



BALLOT Newsletter

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK(ZESN)

Issue 01

ELECTIONS BULLETIN



ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK(ZESN)



ZESN1



ZESN1



ARTICLE 1

ZESN IMPLORES ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS TO FOSTER PEACE AHEAD OF POLLS

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) implores electoral stakeholders to foster peace ahead of the March 26 by-elections and 2023 harmonized elections. The network is deeply concerned about the recent spate of inter-party as well as intra-party violence that occurred in Kwekwe, Gokwe and Marondera to mention but just a few which taints the credibility of electoral processes.

Acts of violence often lead to voter apathy, especially among women and people with disabilities which in turn defeats the desired 50/50 approach to gender balance in electoral processes and leadership positions. It is against this background that ZESN urges political parties to create a conducive political environment where all citizens enjoy their fundamental rights without fear.

Commenting on the incidents of violence the ZESN Chairperson Mr Andrew Makoni said, "the recent violent clashes have a potential to adversely affect the turnout of citizens on the ongoing voter registration exercise as violence impacts negatively on the participation in electoral processes, especially of women and people with disabilities. Political and electoral related violence undermines civil and political rights and affects citizens' right to compete in electoral processes. Also; it erodes trust in democratic processes as well as undermines the quality of democracy thereby, limiting inclusive participation."

"As ZESN, we call upon political parties to embrace divergent views and promote peace in the country as well as to put in place mechanisms that promote the participation of women in electoral processes," said Makoni.

ZESN urges the law enforcement agents to ensure that perpetrators of violence are arrested and that there is a more holistic and expanded legal framework to deal with perpetrators of political and electoral related violence.



ARTICLE 2

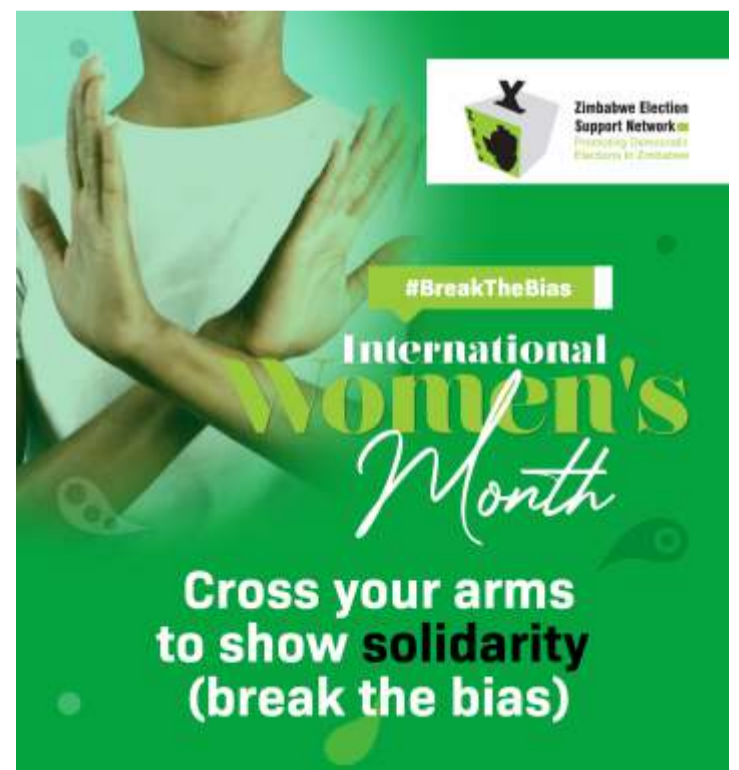
STAKEHOLDERS URGED TO EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES THAT EMPOWER WOMEN TO EFFECTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN ELECTIONS

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) urges all stakeholders to continue exploring opportunities, impediments and empower women to effectively participate in democratic electoral processes. This is in line with this year's International Women's Day celebrations that ran under the theme "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow" and hashtag #BreakTheBias.

"Without gender equality, today, a sustainable future, and an equal future remains beyond our reach, hence the need for a multi-stakeholder to break the biases that exist against women; such as men make better political leaders and that the woman's place is in the household," said ZESN Programmes Director Ellen Dingani.

More needs to be done to ensure diversity and a world free of stereotypes and gender discrimination; political parties should put in place mechanisms that promote gender equality and equity. There is need for women to challenge barriers that affect them and report violations on their rights; to have a voice and be equal players in decision-making as a key tenet for sustainable development and gender equality.

Women's Day is celebrated every year on March 8 to mark and celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women and raise awareness about women's equality and accelerate gender parity.





ARTICLE 3

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENT FOR FEMALE CANDIDATES HINDERS 50/50 REPRESENTATION

THE Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has come under fire for allegedly frustrating women's political participation by imposing stringent 'discriminatory' requirements for aspiring female candidates. This is against the background that female candidates were asked to provide marriage certificates or divorce papers for previously married women during the Nomination process in what critics said hindered progress in achieving the 50/50 gender representation quota as stipulated in the Constitution.

The Nomination Court sat on January 26 to accept papers from aspiring candidates for the March 26 by-elections.

Statistics from Nomination Court in Harare for example; show that out of the 46 candidates duly nominated to contest parliamentary seats, only six of the candidates were female. There are also fewer female candidates in local government elections compared to males.

