

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



Report on the Inspection of the Voters' Roll



Executive Summary

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) observed the public inspection of the provisional voters' roll which was conducted by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) from 19-29 May 2018. The findings in this report are primarily informed by the Long Term Observers (LTOs) that ZESN deployed to the National Assembly Constituencies throughout the country.

ZESN deployed 210 LTOs to track political developments in all the National Assembly Constituencies in Zimbabwe. During the Inspection of the provisional voters' roll, ZESN deployed LTOs who visited 693 Inspection Centres (ICs) across the country during the inspection and making 909 visits in total during the process.

Some ZESN observers were denied access to 108 centres because inspection officials mistakenly regarded the BVR accreditation cards as having expired when in actual fact the Commission had extended their validity to cover the inspection period. In addition, the public's ability to check the list for non-residents, dead people or multiple registrants was hampered by the fact that the voters' rolls were not posted outside the ICs.

Generally, the political environment was calm and relatively peaceful during the observation period. However, observers noted that at 18% of centres visited, there were accessibility challenges for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, essential materials, such as polling station voters' rolls and registration forms were missing or insufficient at up to 30% of the ICs during the initial two days.

Findings from observer reports indicated that the number of people coming to check their details was very low – only 6 per hour on average. In addition, the number of voters missing from the voter's roll was difficult to determine given the low number of people who physically presented themselves for inspection.

Political party agents were observed to be largely absent from the centres visited by ZESN LTOs.

It was noted that some polling stations had voting populations that were fewer than 100 people on their voters' rolls, for instance, Willsgrove Tent in Bulawayo East has 17 voters, Ngozi Mine in Bulawayo Central has 19, and Pfitsaro Primary School has 96 voters. This has implications on the secrecy of the vote, as it may be easy to target people especially in light of the polling station based voters' roll. ZESN also implores the ZEC to proportionally apportion registered voters' at polling stations.

Recommendations

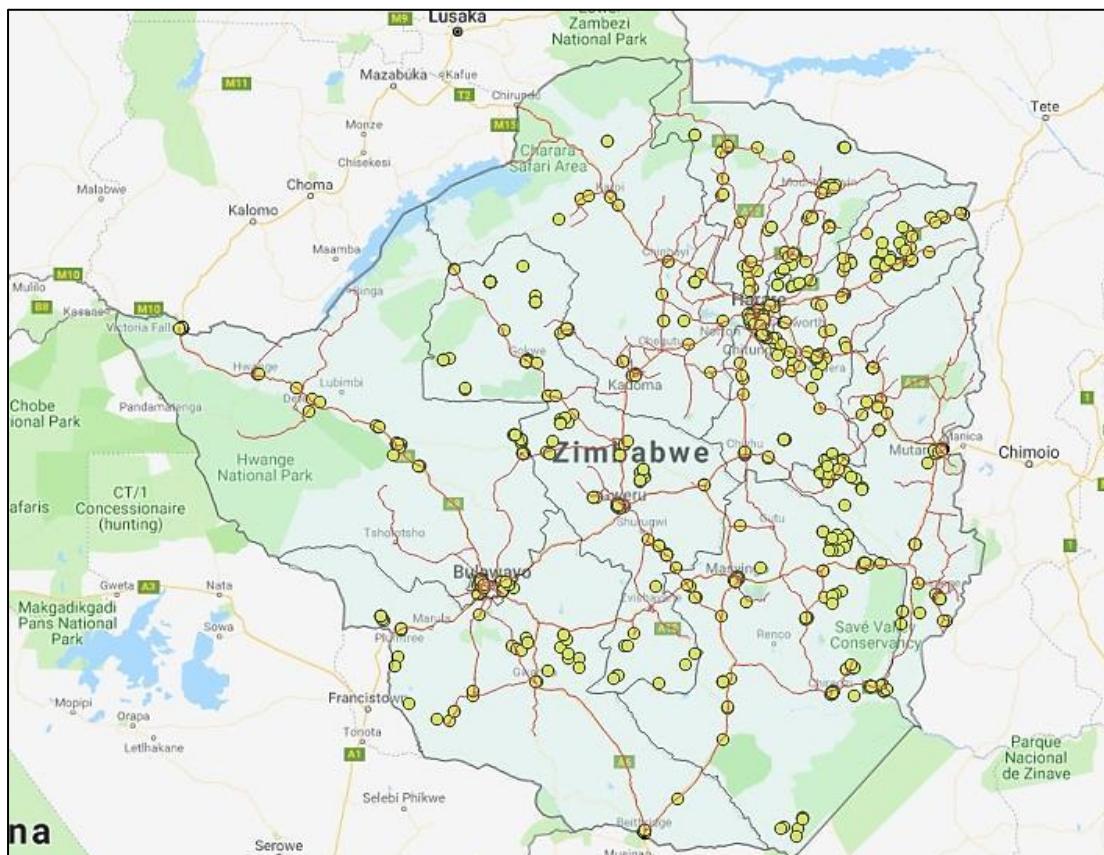
Based on its observation of the inspection process, ZESN makes the following recommendations:

