue to seek the mandate of the people without engaging in mud-slinging, name-calling, baseless and damaging innuendo, and character assassination;
- That on May 11, 1998, and beyond, I am committed to accepting the sovereign will of the people as they express this through their votes and to support the candidate who receives the mandate of the people.

As we celebrate the Centennial of our independence, I vow to engage all my personal power and influence to give our people what they most fervently desire and pray for today: clean, honest, peaceful and credible elections on May 11, 1998.

Signed, this 2nd day of May, 1998 in Manila.

Signed:

Jose C. De Venecia, Jr. (LAKAS-NUCD-UMDP-KAMPI), Santiago F. Dumlao, Jr. (Kilusang Pambansang Pagpapanibago), Joseph E. Estrada (Laban ng Makabayang Masang Pilipino - LAMMP), Raul S. Roco (Aksyon Demokratiko), Renato S. De Villa (Partido Para sa Demokratikong Reporma-Lapiang Manggagawa Coalition – REPORMA), Alfredo S. Lim (Liberal Party – LP), Emilio R. Osmena (Probinsya Muna Development Initiatives – PROMDI) Miriam S. Santiago (People's Reform Party)

Witnesses:

Bernardo P. Pardo (Chairman, Commission on Elections), Jose S. Concepcion, Jr. (National Chairman, National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections – NAMFREL)

Equipment Borrowed, Donations in Cash and in Kind

NAMFREL, through the National Secretariat, solicited various consumable materials and supplies, equipment, services and cash donations from a number of companies.

The donations received by the National Secretariat were appropriated for financial assistance (seed financing) to provincial chapters and NCR municipal and city chapters. The donations were used for the conduct of the pre-election assembly, travelling expenses, purchase of supplies, communication expenses, printing and shipping of training and OQC

materials, identification cards, etc. This fund was also used for the release of various full-page ads by NAMFREL, set-up of the National Tabulation Center (NTC) at La Salle Greenhills, meals for NTC volunteers, providing security in the NTC, and other expenses necessary for the conduct of the OQC nationwide.

Among the equipment that was lent to NAMFREL were mobile telephone units and pagers. These were distributed to the different chairpersons in the different areas in the country where the mobile telephone and paging companies had service coverage.

The National Secretariat was able to borrow two vans for transport of personnel, equipment and supplies for the entire duration of the election period. Companies lent NAMFREL photocopiers, mimeographing machines, telephones, computers, network servers, electric generator sets, uninterruptible power supply, video wall, TV sets, facsimile machines, two-way radios, water dispensers, and a host of other equipment.

Among the professional services received by NAMFREL from its various supporters were: website hosting and maintenance, e-mail and internet access services, designing and lay-outing of various ads, designing and printing of a variety of materials, telegram and fax, installation of telephones and telephone lines in the NTC, National Secretariat office and in the provinces, courier and messengerial services, etc.

Operational and Administrative Preparations- Provincial

The NAMFREL provincial operations were on the whole organizational, i.e. all the work that was done to enhance the organization's ability to conduct the OQC. The breadth of this work covered the reactivation of municipal and city chapters to identification of new municipal chairpersons. Also included in the scope of work of the provincial chapter was the training of municipal chairs and municipal OQC chairs. The complementing activities, which were also crucial, covered networking and liaison work with sectoral organizations (like labor, youth, academe, business, religious, professional, etc.) to secure support for provincial NAMFREL operations.

NAMFREL- BY- NUMBERS

- 34,163,465** : The number of registered voters for the May 11 Election
- 27,259,385** : The estimated number of votes cast on Election Day
- 15** : The number of years since NAMFREL was founded
- 250,000** : The number of NAMFREL volunteers across the country
- 250,000** : The number of NAMFREL volunteers insured by ISAP
- 20** : The number of headquarters staff at NAMFREL
- 77** : The number of NAMFREL provincial chapters (all provinces covered)
- 120** : The number of local tabulation centers nationwide
- 121,409** : The number of precincts tabulated as of May 18
- 70.31** : The percentage of precincts tabulated as of May 18
- 19,176,801** : The number of votes counted as of May 18
- 177** : The number of phone lines installed at the National Tabulation Center
- 8,040** : The estimated number of fax messages received at NAMFREL
- 600** : The number of press passes issued at the National Tabulation Center
- 71,516** : The number of visits to NAMFREL's website from May 11-18
- 200,000** : The number of pagers which received NAMFREL reports
- 2** : The number of NAMFREL volunteers who died in the 1998 Elections
- 10** : The number of volunteers who have died since 1984

