Enhancing Understanding of BVR in Zimbabwe

What is Bio Metric Voter Registration (BVR)?
- Biometrics is a technology used to capture unique physical features such as finger prints and/or facial scans for the purposes of identification. Biological and behavioural characteristics are stored in a database and used for identification of voters on polling day.
- Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) can be used to collect this unique data to identify voters and the software used can help eliminate duplicates or multiple registrations due to malpractice, fraud and human error.

What BVR is not
- BVR is not electronic voting.
- BVR is not internet voting
- BVR will only be used for registering voters.
- On Election Day, voters will still be identified and be issued with a paper ballot paper and not vote electronically.

Advantages of BVR
- If implemented in accordance with the internationally accepted principles for voter registration such as inclusivity, transparency, accuracy,integrity,sustainability, comprehensiveness, and security of data, the BVR will result in a clean, comprehensive and credible voters' roll with no duplicate names and will minimise multiple voting.
- It improves the quality of the Voter Register as it accurately captures voters data.
- Increases efficiency as less registration officials will be used.
- It enhances trust and confidence in the voters' roll which in previous elections has been highly contested emanating from the presence of duplicated entries and other errors and this is an opportunity for Zimbabwe to get a fresh voters' roll.

Risks of BVR
- If proper planning is not done the BVR could result in a number of challenges.
- Fear of ICTs by the electorate which could result in their intimidation
- Human Error
- High costs of equipment
- Vulnerable to Information Technology(IT) Fraud
- Limited knowledge and Poor Training of Implementers resulting in inaccuracies
- Human Error leading to mistrusts and suspicions.

ZESN's position on BVR

- BVR accompanied by other appropriate electoral reforms has great potential to transform the electoral system in Zimbabwe given that it offers significant protection against double registrations and inaccuracies.

- The BVR system requires careful planning, preparation and implementation and in addition to providing adequate financial and technical resources, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) should also provide adequate and continuous information regarding the implementation of the system to ensure that all stakeholders understand how the system will be implemented in Zimbabwe.

- ZEC would be required to continuously engage other stakeholders on the process to enhance confidence and trust in the process.
- The BVR should be backed up by regulations supported by a sound legal framework.
- There is need for an inclusive and comprehensive Voter Education to demystify some of the questions around the introduction of the new technology.
- If the BVR is not implemented in accordance with internationally accepted principles and standards it will not be effective in achieving its objectives.
- BVR is not a panacea to Zimbabwe's Electoral problems. It must be complemented with other reforms to the administrative, legislative and political environment in which electoral processes are implemented.
- BVR should not be seen as driven by vendor or external interests, introduced for reasons of national ego or as a distraction from other key electoral tasks.
- BVR should not be introduced at the last minute (11th hour).
- If BVR is to succeed, there is need for a conducive political environment that is free from intimidation and violence.

Promoting Democratic Elections in Zimbabwe