- ZESN urges ZEC to ensure that the Code of Conduct is adhered to. This assists in safeguarding the secrecy of the vote, and protecting voters especially those allocated to polling stations with voting populations of 100 people and below, who may suffer political retribution after the elections.
- ZEC should intensify voter education, ahead of the elections to ensure participation of citizens
- ZESN calls on political parties to step up their efforts to recruit agents to monitor all key electoral processes including polling day.
- Deployment and logistics should be properly planned, missing materials and equipment during inspection points to inadequacies in planning
- ZEC should ensure that inspection centres and polling station are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Methodology

ZESN has 210 LTOs deployed in all constituencies around Zimbabwe since mid-May 2018. Observers received relevant training.

ZESN LTOs visited up to 6 ICs each, during the 11-day voters' roll inspection period from 19 to 29 May 2018. The LTOs were instructed to observe centres spanning across different urban, peri-urban, rural and remote locations in a ratio roughly determined by the population distribution in their respective constituencies. If an IC was subdivided into more than one Polling Station (PS) the observers were required to complete a checklist of each PS observed (see Annex 1).



Map of each Inspection centre observed by ZESN LTOs

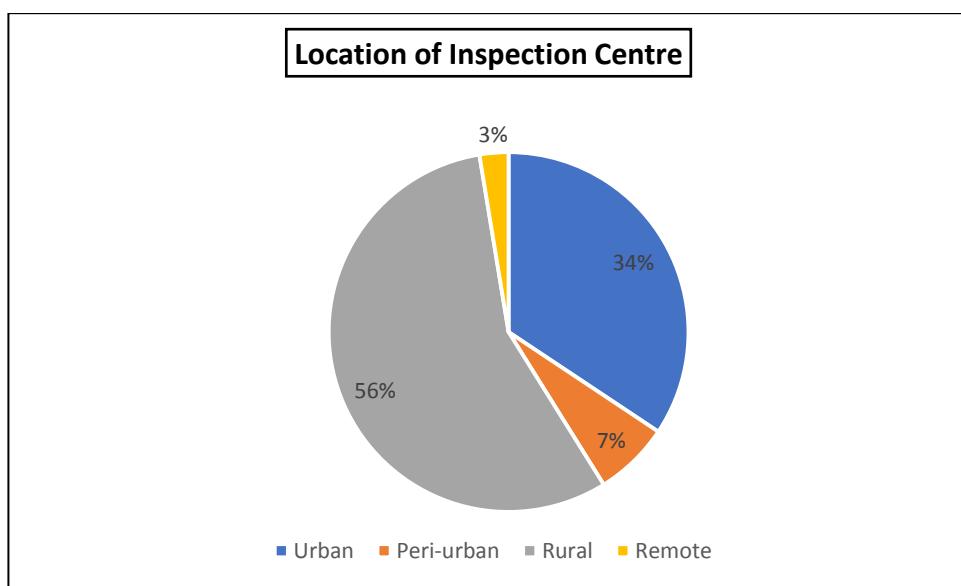
LTOs observed at each IC for two hours on each visit (they could visit the IC more than once during the period) and completed a checklist which was sent in directly to a central database via 3G phone connection.

On the last day of inspection, observers returned, the last 2 hours before closing to at least one centre to establish if the total numbers of people missing, added, corrections and objections had been posted outside the IC and to report these figures.

Findings

The extent of the observation

The ZEC set up 10 807 ICs during the entire inspection period, ZESN observers visited a total 909 Inspection centres. This represents 7.4% of the total number of Inspection Centres around the country. 34% of the visits were done in urban areas, 59% rural areas and 7% peri urban.