May 18, 1998

**Operation Quick Count Results
on the May 1998 Elections*
for President and Vice President**

For President

Estrada	8,239,823
De Venecia	3,247,067
Roco	2,923,842
Osmeña	2,454,432
Lim	1,815,664
De Villa	1,028,854
Santiago	584,633
Enrile	297,801
Marcos	232,714
Dumlao	29,327
Morato	23,208

For Vice President

Macapagal-Arroyo	9,624,397
Angara	4,380,991
Orbos	2,651,184
Osmeña S.	1,813,998
Tatad	582,548
Sueno	409,966
Santiago I.	196,386
Pacheco	23,107
Sabio	19,555

*Based on 79.25% precinct coverage as of 25 May 1998.

***OQC Results, Conduct
of the Counting of the
Elections by the BEI,
and Recovery of
Election Returns by
NAMFREL***

Final results at the NTC

NAMFREL closed the NTC at La Salle Greenhills on May 20. After nine (9) days of continuous operation, it was able to tabulate 22,270,104 votes from 79.25% or 136,967 of the total precincts nationwide. It had the largest coverage in regions II, CAR and VIII with 98.24%, 93.12% and 91.69% of coverage, respectively.

Except for the ranking of Senatorial candidates who placed numbers 6, 7, 8, 20, 21, 22 (which was ranked in the NAMFREL count as 7, 8, 6, 21, 22, 20 respectively) there was no difference in the ranking of the top 24 candidates.

Total OQC Coverage, Recovery of Election Returns (ER) and Final Results

Before the May 1998 elections, NAMFREL estimated that it would be able to collect the election returns from 90% of the total number of precincts nationwide. Election returns from an estimated 10% of precincts would not be collected due to several reasons. Among these were: missing copy of ER for NAMFREL; the ER was placed inside the ballot box which cannot be retrieved without an order from COMELEC; and the absence of NAMFREL volunteers to collect the ER. Of the 90% collection, NAMFREL estimated that 10% would not be tabulated for the following reasons: discrepancies or inconsistencies in the votes in *taras*, figures and

words; the total votes cast exceed the number of registered voters in the precinct; and the ERs have missing pages.

The final results of the OQC showed that NAMFREL had tabulated 87.62% (from 151,421 precincts) of the total number of election returns. Results from the field still came in after the operations at the NTC closed on May 20. These results were tabulated at the National Secretariat Headquarters and the resulting coverage for the 1998 OQC was 87.62%.

SENATORS				
	<i>COMELEC*</i>	<i>RANK</i>	<i>NAMFREL</i>	<i>RANK</i>
			<i>OQC**</i>	
Legarda-Leviste	14,560,542	1	11,358,304	1
Cayetano	12,793,771	2	10,032,069	2
Sotto	11,229,075	3	8,703,046	3
Pimentel	9,792,579	4	7,821,303	4
Barbers	9,502,782	5	7,514,031	5
Biazon	9,151,472	6	7,315,390	7
Osmeña	9,058,032	7	7,098,224	8
Ople	8,760,064	8	7,410,977	6
Jaworski	8,684,500	9	6,898,869	9
Revilla	8,300,913	10	6,644,008	10
Guingona	7,155,879	11	5,663,390	11
Aquino-Oreta	7,008,651	12	5,550,949	12
Pagdanganan	6,850,371	13	5,518,129	13
Torres	6,771,737	14	5,336,684	14
Lagman	6,665,600	15	5,308,074	15
Rasul	6,300,200	16	5,099,224	16
Andaya	5,598,683	17	4,395,105	17
De Ocampo	5,577,047	18	4,348,479	18
Abadia	5,239,633	19	4,125,490	19
Yorac	4,457,030	20	3,524,983	21
Gloria	4,438,150	21	3,508,931	22
Bagatsing	4,431,669	22	3,563,337	20
Webb	4,390,497	23	3,507,300	23
Perez	4,327,424	24	3,480,850	24

*As of 6:16 pm, 26 May 1998.
**Based on 79.25% precinct coverage as of 25 May 1998.

Analysis of OQC Results

Voter Turn-out

The final results of the OQC reported a 72.52% turnout of voters for the 1998 elections. This means that 24,775,585 out of the 34,163,465 registered voters cast their ballots in 86.91% of precincts nationwide. Out

of the fifteen (15) regions in the country, the Region V (Bicol) had the highest turn-out at 68.55% or 1,560,109 out of the 1,869,293 registered voters. On the other hand, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) had the lowest turnout at 34.76%. Out of the 994,910 registered voters in the ARMM, only 345,840 went out on election day to cast their ballots.

