

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTRATION UPDATE END OF PHASE 3 - NUMBER 12

8 December 2017 – ZESN continues to observe the (Biometric Voter Registration) BVR blitz which entered the fourth and last phase on 4 December until 19 December 2017. At the conclusion of Phase 3, ZEC indicated that a total of 3,532,577 had been registered cumulatively from Phase 1. Despite repeated efforts by ZESN, the voter registration statistics provided by ZEC are not disaggregated by sex, age and geographic area. It is therefore not clear at this stage how many women, men, youths and persons with disabilities have been registered. Given that slightly over half of the projected 7 million registrants have been registered over the last three phases, the provision of disaggregated data on registered voters would be helpful in assisting targeted voter education and mobilisation efforts.

Observation of Phase 3 data transfer and transmission

The data transfer and transmission process was conducted differently at centres where ZESN observed in the 10 provinces. For instance, instead of transferring data from the kits to the USB drive at each registration centre, ZESN observed that in Mashonaland East at Women's Affairs Building in Chivhu, in Mashonaland Central at Madziwa Secondary School in Shamva North and in Harare at Highfield High 1, supervisors brought together registration officers to a central place and conducted the data transfer for all centres simultaneously. In Kwekwe at W Section Play Centre, Amaveni Primary School A and B data transfer was conducted at each registration centre with all processes duly followed. However, BVR kits in Kwekwe, Redcliff and Chegutu Civic Centre did not have USB drives by close of registration and the supervisors brought the USBs for the data transfer process which is different from observations from other provinces where the BVR kits had assigned USB drives upon delivery from phase 2.

The ZESN observer at PWD Luveve Deport in Bulawayo reported that registration data that had been captured between 18 November 2017 and 1 December 2017 could not be exported owing to the fact that a ZEC technician had exported data from one of the BVR kits, ahead of schedule, without the knowledge of the registration officers operating the kit. The incident, which happened on the 18th of November 2017, ultimately affected the data export process at the end of the phase. As a consequence registration officials recorded the registration data for the affected period on the appropriate forms.

In Masvingo data export was conducted at the under the supervision of ZEC officials at the respective registration centers such as Bikita Minerals in ward 30.

Turnout

Whereas turnout sharply increased at some centres in Phase 3, turnout was generally low at most centres across the country. At Town House in Harare Central, turnout skyrocketed from a total of 51 person that registered on 25 November to 542, 622, 815, and 883 on 27, 28, 29, and 30 November respectively. The sharp increase persons registering can also be partly attributed to the fact the days indicated above coincided with the days police officers were granted leave from their workplaces to enable them to register. In



Kwekwe at Amaveni Hall; Main Bus Terminus in Ward 6; Fitchlea Primary School; Kushinga Primary School; and Redcliff Golf Club in Redcliff, turnout sharply increased on the final day of phase 3 resulting in voter registration extending into the night. By contrast, centres such as Manyotswa Primary School in Seke ward 15, Landas Shops in Marondera West ward 14, Mupfurudzi Primary School in Shamwa North, and several centres in Mashonaland West generally showed signs of inactivity particularly on the last two days of Phase 3.

Intimidation during voter registration

As reported in previous updates, ZESN continues to receive reports of intimidation of registrants by political actors, whereby registrants are asked to bring their registration slips to have their serial numbers. Some political actors are threatening voters with unspecified action if they vote for the opposition in 2018. The political actors claim they have the ability to track voting preferences of individual voters.

Aliens' registration

In a landmark ruling on the 29th of November, the High Court of Zimbabwe ruled that people with Identity Cards labeling them as aliens should be allowed to vote by the ZEC. However, at all registration centers visited in Mashonaland West and Masvingo provinces, on the last two days of Phase 3 (30 November and 01 December), ZESN observed that 'aliens' were still being turned away without registering because registration officers were waiting for the relevant instructions from ZEC. ZESN therefore urges the ZEC to promptly provide the necessary clarity about the new status of the so called aliens. Such clarity needs to be mainstreamed into future registration efforts.

Anomalies with voter registration centres

The ZESN observers in Mashonaland West reported that some centres marked for Phase 4 were set up for registration 18 days before they were scheduled to start registering. According to the

schedule that ZEC availed to stakeholders the registration centers in question should have been set up during Phase 3. Examples include some centers in Mhondoro- Mubaira Ward 5 where some centres scheduled to be set in Phase 4 were actually set up in phase 3. On the other hand, some registration centers in Zvimba South were set up to receive registrants in phase 2 instead of phase 3. It is imperative that changes whenever they occur be publicized timeously in order to avoid confusion among potential registrants and election stakeholders such as observers and political parties who may be mobilizing their supporters to register.

Recommendations

1. ZEC should avail disaggregated data categorizing registrants by geographic location (ward, district, constituency, and province); sex, and age, among other things.
2. ZEC and ZHRC should investigate cases of intimidation which include, the recording of serial numbers on registration slips of voters of registrants.
3. Changes to the location of registration centers need to be made known to all stakeholders, including the public, ahead of time.
4. ZEC should extent the BVR process to accommodate ‘aliens’ who are now eligible to register and deliberately target places such as farms and mines where these people normally reside.
5. ZEC should convene a meeting with electoral stakeholders in order to jointly review the progress made and challenges encountered during the voter registration exercise so far to allow for appropriate adjustments to be effected.
6. Due to the rather low turnout ZEC has, to date, only managed to register over 50% of its target, ZESN therefore recommends that the Commission consider extending the voter registration period to allow for more citizens to be registered.
7. The Registrar General should also extend the mobile National Identity Documents registration exercise to match the same period covered by the ZEC voter registration exercise.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

ZESN Chairperson Mr Andrew Makoni: +263772234891

ZESN Director Mrs Rindai Chipfunde Vava: +263712415902

zesn2011@zesn.net, info@zesn.net

Facebook: Zimbabwe Election Support Network | **Twitter:** @ZESN1