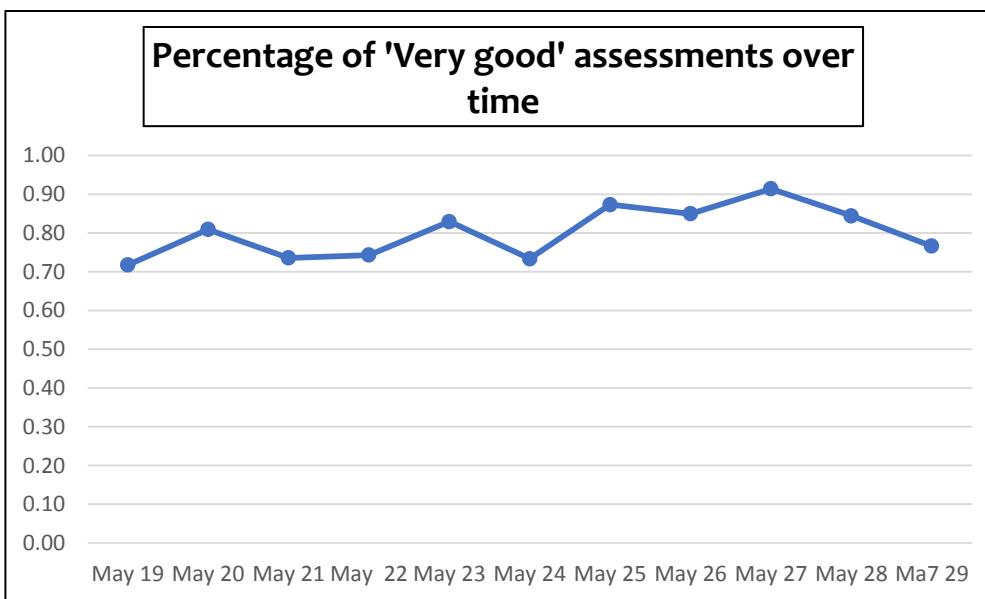
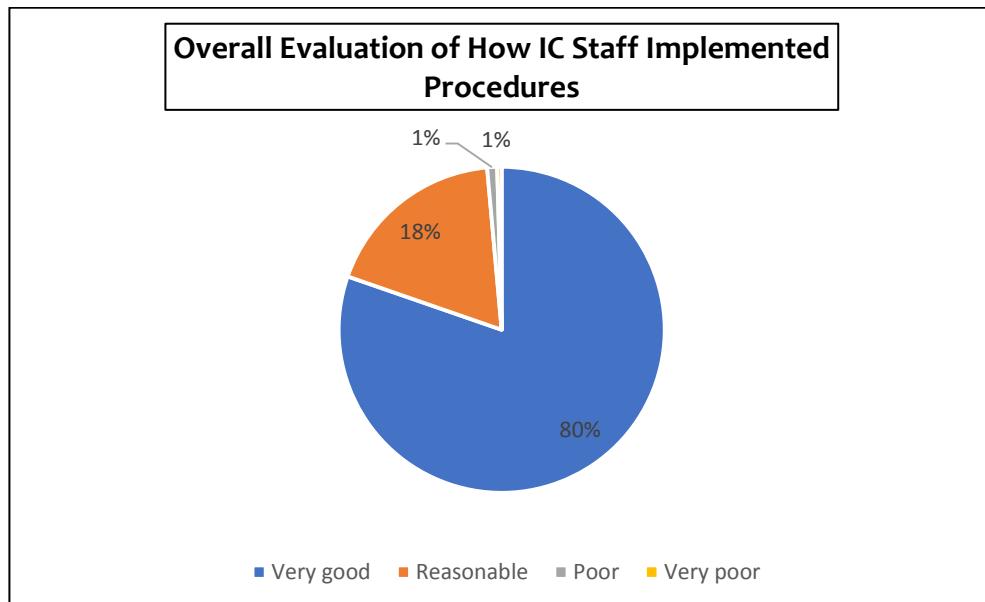
However, on 108 visits ZESN LTOs were either not granted access into the ICs or were denied information such as the number of people registered at that IC by the inspection officials. This mostly affected LTOs who had not observed the BVR process and therefore did not have ZEC accreditation. In some instances, the inspection officials allowed the LTOs to observe after consultation with their district offices and supervisors. Although some centres called the District ZEC office and were told to allow observers, the officials still refused them entry.