Voting Trends

Filipinos tend to vote more for the president than for any other national office during the 1998 elections. The results of the 1998 elections based on the OQC showed that 97.09% of Filipinos who flocked to the precincts cast their votes for president. 91.15% Filipinos chose a vice president while an average of seven (7) out of the twelve (12) slots reserved for senators were filled-up. Meanwhile, only 35.67% of Filipinos wrote their choice of party, organization or coalition for the Party-list System, which was first introduced during this election.

Regionalism, whereby candidates tend to be strong in areas where they originated, still came into play. However, its effect on determining the winners of the election was not significant. For example, in the election for president, Estrada garnered the highest number of votes in almost all regions except in Bicol, Central Visayas and Ilocos Regions. These regions were considered to be the bailiwicks of Jose de Venecia, Raul Roco and Emilio Osmeña, respectively.

Roco won in the Bicol Region with an overwhelming difference of 877,970 votes. Osmeña, the former Governor of Cebu Province, topped the election in Central Visayas with 679,742 margin of victory. De Venecia, a Pangasinense, won in the Ilocos Region with just 246,867 vote difference. Estrada ranked second in the three regions.

Regionalism did not work at all in the election for vice-president. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo won in all regions nationwide, including those considered by other candidates as their bailiwick. For example, in Central Visayas, Sergio Osmeña III, a son of Cebu, lost to Macapagal by 421,601 votes. In the Ilocos Region, Macapagal won over Oscar Orbos, who was the former Governor of Pangasinan by 193,061 votes.

Finally, Philippine political culture has always been characterized as personality-based and not issue-based. Voters rarely vote on party line. Often, candidates win on the basis of their popularity and not on the issue that he/she espouses. A corollary to this is that political parties field candidates who have charisma whether or not the candidate's stand on certain issues coincides with the party's vision.

The results of the 1998 elections show that Philippine politics remains personality-based. The winner for president came from the Laban ng Makabayang Masang Pilipino (LAMMP), an opposition party, while the winner for vice president came from the LAKAS-National Union of Christian Democrats (LAKAS-NUCD), the administration party. Seven (7) of the twelve (12) winning senators came from LAMMP while the remaining five (5) were fielded by the administration party.

Party-list Results

Preliminary Tabulation

The tabulation of results for the party-list was suspended after May 17. Reports from the field indicated that tabulating the party-list votes was taking a lot of time and this slowed down the transmission of results to the NTC. The decision to suspend the tabulation for the party-list was arrived at in order to speed up the transmission and subsequent reporting of election results for president, vice president and senators.

When NAMFREL temporarily stopped tabulating the results for the party-list, the total votes cast for the party-list that was published in the OQC Report No. 17 was 1,916,490. Report 17 showed that the Progressive Movement of Devolution of Initiatives Political Party of Central Visayas (PROMDI) topped the Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives (APEC) by 5,600 votes. However, in the COMELEC report showing that 1,707,302 votes were cast for the party-list, APEC topped the list with 132,884 votes while PROMDI was ranked 15th with 27,829 votes.

The reason for this discrepancy was that NAMFREL tabulated the results as they arrived at the NTC. As of May 17, most of the results that were tabulated came from Region VII or Central Visayas. PROMDI was registered as a regional political party in Central Visayas.

A review of NAMFREL's Report No. 17 showed that PROMDI got a large portion of the votes from Central Visayas. Of the 96,770 votes attributed to PROMDI, 69,977 came from Central Visayas. On the other hand, APEC's votes were evenly distributed among the regions. APEC was ranked in the top five in ten (10) of the regions nationwide and it was in the top 25 in all regions except in the National Capital Region where it was ranked 98th. APEC was able to garner support in all regions, except the NCR, because of the rural electric cooperatives that are present in almost every province in the country.

OQC-Related Incidents

The most frequent report received by the NTC concerned the refusal of BEIs to give the 6th copy of the ER to the duly-authorized NAMFREL volunteers. This was often attributed to the inability by COMELEC to disseminate the appropriate information. There were some cases when the BEIs refused to recognize the ID of the NAMFREL volunteer which bore the logo of the COMELEC and the signature of Chairperson Bernardo Pardo. This was often resolved in the end between the BEI and the volunteers. In cases where the BEI totally refused to give the 6th copy of the ER, the municipal chairperson secured their copy of the ER at the municipal level.

