
ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTRATION UPDATE - NUMBER 18

02 February 2018 –As part of its oversight role on electoral processes, ZESN continues to closely observe the ongoing Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) Mop-up exercise. This update is based on reports from ZESN’s mobile and static observers who have been deployed at selected mop up, district and provincial registration centres countrywide.

Intimidation of registrants

ZESN continues to receive reports countrywide of an elaborate system of intimidation of voter registrants by members of the ruling party (ZANU-PF) and traditional leaders who are coercing registrants to bring their serial numbers which are added to the party’s cell, ward, village and district databases. Registrants are misinformed that the party is capable of establishing how the registrants would have voted in 2018, in addition ZESN has received reports that those who fail to present their registration slips have been warned that they will not be allowed to access food aid, basic social services and in some instances village heads have threatened to evict them from their villages if they do not comply with these requests. In addition to reports from ZESN observers, there are videos circulating on social media which show an individual, who is not a ZEC employee, recording serial numbers of registrants.

The image shows a document titled 'ZANU PF MASVINGO PROVINCE BVR VERIFICATION EXERCISE 2018'. It includes fields for 'CELL', 'WARD 2A', 'ANNEXURE "E"', '18', 'MASVINGO NORTH CONSTITUENCY', and 'MASVINGO DISTRICT'. Below the header is a table with columns: 'SRL', 'WING', 'POSITION', 'NAMES', 'ID NUMBER', 'SEX', 'BVR SRL NO', 'STATION', and 'CELL NO'. The table has 11 rows, with the first row containing the numbers 1 through 11 in the 'SRL' column, and the rest of the rows being empty.

Figure 1: A sample of the form which is reportedly used to record serial numbers of registrants

ZESN and other civil society organizations continue to bring these violations to the attention of ZEC and the Human Rights Commission. ZESN commends the ZEC for issuing public responses to these violations, and encourages the Commission to also communicate the same issues using radio, television and social media platforms.

Turnout

As of 1 February 2018, ZEC indicated that they have registered 5,186,331 people since the commencement of the voter registration exercise. On the other hand 306,849 people have been registered during the mop up voter registration exercise alone.

Turnout of people wanting to register at district and sub district centers remains high in Harare and Bulawayo and with six days remaining before the completion of the BVR mop-up exercise the queues of people coming to register at these centers are not getting shorter. It is therefore imperative that ZEC considers opening more centres at the sub-district level where voter registration is currently not taking place. The sub-district centers, especially those in urban areas, continue to register over 100 people per day which indicates that a large number of eligible voter are still yet to register in the catchment areas of those district centers. In Harare these centers include Town House, Parliament, Kuwadzana 2 High School and Highfield West's Zimbabwe Hall.

At Kuwadzana 2 High School, in Harare, the center has consistently been registering more than 100 people daily. The catchment area for this registration center is large as evidenced by the fact that people from as far as Dzivarasekwa extension, Whitecliff, Grenary and Rainham are making their way daily to be registered as voters. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the BVR kit at this center is operated by one registration official. Despite the best efforts of the registration official, people are waiting for hours just to be served and others are having to return to their homes without registering to vote.

While ZESN appreciates that there is a daily limit to the number of persons that a BVR kit can serve, ZESN believes the Commission needs to quickly respond to request for additional kits at registration centers where high numbers of people are turning up to register in the urban areas. The 16 additional kits that were deployed to Harare still appear inadequate. In addition ZEC needs to correct the practice that is now widespread where registration officials are turning away people who come to register after 15.00hours.

Civil Society Organizations' Mobilization Efforts

A number of Civil Society Organizations have held a roadshows as part of efforts to mobilize people to register. In the past week road shows have been held in Mutoko (by ZESN), Mount Darwin (by Zimrights) among others. In addition COTRAD and EFZ set up information Kiosks in Masvingo and Gwanda respectively in order to enhance people's understanding of the BVR process.



PIC Left: People in a queue at Townhouse, which is one of the center registering over 100 people daily per registration kit. PIC Right: Part of the Crowd that attended the ZESN roadshow in Mutoko

Turned Away

ZEC reports that as of 1 February 2018, the number of persons turned away at registration centers countrywide stood at 6,573 . This figure represents 2 percent of people that have presented themselves to register during the BVR Mop up exercise. The reasons include Aliens who do not have long birth certificates, defaced and photocopied Identity document. ZESN urges the registrar General to conduct another mop up national identity registration exercise to facilitate ease of getting national identity documents by those who still want to register.

Recommendations:

1. ZEC needs to add sub-district registration centers and other high traffic areas to the list of registration centers that will remain open after the end of the mop up exercise.
2. ZEC needs to ensure that its registration centers are open throughout the advertised times.
3. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission should investigate cases of the recording of voter registration slips' serial numbers by political actors which has become rampant in most areas. In addition official pronouncements by the Commission denouncing thzis practice may help deter this practice and inform registration that they are not obligated to comply with such requests which are extra-legal.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

ZESN Chairperson Mr Andrew Makoni: [+263772234891](tel:+263772234891)

ZESN Director Mrs Rindai Chipfunde Vava: [+263712415902](tel:+263712415902)

zesn2011@zesn.net, info@zesn.net