The Inspection Process

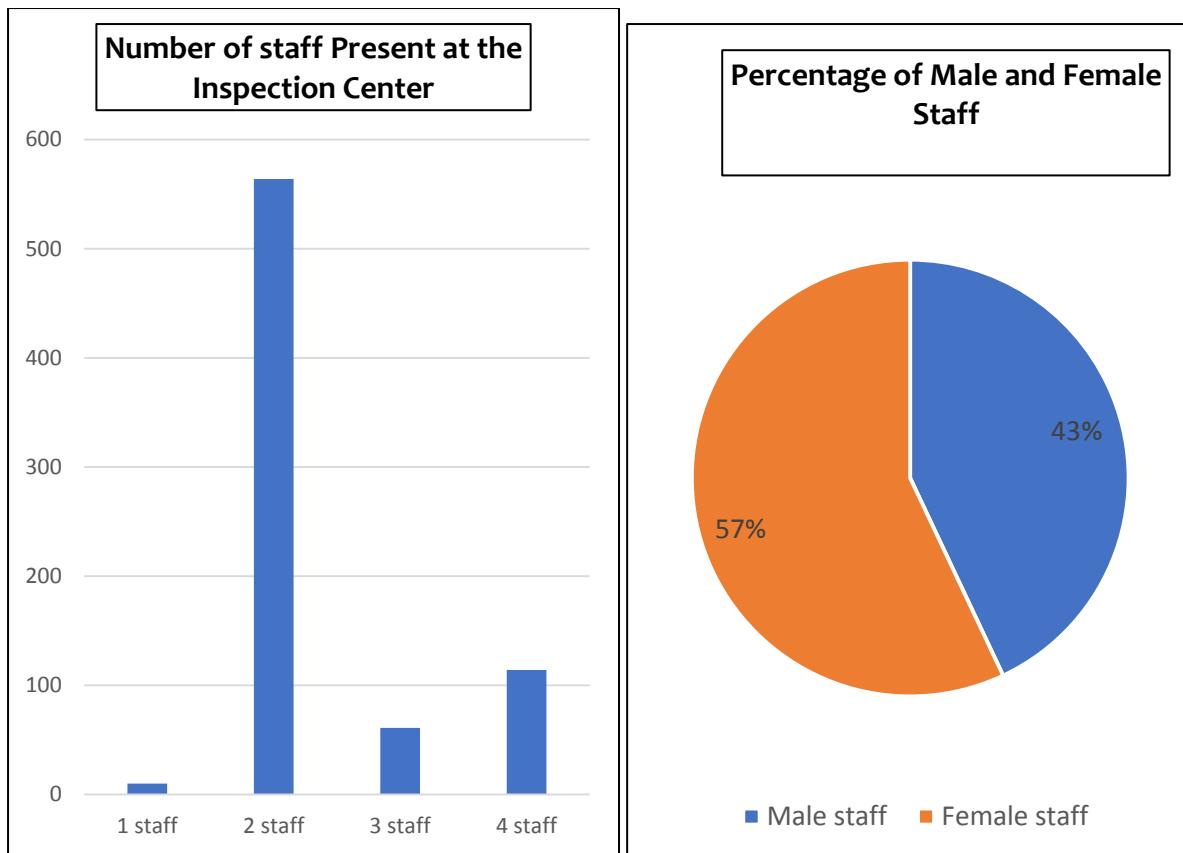
The law provides that every voters' roll and every consolidated roll shall be a public document and open to inspection by the public, free of charge, during ordinary office hours at the office of the Commission or the registration office where it is kept. The voters' roll was not posted for inspection outside ICs and people could only check their names by handing their identity documents to the inspection staff. The impact of this is

that voters could not check for friends or family or provide objections to the IC staff. This public scrutiny of the roll is important for removal of ineligible voters by reason of multiple registration, death or non-residence.

Observers were asked to evaluate the performance of IC staff over the observation period from very good, to very poor. Of the ICs, where ZESN LTOs observed, only 1% of the polling stations were rated as very poor, 1% as poor, 18% as reasonable and 80% as very good.



The average number of IC staff present at each station was 2, with larger percentages of female staff than males.



Of the 583 inspection centres where observers were given information on the number of voters on the voters' roll, 163 polling stations (28%) had less than 400 voters on the rolls. Two polling stations had as few as 17 and 19 voters. For instance, at St Johns Primary School in Chegutu, Mashonaland West, there was an Inspection Center A with 1574 voters registered which had been divided into two polling stations. There was also a St Johns B Primary school IC at the same location with only 58 voters. Divisions should be made more evenly so as to avoid the problem of small PSs. It appears that the subdivisions were done in a haphazard manner not taking into account the need to ensure a reasonable size of voters in each polling station.