Automated Elections in ARMM

“Since Sulu is a part of the ARMM, the counting had to be computerized as mandated by law. But the problem arose when the BEIs and the party watchers in one precinct noticed that the machine was not reading the ballots properly, so, a political party asked the COMELEC for the suspension of the counting. Since there were four political parties, two were in favor of computerization, while the other two wanted manual counting. The COMELEC (National) came with a decision to bring all the ballot boxes to Manila to do the manual counting. NAMFREL was requested to accompany the ballot boxes and be present during the counting. The ERs were submitted to the NAMFREL national office.”
(Sulu Province – Sr. Maria Virginia Adre, OND, Chairperson)

FINAL PARTY-LIST RESULTS

NAMFREL OQC	
Based on a coverage of 87.62% precincts nationwide (as of November 1998)	
Party	Votes
1. APEC	342,183
2. ABA	236,253
3. VFP	220,337
4. ALAGAD	184,298
5. PROMDI	174,258
6. SCFO	172,259
7. AKO	158,401
8. COOP NATC	147,977
9. BUTIL	143,958
10.AKBAYAN	137,207
11.ABANSE	137,131
12.COCOFED	118,265
13.SANLAKAS	107,569
14.SR. CTZN	101,415
15.PRP	97,188
16. PINATUBO	85,269
17.AKAP	83,299
18.AKSYON	83,283
19.NUPA	81,025
20.AMMA-KAT	71,548
21.PAG-ASA	70,873
22.FEJODAP	66,257
23.AMIN	65,303
24.OCW-UNIF	64,032
25.AFW	63,888
26. AASAHAN	62,120
27.KAMPIL	61,531
28.WPI	59,886
29.FOUR L	58,361
30. PCCI	56,355

NAMFREL OQC in Cyberspace

People with internet access were able to view the latest OQC updates from the NAMFREL website (www.namfrel.org). The website was able to register a record 71,516 visits from May 11 to 18, 1998.

We would like to share some of the e-mail messages that we have received on the duration of the OQC:

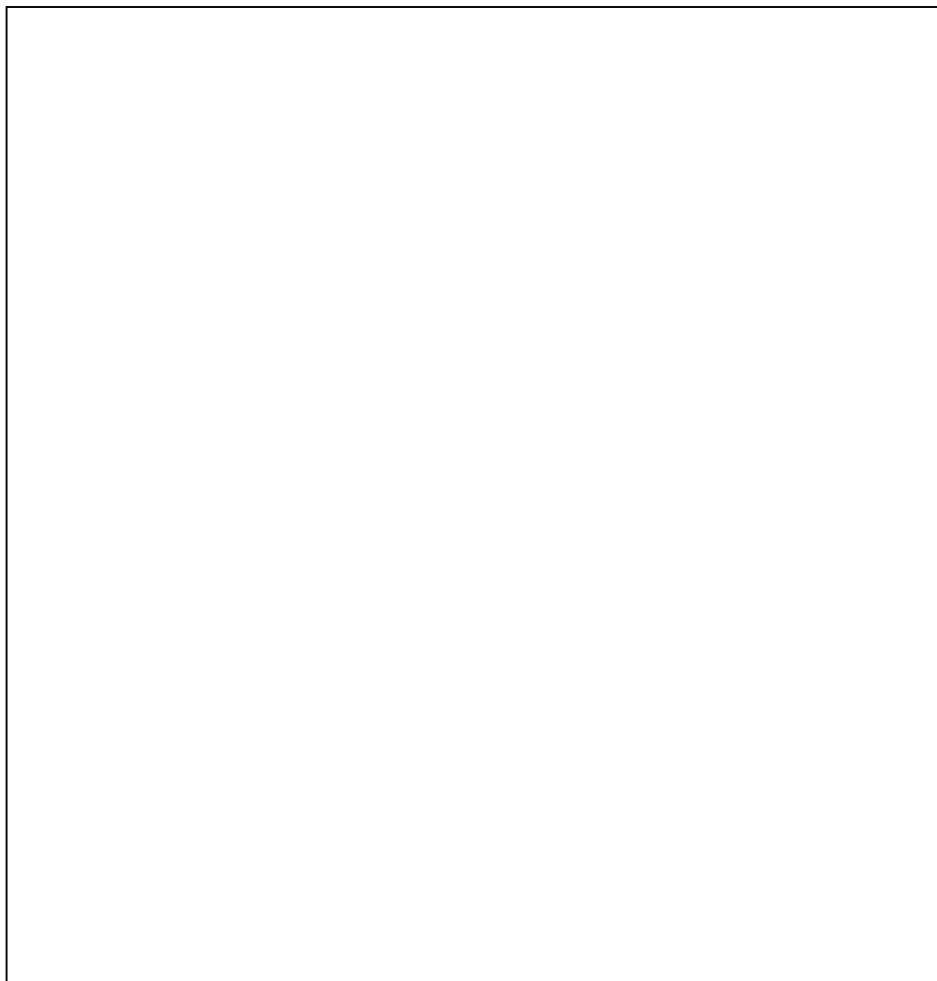
"I support your cause, I'm currently residing here in America, and I could not believe it. You had the guts to show your muscle, inspite of all the odds you will face with the 11 presidentiables. If the COMELEC and the Congress passed the bill for a computerized election, life would have been easier. I commend you for your sincerity and honesty for being vigilant for a clean and honest election. But next time, we just hope you could give us news in your web site, if the election was peaceful and most of all if HONEST." (Don Cometa, doncomet8@aol.com, May 11, 1998)

