

**ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK**



**ZESN CONCERNS ON THE PROPOSED TIMELINES FOR NEW VOTER  
REGISTRATION**

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**HARARE, 17 October, 2016-** The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) notes the announcement by the Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) that the Commission will commence a new biometric polling station based voter registration in 2017. According to a report in The Herald of 11 October 2016, ZEC will conduct a new voter registration exercise from May 2017. ZESN calls upon ZEC to ensure that this crucial exercise is awarded adequate time to guarantee that the process is inclusive and comprehensive so as to safeguard against the disenfranchisement of any potential voters.

Furthermore, for the BVR process to succeed, it should allow ample time for intensive voter education so as to allay any fears and misconceptions about the use of ICTs in the registration process. The implementation of the polling station based and biometric voter registration system in the current political environment might result in targeted violence and intimidation hence the need for the creation of a conducive political environment. ZEC and other relevant stakeholders should put in place mechanisms and enforceable punitive measures to eliminate intimidation, fear and political violence. Moreover, ZEC should timeously accredit civic society organisations to conduct voter education and publicity on the new voter registration model to ensure comprehensive information is delivered and geographically covers all areas of the country adequately.

In view of the challenges experienced during the 2013 voter registration exercise where thousands of potential voters were not registered due to insufficient information on voter registration procedures and requirements, inadequate funding, lack of adequate personnel and the slow processing of registration queues. ZESN therefore calls for proper planning on the part of ZEC and urges the Government to provide adequate financial and technical support to enable the ZEC to discharge the new voter registration model in an effective manner.

ZESN believes that whilst the Polling Station based Biometric Voter Registration system alone is not the panacea to credible, free and fair elections, there is need for transparency and accountability in the implementation of this process, in particular tendering and procurement of BVR kits. In addition, the process should be accompanied by other electoral reforms such as, the alignment of electoral laws to the Constitution, and the independence of ZEC in its operations without any executive interference, amongst others. The Network therefore reiterates that ZEC should continuously engage with electoral stakeholders on all electoral processes to build trust and confidence.

Of concern is the proposed threshold of voters per polling station which is pegged at 800 to 1500. ZESN believes that 1500 is too high and may congest polling stations particularly in highly populated areas. The Network therefore proposes that the maximum threshold be reduced to 1000 drawing lessons from the recently held Zambian elections where the threshold was 900.

ZESN believes that in dealing with the aspect of the Right to Vote, the issue of the Diaspora vote must be finalized timeously so as to ensure that proper mechanisms and resources for the registration of Zimbabweans living in the diaspora are put in place.

ZESN is committed to the promotion of democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe and calls for adherence to the principles of good voter registration to ensure that the process is fair, comprehensive, inclusive and gives equal opportunities to all eligible have access to voter registration centres.

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**PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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