

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



PRESS STATEMENT

CSO's JOINT STATEMENT ON THE JUST ENDED MOBILE VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE

HARARE-21 May 2013

We, the Zimbabwean Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) listed below,

Noting the conclusion of the constitution making process, a key milestone in the implementation of the Global Political Agreement, which paves way for preparations for free and fair elections,

Recognizing the centrality of an inclusive voter registration exercise as a key foundation to a credible electoral process,

Having Observed the just ended Mobile Voter registration exercise that commenced on 29 April 2013 and ended on 19 May 2013,

Disheartened by the observations of various electoral stakeholders such as parliament, the church, cabinet and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) that the process was inadequate, chaotic, slow and did not capture all those interested in registering as voters.

Desirous of seeing a peaceful, free and fair election in Zimbabwe

Do hereby make the following observations and recommendations:

OBSERVATIONS

INADEQUATE EDUCATION AND INFORMATION ON THE PROCESS – The process was hampered by a dearth of information, publicity and limited voter education. We noted the exclusion of key stakeholders such as the church and civil society which were not accredited to compliment the Electoral Commission in providing voter education. Even where civics sought to legitimately mobilize citizens to participate in the process they were met with heavy-handedness. As a result potential voters were largely ignorant of the dates, centers and the requirements for registration.

ACCESIBILITY - The process was characterized by lack of true decentralization; the centers were not in proportion to the intended beneficiaries leaving many communities without the service or citizens having to travel long distance to register as voters. Further, the manner in which the methodology of the exercise was crafted did not reflect any due consideration of the special needs of groups such as women, youths, the elderly, the infirm, workers and people living with disabilities resulting in the disenfranchisement of a significant number in these key sectors.

LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM – Some centers did not adhere to the stipulated opening and closing times, prospective voters in the queue by closing time were turned away even when the mobile unit was relocating the following day, leaving citizens frustrated in their efforts to register.

INADEQUATE HUMAN RESOURCES – Mobile units and static centers were plagued with an excruciatingly slow pace of processing applications for registration resulting in long slow moving queues particularly in urban centers.

INCONSISTENCIES IN PROCEDURE AND REQUIREMENTS – Some centers turned away prospective registrants who were ‘aliens’ or had opted for an affidavit as proof of residence while some centers accepted prospective registrants in similar circumstances. Some centers were not issuing registration slips asking prospective registrants to collect the slips the following day at a different center.

GENERAL ABSENCE OF FULL SERVICE- Mobile and static units had limited service. Reports reveal that not all of the units were offering a comprehensive package of birth certificates, national identification papers and voter registration on site. As a result prospective registrants were unable to benefit fully from a single centre. Some citizens with waiting passes were asked to produce birth certificates and upon failure to do so, they failed to register.

FUNDING – There was no clarity in terms of the resources that were disbursed for the exercise, with one arm of government claiming to have disbursed funds while the recipients claim to have received different amounts. As a result there was lack of accountability and blame games revolving around inadequate funding dominated the narrative for the insufficiencies of the exercise.

In light of the foregoing, it is our overall assessment that the mobile voter registration exercise as implemented by the registrar general’s office and supervised by ZEC, has failed to comprehensively reach out to all prospective registrants.

Accordingly we do hereby make the following recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The process must be re-started in line with the new constitution which stipulates a thirty day period for registration after its enactment; it is our view that the preceding exercise cannot be a substitute for this constitutionally mandated process.**
2. **Legal instruments guiding the issue of “aliens” and the use of affidavit as proof of residence put in place recently should be well publicized to ensure that citizens are able to fully benefit.**
3. **As a precondition to the aforementioned exercise, the public must be adequately informed of the process, the requirements and the modalities prior to the commencement of the process.**
4. **A comprehensive inclusive process must be undertaken with adequate financial and well trained human resources. This process must be effectively decentralized to the ward level in each constituency. Adequate time must be allocated to each centre in proportion to the population density in the community.**
5. **Stakeholders should have unfettered access to the process, particularly civil society organizations pursuing their legitimate functions of sensitizing, mobilizing citizens to participate in the process.**
6. **Effective supervision of the Registrar General’s office by the ZEC to safeguard the integrity of the process for which ZEC is ultimately accountable to stakeholders. /END/**

The following organisations have endorsed this statement;

1. Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)
2. Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC)
3. Election Resource Centre (ERC)
4. Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum
5. Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA)
6. National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO)
7. Association of Women's Clubs (AWC)
8. Bulawayo Agenda (BA)
9. Catholic Commission for Justice And Peace (CCJP)
10. Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET)
11. Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA)
12. Counselling Services Unit (CSU)
13. Evangelical Fellowships of Zimbabwe (EFZ)
14. Federation of African Media Women (FAMWZ)
15. Legal Resources Foundation (LRF)
16. Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)
17. Media Monitoring Project (MMPZ)
18. National Constitutional Assembly (NCA)
19. National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH)
20. Organisation for Rural Association for Progress [ORAP]
21. Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ)
22. Rooftop Promotions
23. Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIZ)
24. Women's Action Group (WAG)
25. The Women's Trust
26. Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of the Offender (ZACRO)
27. Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET)
28. Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)
29. Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)
30. Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights)
31. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights [ZLHR]
32. Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU)
33. Zimbabwe Students Christian Movement (SCM.Z)
34. Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ)
35. Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)
36. Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA)
37. The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ)
38. Shalom Project
39. Centre for Community Development Trust (CCDZ)
40. Media Centre
41. Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT)
42. Youth Forum
43. Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI)
44. Community Tolerance Reconciliation and Development (COTRAD)
45. Build a Better Youth Zimbabwe

46. Zimbabwe Poets for Human Rights
47. Zimbabwe Organisation for the Youth in Politics (ZOYP)
48. Youth in Development and Empowerment Zimbabwe (YiDEZ)
49. Radio Dialogue
50. Matabeleland Constitution Reform Agenda (MACRA)