"This site is one of the most important development in recent years of Philippine history. Your efforts are making a difference in the legitimacy of the election process in the Philippines. I am proud of your existence and all your efforts. Please continue to play a very important role in our nation's most precious democratic process. Let us all rise and tell the world that the people of the Philippines are 'de kalidad', principled and democratic/freedom loving people. Kudos." (Noel Domingo, noeld@linkline.com, May 14, 1998)

"I was monitoring the different election TV coverage. In a segment that showed the voting that was going on (I believe it was Dagupan City at around 11 am), I noticed that the ballot boxes shown did not have the required padlocks on the 3 slots on top of the box. I assume that this is not the proper procedure and can put the integrity of the ballots within at risk since the box can be opened at any time and substitution take place. Just thought you should take note. I have been checking on this whenever they show the box and noticed varying situations (some with only one lock, some with all three, etc). Regards." (Nonato P. Arboleda, noniea@skynet.net, May 11, 1998)

" I am closely monitoring the results of the elections through your website. However, I find your data lacking some parameters such as the number of provinces, precincts, voters so far has been tabulated. I think your tabulation will become more reliable if such data were included." (EDL, edeleon@freemail.webquest.com, May 11, 1998)

"Hi! I'm an avid fan of the Party-list. I notice the update was last Sunday pa, please naman update this so we can see the real score or did our kababayan really understood about the subject, thanks..." (GENE, hormedia@webquest.com, May 21, 1998)



Incidents related to voting, transport of ballots, etc.

The 1998 election was noted to be the most peaceful and most orderly election in the post-Marcos era. There were reported incidences of cheating and violence but these were minor and they did not affect the general conduct of the election. During its nine-day operation at the NTC, NAMFREL received several incident reports in relation to the election.

Reports of election-related violence in several municipalities in Lanao del Sur were received. There were cases of shooting incidents where several individuals were injured including two NAMFREL volunteers. At

least four persons died in an election-related violence in Lanao del Sur. These incidents were referred to the Philippine National Police for verification and/or action.

Several accounts of harassment were received at the NTC. The presence of armed men on election day was reported in the provinces of Masbate and Albay. NAMFREL volunteers were threatened in Guimaras Province and Bacolod City while in Cagayan it was reported that the supporters of a candidate were being harassed by the supporters of his opponents.

There were reported incidences of cheating although a nationally-organized attempt to cheat like *dagdag-bawas*, which was rampant in the 1995 elections, did not occur or was prevented in this election.

In Palawan, NAMFREL uncovered a plan that would enable a voter to vote more than once. Using the name of NAMFREL, several individuals conducted a survey of voters in Puerto Princesa City who were no longer residents in the area but were still registered there. They would then make several copies of Voters Registration Record (VRR) and fill them up with the names of the voters in the survey. This would then be used by individuals when they try to vote again. Another example was the case in Midsayap, North Cotabato, where a teacher distributed filled up ballots, which were later declared invalid.

In Julita, Leyte, several ballots were stolen from the Municipal Treasurer's Office the day before the elections. This report was confirmed by the Provincial Election Supervisor of Leyte and was acted upon by Commissioner Evalyn Fetalino who gave instructions to replace the ballots and nullify the stolen ballots' serial numbers.

