



Ballot Update

Bulletin

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Zambia 2015 Election: Lessons for Zimbabwe

ZESN held a public seminar on the **2015 Zambia Elections: Lessons for Zimbabwe** on the 3rd of February at the Book Café in Harare. The discussions were led by a team of three presenters who observed the Zambia Presidential by-election held on January 20, 2015. Zambia's compliance with the constitutional provision to announce the date of the election within 90 days was applauded as a good practice. The three presenters noted this as a key lesson for Zimbabwe, given that it has taken more than a year to proclaim dates for Mt Darwin West by-election and to fill in senate seats in Chegutu Mhondoro and Buhera following the elevation of Hon. Edna Madzongwe to be the President of Senate and the death of Hon. Kumbirai Kangai respectively.

The discussants noted that Zambia uses polling station based biometric voters' rolls which make it easy to deter double voting and has ensured that the register is up to date enhancing transparency and trust amongst stakeholders.



Left: The panel of discussants for the public seminar on the Zambia elections 2015

The Electoral Commission of Zambia provided all political parties that contested the election with hard and electronic copies of the voters' roll free of charge. The discussants noted that this is standard practice that Zimbabwe must also adopt in order to enhance transparency and confidence in the electoral process. In Zimbabwe's elections the voters' roll is always a contentious issue with political parties and electoral stakeholders failing to obtain copies and raising questions over the credibility of the roll. Information Communications Technology now play a pivotal role in elections the world over, and in Zambia ICTs were comprehensively used during the election in conveying information

such as results from the various provinces to the command centre. Speaking on the need to embrace ICTs in election managements, participants called upon Zimbabwe particularly ZEC to explore the use of ICTs in order to improve election management. Democracy thrives when institutions that are entrusted with ensuring flourishing of democracy respect and act within their mandate. The discussants raised the important issue of critical enablers which are the judiciary, security sector, informal institutions, and media among others. The EMB should remain resolute and determined in delivering their mandate as provided by law without giving in to political pressure and demands thus high levels of professionalism and independence should be exhibited by the Commission and its staff.

UP COMING EVENTS

- ♦ 27 March—Mt Darwin and Chirumhanzu—Zibagwe Parliamentary by-elections
- ♦ 12-16 March: Voter education for polling for Mt Darwin and Chirumhanzu by elections
- ♦ 6 March: ZESN Public Seminar at the Book Café—Harare TOPIC: Election administration and role of election stakeholders

ZESN Observes the Pilot Voter Registration Exercise

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) observed the pilot voter registration exercise conducted by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) in Mt Darwin West and Chirumanzu - Zibagwe from the 3rd to the 10th of February in preparation for by-elections to be held on the 27th of March in these two constituencies.

ZESN commends ZEC for upholding its constitutional mandate by proceeding with voter registration despite the subordinate electoral legislation not being aligned to the Constitution as laid out in Section 239 (c) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Regrettably there appears to be no political will by the executive arm of government to expedite the complete alignment of the Electoral Act to the Constitution although electoral stakeholders including ZESN made comprehensive submissions to Parliament before the passing of the Electoral Amendment Act.

ZESN deployed teams to conduct voter education for voter registration at the invitation of ZEC and subsequently deployed observers to Mt Darwin and Chirumhanzu-Zibagwe to observe the voter registration processes in the two constituencies. ZESN observers noted that voter registration turnout was generally low especially at district and provincial centres.

In the conduct of the voter registration pilot in Chirumhanzu-Zibagwe and Mt Darwin West, ZEC established 83 static centres, 3 mobile registration teams and 47 static centres and 2 mobile registration teams respectively within the constituencies and deployed two registration officers per centre while the Registrar-General deployed stationary and mobile teams to issue national identity documents, replace lost, torn or defaced documents among other services. These complimentary services provided by the Registrar General's office are welcome.



ZESN Observed the pilot voter registration exercise carried out by ZEC

ZESN observed that although the new Constitution now allows “aliens” to obtain Zimbabwean citizenship thereby becoming eligible to register as voters, a significant number of them were turned away on the basis that they did not have identification documents or had not renounced their citizenship in other countries.

This is a clear violation of the rights and protections offered to such individuals in the new Constitution.