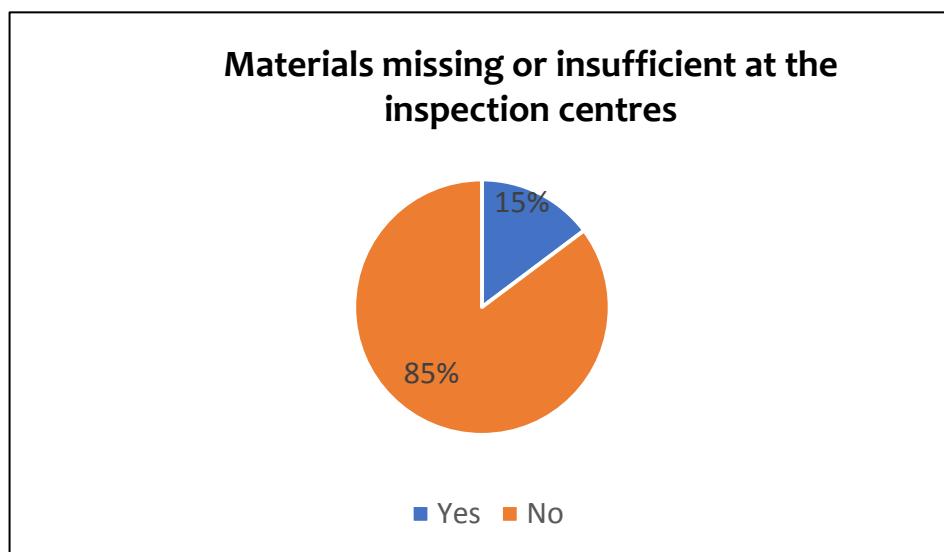
This may have serious implications for voters who may feel that their voting choices will be known thus the need to put in place mechanisms to deter possibilities of political retribution and affirmation of the secrecy of the vote. In addition, the fact that more than 80% of these small polling stations were in rural and remote areas where people are more likely to know each other exacerbates the problem. It is therefore imperative that the Commission conducts comprehensive voter education and enforce strict adherence to the code of conduct for the election.

On average, 6 people visited the ICs per hour to check their registration details during the 2 hour period were ZESN LTOs observed; this could be attributed that for the first-time voters were able to check their details via SMS, USSD or the ZEC website and also on a number of factors such as lack of voter awareness or general disinterest.

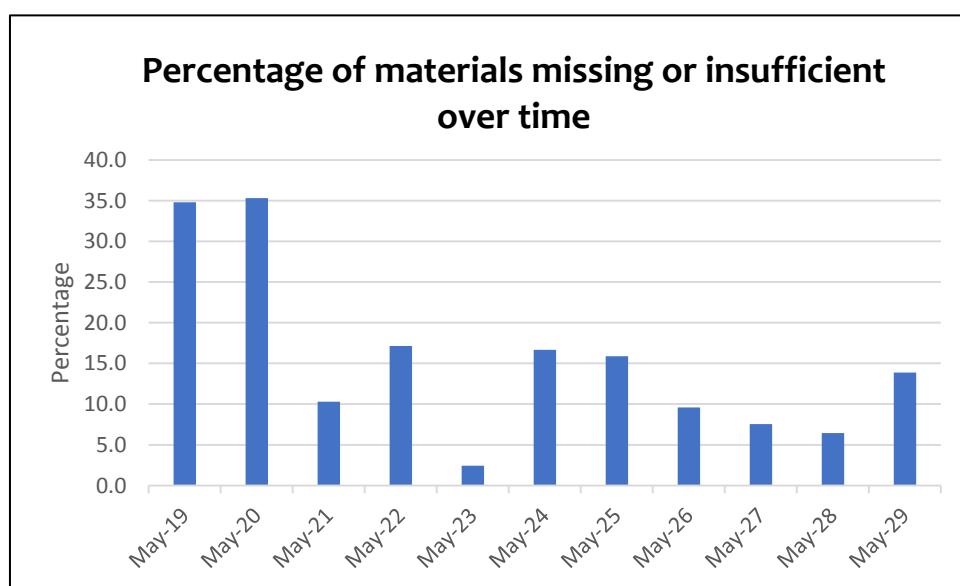
Problems witnessed by observers.

Apart from the fact that the voters' roll was not displayed for public inspection, the major problem witnessed was shortage of some of the materials required to make changes or add new registrants to the voters' roll.

Observers encountered ICs where the Voter Registration Data Correction Form (VR 1) and Transfer Form (VR 3) were missing 15% of the time. This was high especially at the beginning of the inspection period.