There were also reported cases of ballot box snatching in Abra, Masbate and Albay provinces. These were referred to the COMELEC for their appropriate action.

Finally, there were cases of voter disenfranchisement. In Cotabato City, for example, many voters were not able to vote due to the loss of voters' records in a fire that occurred in 1997 (the files were not reconstituted). In Tugaya, Lanao del Sur, at least 5,000 voters were not able to vote since the election officer failed to include their names in the voters' list. This incident was referred to Hector Masna, COMELEC Regional Election Director and Resurreccion Borra, COMELEC Executive Director.

The Essence of NAMFREL Volunteerism

After the 1998 elections, the National Secretariat received an overwhelming number of post-election evaluation reports from its provincial and NCR chairpersons nationwide. These reports tell a story of how ordinary people's involvement in the elections can help protect and enhance democratic practices and institutions.

NAMFREL's Performance in the Field

"NAMFREL Samar chapter reached a 95% rating from a previous 64% in 1995. This simply means that the concerns of NAMFREL are gaining grounds, that indeed its concerns are the concerns of every individual.

...NAMFREL activities were worth all the trouble, such that many would encourage us to continue working for a fraud-free election. Dagdag-bawas for one was prevented because of the vigilance of many concerned individuals. This has been one of NAMFREL's goals. After the election, our office received letters of gratitude and commendation for a job well done." (Samar Province – Fr. Cesar Aculan, Chairperson)

Public Perception on NAMFREL

"Public feedback on the performance of NAMFREL was very positive. In our town of Gumaca (Quezon Province), we helped resolve the conflict regarding the ranking of the candidates for councilors by providing our copy of the returns. In the towns of Pitogo and San Francisco, NAMFREL's help was solicited in resolving conflicts between the COMELEC and the candidates. In general, the public welcomed the presence of NAMFREL as a deterrent to election fraud." (Gumaca-Quezon Province – Ely Arcaya, Chairperson)

"Major political parties and candidates acknowledge NAMFREL as a credible institution. It has good working relations with all the parties and was able to gain the respect of the community because of its advocacy for free elections." (Lanao del Sur Province – Judge Abdul Ghani Marohombsar, Chairperson)

"As can be gleaned from the reports of local newspapers and the direct feedback of the citizenry of Cebu, C-CIMPEL-NAMFREL's tandem performance, especially during the elections, was not only laudable but was considered as a group to reckon with, to avert any attempt of any power-hungry politicians to mar the elections and its results. In fact, the task of any volunteer now is to preserve this credibility and integrity that C-CIMPEL-NAMFREL has earned over the years." (Cebu Province– Marilu Chiongbian, Chairperson)

Relationship with the COMELEC and Its Deputized Agencies

“Atty. Macaria de Villa, the Provincial Director (Election Supervisor) of COMELEC, agreed to participate as a member of the NAMFREL Provincial Council...Col. Jefferson Soriano of the PNP agreed to be a member of the NAMFREL Provincial Council, and this helped to rally police support for NAMFREL throughout most of the province.” (Batangas Province – Bro. Rafael Donato, FSC and Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, DD, Co-Chairpersons)

“The active involvement of priests, religious, and youth not only gave inspiration to the volunteers but also elicited recognition and respect for NAMFREL by the COMELEC registrar.” (Isabela Province – Bishop Sergio Utleg, DD, Chairperson)

Citizens' Involvement

“I still believe that many people still adhere to the cause that NAMFREL stands for. Despite the fact that political parties pay their volunteers, we were still able to recruit volunteers more than the number we normally would need.” (Camarines Norte Province – Ricardo Laureles, Chairperson)

“Cebu was overwhelmed by the faith-response made by its volunteers, that they totaled to 17,324 warm bodies, prophetically witnessing as one Filipino-Christian community.” (Cebu Province – Marilu Chiongbian, Chairperson)

“The conduct of the 1998 elections in the province, to a large extent, was generally peaceful, orderly and honest. We believe the support of the local church and active involvement of NAMFREL made that possible. Indeed, we believe that accepting the challenge of serving as NAMFREL volunteers opened our eyes to our social responsibility of affecting change in our society.” (Catanduanes Province – Fr. Laudemer Jose Gapaz, Chairperson)

“Everyone among our faculty, employees and students are conscious that participation in every democratic exercise is one of our institutional outreach program. This was the reason why many gave their time generously. To make the most out of such socially transforming activity, an evaluation meeting shall be conducted when classes begin. Experiences shall be processed and shall be used as a springboard of another institutional and/or diocesan program.” (Abra Province – Pura Sumangil, Chairperson)