ZESN observers also noted that in resettlement and farming areas the number of new registrants and those seeking to transfer was higher as compared to other areas. ZESN observed that the new registered voters were issued with voter registration slips to be used during the by-elections if their

names do not appear in the voters' roll on polling day. This is of concern as it would be difficult to ascertain the authenticity of slips on Election Day as has been the case with previous by-elections and the national elections of 2013.

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ZESN'S Recommendations to ZEC on the Pilot Voter Registration Exercise

Voter registration is the principal means to determine those eligible and or ineligible to vote. Thus a flawed voters' roll can disenfranchise eligible voters and allow ineligible voters to vote. Voter registration in Zimbabwe serves a number of purposes which include: guaranteeing that people legally entitled to vote can do so. As a continuation of ZESN's programme of monitoring of the voter registration processes and the voters' roll, two teams were deployed in Mt. Darwin West and Chirumanzu-Zibagwe parliamentary constituencies to observe the pilot voter registration exercise by the ZEC.

ZESN recommends that ZEC should start considering implementation of the polling station based voters' roll as mandated by the Electoral Act Section 22A, however proper mechanisms have to be put in place to ensure that the system will not be used to disenfranchise or for retributive action towards voters perceived to be supporters of the opposition parties. ZESN calls upon ZEC to come up with a clear voter registration model that can be piloted in by-elections; a model that conforms to the principles of a sound voter registration, which include integrity, inclusivity, accuracy, accessibility, comprehensiveness, transparency, credibility, stakeholder participation, sustainability, accountability, an informed public and cost effectiveness.

The voters' roll is a national asset which has been subject to critique and controversy in the past. ZEC must continue where they left off with the Stakeholders' Conference and continue to strengthen stakeholders' participation on voter registration by involving and or consulting members of political parties, CSOs, academia, voter registration experts and voter registration ICT experts to act as a sounding board for ZEC to instil confidence and trust in the process.

Furthermore, the voters' roll should be accessible and readily available for inspection to the public to increase transparency and confidence in the voters' roll. Contesting parties and candidates should also be given copies of the voters' roll in a format that can be analysed in a reasonable time before the elections. ZESN urges the government to demonstrate its commitment to supporting the holding of credible elections by among other things supporting the creation of an enabling legislation that supports the efficient administration of elections.



ZESN Roundtable Meeting for Women in Politics, Governance and Democracy

ZESN held a roundtable meeting for women in politics, governance and democracy on the 27th of February at the Crowne Plaza in Harare. The discussions were led by women from various political parties including Mavambo/Kusile/Dawn, MDC-N, MDC-T, MDC-Renewal, ZANU Ndonga, NCA and Transform Zimbabwe as well as representatives from women's organisations and young women's networks. The discussion sessions focused on the milestones, opportunities and challenges encountered by women in emerging and established political parties in Zimbabwe.

The discussants noted that women in politics must strategize to garner political capital around common issues that affect them so as to set the agenda for parliament and the media. Participants agreed that women in politics are not a homogenous group hence they should embrace their diversity to support initiatives that seek to increase participation of women in politics and elections despite political and ideological differences. There was consensus on the need for women to rewrite the narrative regarding women's issues by engaging the media. The media has traditionally reported negatively on women's issues. Participants called upon the media to cover issues on women in politics positively.

This will reduce the influence of patriarchal stereotypes which portray women in negative light resulting in their poor representation in parliament and other influential political positions.

The roundtable suggested that women in politics should develop robust support systems for each other regardless of political and ideological affiliation, mainstream gender in all the country's laws including the Electoral Act. Participants also suggested that there is need for incentivizing women's participation at a political level, with those political parties that meet the thresholds in the Law receiving more money under the Political Finance Act.



Hon. Jessie Majome addressing participants at the Roundtable for women in politics, governance and elections

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK

PUBLIC SEMINAR INVITE



ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND ROLE OF ELECTION STAKEHOLDERS: A CASE OF LESOTHO

6 March 2015

At the Book Café

12:00 Hrs. to 14:00 Hrs.

Admission is Free

Follow proceedings on Twitter @ZESN1

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Speakers

Ian Goredema

Runyararo Mazingaizo

Dzimbabwe Chimbga

Moderator

Kumbirai Mafunda

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