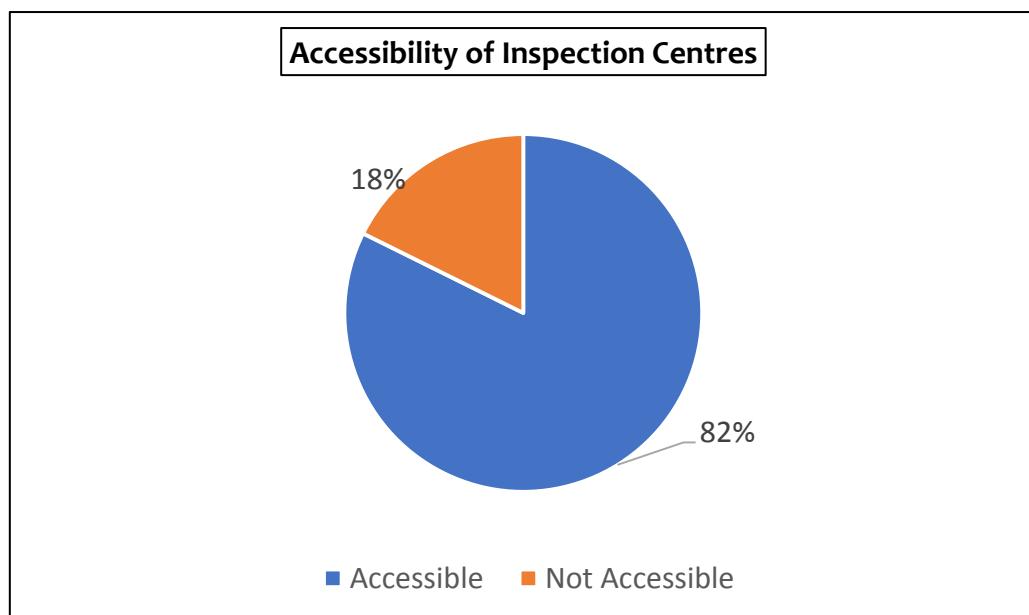
Compared to rural and remote areas, the urban centres experienced greater problems with missing materials.



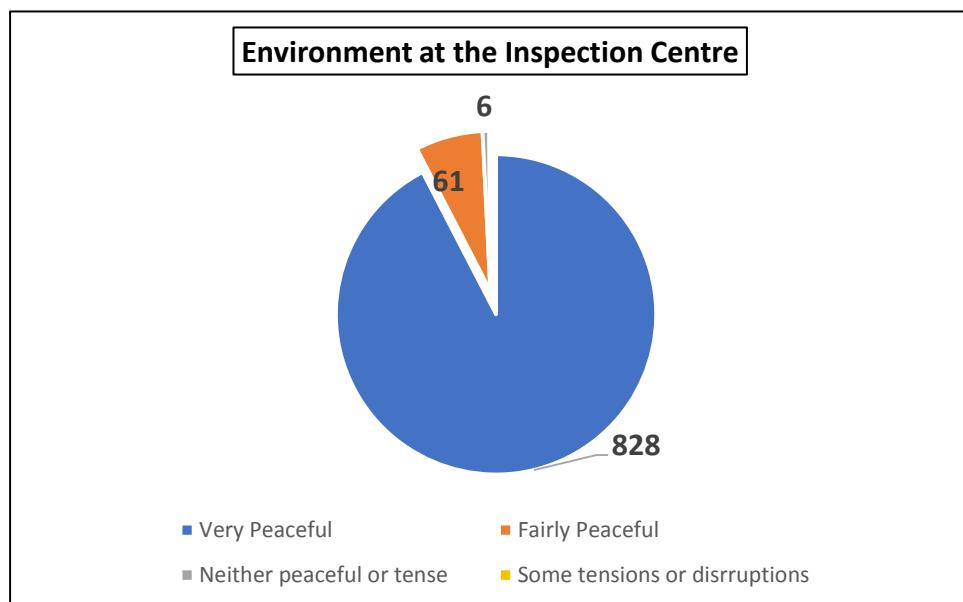
Accessibility of Inspection Centres to Persons With Disabilities (PWDs)

18% of ICs visited were not easily accessible for the elderly or persons with disabilities, often with steps and no ramp. Accessibility was more of an issue in large centres housing a number of polling stations, it is critical for the ZEC to ensure that ramps are made available at such centres for Election Day to facilitate easy access for Persons With Disabilities and the elderly.

For instance, there were steps to the room in Ruvimbo primary school, Mbizo, Ward 5, Midlands, (IC 4301MAM1003) and Godfrey Huggins primary school Marondera Central , Ward 10, Mashonaland East. The IC in Joel sub office, Zhombe Ward 13 Midlands province was on the first floor so inaccessible to the elderly or people using a wheelchair.