“...NAMFREL is a family affair. The challenge of not allowing NAMFREL work to get in the way of family life requires that you involve the entire family in NAMFREL work. This also ensures that we all know who is involved in NAMFREL since we have to consistently maintain the principle of non-partisanship in NAMFREL.” (Misamis Oriental Province – Marriz Manuel Agbon, Archbishop Jesus Tuquib, Chairpersons)

Problems Encountered

“...the long, complicated, procedure-laden and tedious electoral process drove our volunteers extremely exhausted. As a result, some precincts may have been abandoned at the most critical time for reasons of tiredness, lack of sleep, and even hunger...the BEIs’ lack of appreciation of their duties and responsibilities led to delays in the conduct of an honest-to-goodness OQC.” (Rizal Province – Roland Moya, Chairperson)

“Many BEIs were not informed about NAMFREL being the citizens’ arm of the COMELEC. Some would not recognize our blue IDs or honor our accreditation even after presenting to them our copies.” (Laguna Province– Fr. Melchor Barcenas, Coordinator)

“Slow transporting of elections result particularly from island barangays, cynical and belligerent attitude of some BEI members.” (Occidental Mindoro Province – Bishop Vicente Manuel, SVD, Chairperson)

Recommendations from the Field

“The computerization of the voters’ list and issuance of tamper-proof voters’ ID be implemented before the next elections. Close coordination between COMELEC and DECS for proper training of BEIs must be undertaken in the future long before the elections.” (Bulacan Province – Rolando Maclang, Chairperson)

“The COMELEC should work and coordinate with NAMFREL regarding the training of their staff down to the local level. The COMELEC and NAMFREL should sign a MOA, that the training of COMELEC staff (BEIs and poll clerks) shall be handled by NAMFREL.” (Maguindanao Province – Fr. Eliseo Mercado, Jr. OMI, Chairperson)

“To COMELEC: Train BEIs well. An early citizens’ arm accreditation will keep our organization active even without an election at hand.” (Tarlac Province – Elvira Gonzaga, Chairperson)

Motivation for Thousands of Filipinos to Join NAMFREL

“What made us join (NAMFREL) then? The reason lies in the belief that democracy works and that safeguarding the credibility and integrity of the electoral process shows that belief and respect. But even then – there are still deeper reasons to bear. Personally, I call to mind Fr. Aruppe’s words, ‘availability is the heart of our identity,’ and, I guess, being there with others sets into motion the enterprise of Christ himself working through the hearts of good-willed and zealous men and women.” (Quezon City – Bro. Archimedes Lachica, SJ, Chairperson)

NAMFREL volunteers who died in the course of their duties last elections were Mr. Neoldino Del Corro (Sultan Kudarat provincial chairperson and NAMFREL volunteer since 1984) and Engr. Abdulhak Balabadan (Datu Piang, Maguindanao municipal chairperson and NAMFREL volunteer since 1996). We have honored them along with the eight other NAMFREL heroes who gave their lives for the cause of preserving and enhancing Philippine democracy.

Conclusions

The 1998 elections was clean and credible. No major incidents of massive cheating or election related violence was reported. This led to a peaceful transition of power distinguished by the lack of election protests from the losing candidates especially for the presidential and vice presidential positions. More importantly, a peaceful transition of power was made possible since the results of the election were readily accepted by the people.

This achievement was the result of the collective effort of several government agencies headed by the COMELEC together with organizations and individuals concerned in safeguarding our democracy through clean and honest elections. Each had given their contribution towards achieving the goals for this election.

Part of NAMFREL’s contribution to this collective effort was to provide the citizens a venue for their participation in safeguarding the ballots and thus giving them a chance to promote the preservation of the country’s democracy. It was also able to attain its major objectives for the 1998 elections of providing the public with early and accurate (unofficial) election results and minimizing cheating through its Operation Quick Count. When it published its OQC results for 79.25% of the precincts nationwide in just nine days, NAMFREL prevented the manipulation of results by giving would-be manipulators little time to carry-out their plan.

Achieving honest and credible elections, however, should not stop everyone from taking up measures to improve the country's electoral process, which would further strengthen the principles of democracy in the Philippines. NAMFREL, on its part, has given its commitment to assist the COMELEC in ensuring the efficient implementation of the automated election system in the country.

