

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



ZESN'S STATEMENT ON THE MOBILE VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE

Harare-2 May 2013- ZESN welcomes the commencement of a national mobile voter registration exercise earlier this week. Indications from the various parts of the country have shown that although in some areas the registration is going on well there are a number of challenges regarding personnel, funds and other resources resulting in some areas not being fully covered by the exercise.

ZESN notes with concern the failure to publicize the process in the public media before commencement of the registration exercise. Therefore there is lack of adequate information regarding the registration centres, registration dates and the requirements for registration, which has seen a considerable number of people being turned away at the point of registration, while others are not even aware that such an exercise is on-going. Moreover, in some instances, fewer teams than expected were deployed resulting in some wards not being adequately catered for. ZESN is worried that this lack of publicity may result in the electorate not fully participating and being subsequently unable to exercise their right to vote.

Furthermore, ZESN reiterates its previous calls over the past years for the relaxation of registration requirements in Zimbabwe, chief among these being the acceptable proof of residence in urban areas and the need for endorsement by the chief in rural areas. ZESN is of the view that such requirements might result in the exclusion of potential voters should their lessors or chiefs fail or refuse to avail proof of residence or endorsement.

ZESN noted from media reports efforts by the Office of the Registrar-General of removing 1 000 000 dead people from the voters' register – up from 300 000 reported a few weeks ago. This comes on the back of persistent calls by stakeholders including civic organisations such as ZESN for the cleaning of the voters' roll and removal of dead voters who according to a survey by ZESN in 2010 amounted to 27% of the entire voters roll. However, the process was not widely publicised for citizens to initiate the removal of their deceased relatives. Further the rate at which the deletions has been effected is alarming especially given that the method used was not clearly outlined to stakeholders. ZESN therefore reiterates the need for full transparency in the process of overhauling the voters' roll given the vital role that it plays in ensuring a credible election.

In order therefore for the registration exercise to be comprehensive, ZESN recommends the following:

- Increase transparency of the voter registration processes such as deletion from the voters' roll as the process is currently out of public scrutiny and the criteria for deletion is left to the discretion of the Constituency-Registrars;
- Extensive voter education drives to inform citizens on the procedures for registration, transferring, objections, making claims and deletion of dead voters;
- Voter education should also include information on how relatives can help the Registrar with deletions of their deceased relatives from the voters' roll; as well as the process for objection to inclusion of specific persons by citizens.
- Requirements such as proof of residence need to be reviewed, especially for urban voters and young voters who find it difficult to produce proof of residence;
- Ensure the funding of ZEC is adequate for voter registration and voter education that relates to voter registration;

ZESN remains committed to promoting democratic, free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. /ENDS