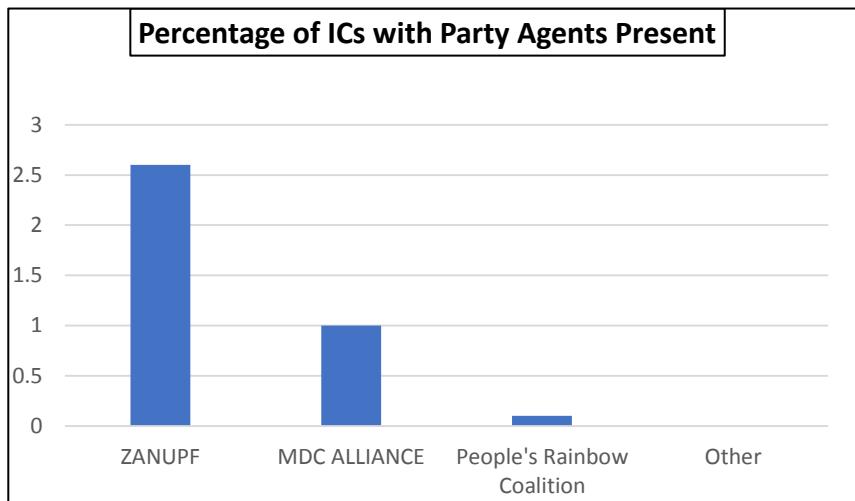


Observers reported that at 92% of the ICs, the environment was very peaceful. Similarly, interference with the inspection process was witnessed in only 32 occasions, or 3.5% of the time. Security forces were neither visibly present nor interfering with the inspection process.



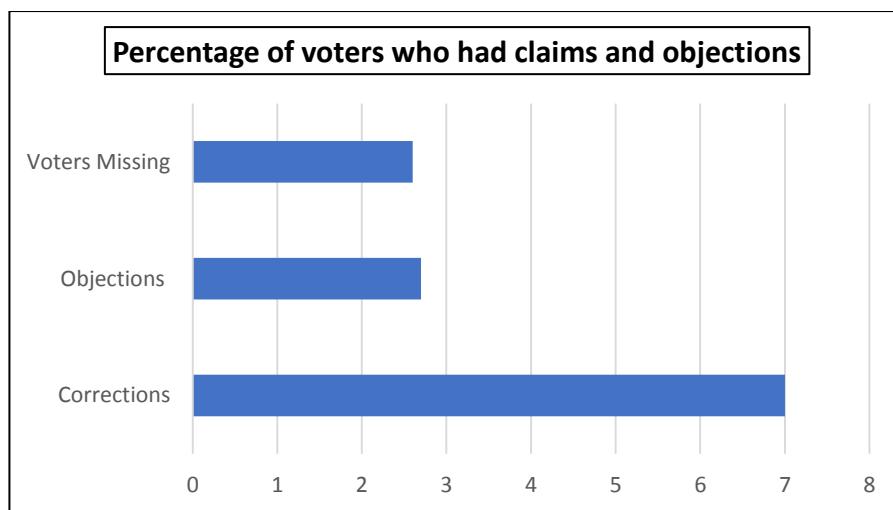
Presence of other Observers and Party Agents

At 4% of inspection centres visited by ZESN observers, political party agents were present to track the proceedings whilst citizen observers were present at 3% of the ICs, possibly due to the lack of accreditation during this period. The majority of political party agents were from ZANU PF. The other parties fielding agents in ICs visited were MDC Alliance and The People's Rainbow Coalition.



Corrections and Additions to the Voters' Rolls

During each two hour visit to an inspection centre, ZESN LTOs observed the number of people who requested corrections to their details, made objections on the voters' roll or were missing from the voters' roll altogether.

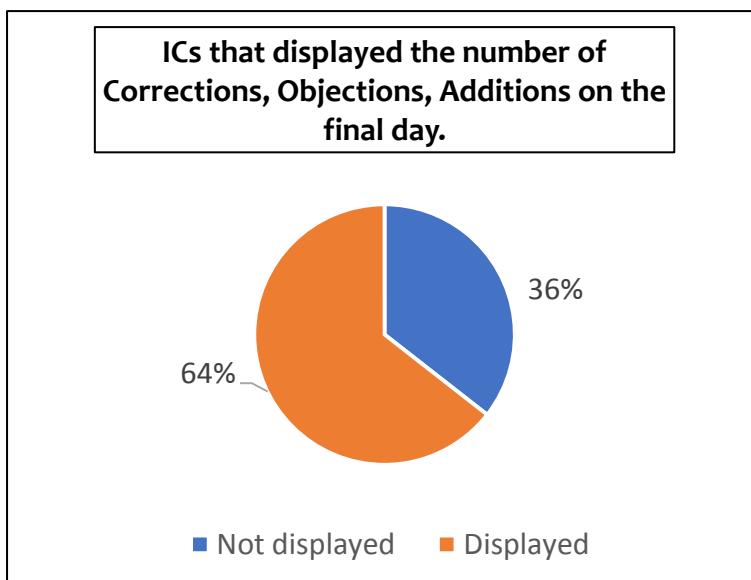


Percentage of different changes made by 9048 voters observed verifying their details.