Recommendations

For COMELEC

The experience of the 1998 elections revealed the tediousness of the electoral process in the country. There were about 100,000 candidates who contested the 17,000 local and national positions during the 1998 elections. The large number of positions and candidates was a burden on the part of the BEIs who appreciated the ballots. Counting of the ballots took, on the average, 24-30 hours. This system of manually counting the votes slowed the release of election results compounded by the fact that there were 123 organizations in the Party-list Elections.

This experience showed the importance of implementing the automated election process as mandated by the Election Automation Law of 1997. Under this Law, the process of counting and canvassing shall be done by machine. However, to ensure the success of implementing the system nationwide, a thorough examination of the automated electoral process as experienced in the ARMM should be done by the COMELEC, the Department of the Education, Culture and Sports, and heads of military units deployed in the elections.

A step-by-step review of the election procedure will provide an opportunity to examine and improve or eliminate redundant steps of the election process. This review should start from the filing of the candidacies, the preparation of election forms, conduct of the voting and counting, up to the proclamation of winners. The review will determine the relevance and value of each phase in the election in the light of the implementation of the new and modern process of counting and consolidating of the election results.

NAMFREL recommends the following measures to help ensure an effective implementation of the automated election system:

Simplify the election process and remove unnecessary procedures

NAMFREL recommends the simplification of the election process and removal of unnecessary procedures to give way for a more efficient implementation of the automated system in 2001. For example, under the modern system, the role of the Municipal/City/District/Provincial Boards of Canvassers would be redundant. It would then be logical to remove the process of canvassing of results by the Canvassing Boards at the municipal/city/district/provincial levels. Under the automated process, once the votes are counted and consolidated by machine, the municipal election officer should just read the consolidated results printed by the machine, and proclaim the winners for local positions. Consolidated results for national positions should be immediately transmitted to the National Boards of Canvassers in Manila. This will provide a substantial reduction in the budget for the elections as well as in the time needed to proclaim the winners.

Conduct orientation on the automated election system

COMELEC needs to conduct training on the automated system for COMELEC field officers such as the Regional Election Director, Provincial Election Supervisor and Election Officers, and especially for DECS supervisors and public school teachers. Since this will be the first time to introduce the new system to the rest of the country, the training would help those concerned with the electoral process to become familiarized with the system for a more efficient and successful implementation. NAMFREL is committed to assist the COMELEC in this effort.

Sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with NAMFREL for the training of BEIs and Poll Clerks

Through the MOA, NAMFREL would be able to assist the COMELEC by providing manpower from its various volunteer organizations to conduct the training of BEIs and Poll Clerks on the modern election system.

Incorporate in the General Instructions (GI) to the Boards of Election Inspectors (BEI) facsimiles of all forms used during elections

This will allow the BEIs and party watchers to follow the procedures easily since they would be more familiar with the forms. This will ensure fewer errors, if not eliminate them, in the completion of the election forms.

Private sector partnership in safeguarding the delivery of ballots and election paraphernalia

One way of doing this is to involve the private sector like those in the courier/delivery business to deliver the ballots and election materials to and from the precincts.

Provide big tamper-evident plastic bags where the ballot box can be placed to protect machine-readable ballots and other election materials

After voting, the BEIs will put the ballot box and election materials inside a big plastic bag and seal it. The tamper-evident plastic bag will be transported to the municipal counting center. This will protect the ballots from getting wet. A similar smaller plastic bag that will go into the bigger bag containing the ballot box, will also have to be provided to store the Voters' List, Minutes of Voting, and other important election documents and materials.

Revise the procedure on the use of indelible ink

Instead of applying drops of indelible ink on the cuticle of the voter's fingernail after voting, COMELEC should just ask the voter to dip his/her finger in the bottle of indelible ink.

For Congress

Congress plays an important role in ensuring the sanctity of our electoral process. It is responsible for strengthening further the integrity of the electoral process through legislation. NAMFREL recommends the following measure to Congress to ensure that the elections in this country will be more free and credible.

Provide the total budget to implement the issuance of tamper-evident digital photo and fingerprint ID and make this state-provided ID a requirement for voting

Republic Act 8189 otherwise known as the Continuing Registration Law provides for the implementation of the issuance of the voters' ID. NAMFREL recommends that the fingerprints (digitally stored) of voters be used to check for multiple registration. Only with this form of verification can the ID be issued to the voter.

To fully complement such safeguards, legislation must be passed to require the voter to show the state-issued voter's ID before he or she can vote. A voter without such ID will be denied his or her right to vote.

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