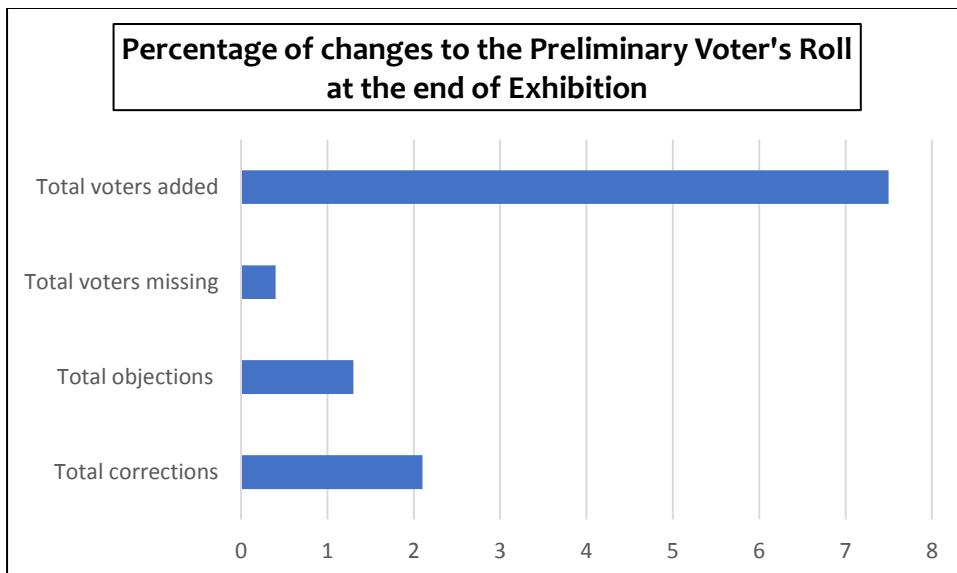
The percentage of corrections required from a relatively small number of people who came to check their details is quite high at 7%. From other checks that ZESN has performed by searching for people surveyed against the ZEC website, the corrections are often regarding misspelt names and may not affect people's ability to vote. The number

of objections to people on the roll is also high considering that rolls were not displayed for easy inspections. There is a relatively small number of people missing completely from the voters' rolls, because some had come to the wrong centre, and these were added or sent to the correct place at the time of inspection. It is important that voter education is stepped up immediately to inform people that they should continue to check their polling stations using the ZEC USSD code and on the website.

At the end of the Inspection period, LTOs returned to as many ICs as they could and noted the total number of corrections, objections, people missing and new registrations (additions) posted at the centre.



Of 301 centres visited at the end of the final day, one third did not avail the final tallies in accordance with good practice.



Changes made as a percentage of the aggregate number of voters on the Voter's Rolls at the Inspection Centres where figures were available.

Using figures from 165 separate polling stations, ZESN observed that the number of persons with objections as to how their details were captured in the preliminary voters

roll was low, while only 0.4% of voters did not find their names. However, the total percentage of missing voters may be much higher when we consider that the number of voters who physically checked their details was very small.

On a positive note, an additional 7.5% of voters were registered during the inspection period.

Recommendations

Based on its observation of the inspection process, ZESN makes the following recommendations:

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- ZEC should intensify voter education, ahead of the elections to ensure participation of citizens
- ZESN calls on political parties to step up their efforts to recruit agents to monitor all key electoral processes including polling day.
- Deployment and logistics should be properly planned, missing materials and equipment during inspection points to inadequacies in planning
- ZEC should ensure that inspection centres and polling station are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- ZEC should issue inspection regulations to ensure procedures are applied uniformly when inspecting the voters' roll
- ZESN recommends that ZEC should provide clear instructions to officials, for example some observers were denied access even though ZEC had communicated that the BVR accreditation was still valid
- The voters' roll should be posted outside in the future to enhance transparency and promote public confidence
- The ZEC should consider extending the lifespan of the USSD and inspection website platform.
- Mechanisms must be put in place to deal with possible cases of political retribution and misinformation.
- CSOs and the media should collaborate with ZEC in conducting civic and voter education