Residents Association Coalition for Electoral reforms called for the scrapping of the marriage and divorce certificates requirements in future by-elections and ahead of the 2023 elections if the country is to achieve 50/50 gender representation.

Muguti added, "This also comes against a background where women comprise just 14 percent of councillors in Zimbabwe and this figure has declined by two percentage points in each election since 2013 when women comprised 18 percent of the elected representatives in local government. "Genuine and credible elections are nourished by a complex ecosystem made up of interlocking human rights protections: the impartial rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights."

"We note with concern the discriminatory practices in the nomination court processes of demanding marriage certificates on female candidates and divorce papers for previously married women, while the same documentation is not required for men," chairperson of the Residents Association Coalition for Electoral reforms in Masvingo Anoziva Muguti said.

Section 17 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe provides for equal representation of women and men in all areas of decision-making. The Constitution provides for women's quota in the National Assembly, and Constitutional Amendment No.2 provides for a quota in local government.

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF-2017), women's political leadership has been shown to have several societal benefits, such as inequality reduction, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and increased prioritization of social issues, like health, education, parental leave, and pensions.

BREAK THE BIAS



Nomination Court in session: Source ZEC

The Constitution provides for women's quota in the National Assembly, and Constitutional Amendment No.2 provides for a quota in local government.



BALLOT Newsletter

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK(ZESN)

Issue 01

ELECTIONS BULLETIN



ARTICLE 4

ZESN IMPLORES ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS TO PUT IN PLACE MEASURES THAT WILL SEE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) has urged electoral stakeholders to put in place measures that will see the implementation of free, fair and credible elections as the country sets for both by-elections and 2023 harmonized elections.

Civil Society Organizations have continuously been urging opposition parties and electoral stakeholders in the country to lobby for electoral reforms before harmonised elections scheduled for next year.

ZESN's Electoral Reforms Tracking Tool reports compilation for the period of January to July 2021 and August 2021 to January 2022, indicated that many gaps were hindering the rebranding of the electoral terrain. ZESN said there was not much improvement on a lot of recommendations; a situation which if not rectified will affect the 2023 polls.

"No changes were made to the legal framework that enhanced the electoral commission. If anything, some of the changes are potentially negative to the extent that they are viewed as concentrating power in the hands of the executive who are contestants for political power themselves," read the report.

"No legal changes took place during the period under review that enhanced voter registration and the voters' roll. The status quo still obtains.

"No legal provisions relating to voter education and election observation were enacted during the period under review."

It said the legal reforms had also been stringent to the extent of locking out the diaspora vote and therefore discrediting inclusivity.

"It is also critical that the implementation of postal voting abides by the principles of free choice and secrecy of the vote contained in the Constitution and the Electoral Law.

"The Constitution grants every Zimbabwean the right to vote. This Electoral Law does not give life to, as it excludes millions in the diaspora, prisons, and hospitals. In keeping with the thrust of the new dispensation to include citizens in the Diaspora in national development, the selective inclusion of Zimbabweans in the diaspora and those in places of confinement and hospitals must be reviewed

"This also includes citizens' hospital staff, nurses, and doctors who will be on duty on Election Day. The expansion of special voting must be considered to cater for these groups." ZESN said there was also the need to mitigate conflict and suspicions around the ballot paper by ensuring transparency in ballot paper designing and printing through the engagement of electoral stakeholders.

"It is also critical that the implementation of postal voting abides by the principles of free choice and secrecy of the vote contained in the Constitution and the Electoral Law. Special voting, amenable to transparent electoral principles and observation must be reinstated to guarantee the right to vote to those unable to vote on Election Day,"

"The electoral observer process must be made easier by removing accreditation fees and the requirement for physical presence. This is the international best practice. Polling stations added in the run-up to elections must be widely publicized to ensure they are known by relevant stakeholders, and to reduce suspicions

The election administration must conform to open data principles. There is need for the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to adopt an effective communications strategy to ensure that it gets the confidence of its stakeholders and also publish audit reports on expenditure on elections administration.



#BreakTheBias

International Women's Month

Collectively we can all #BreakTheBias



Zimbabwe Election Support Network
Promoting Democratic Elections in Zimbabwe



VOTER LETHARGY AMONG THE YOUTH- WHY?

ZIMBABWE heads to the polls on March 26 to fill 28 parliamentary and over 100 local authority seats necessitated by recalls, deaths and diplomatic postings.

But are the country's young people ready to get involved in politics?

The country's youth represent over 60% of the population and about 44% of the total voters' roll.

In 2018, over 2 million, about 43% of the registered electorate were 35 years and below, however, that does not translate to all the youths having voted.

Analysts have argued that the lack of voter education has led to widespread political lethargy among the youth which ultimately results in low voter turnout.

MDC Alliance national youth executive committee member Discent Collins Bajila said several issues affected youth participation, top among them being the lack of identity documents needed in voter registration and voting.

"The second category are those who do have IDs but are affected by the centralisation of registration offices. The third category is of course those who have lost interest in politics but it's a small population. The fourth category is those who have religious reasons. They are also a small population and then the fifth are those who are saying 'I am yet to decide, lets' keep talking and engaging but the biggest category are those who have no identity documents," Bajila said.

Political analysts Dumisani Nkomo and Effie Ncube said youth have lost confidence in the country's politics.

"They don't have confidence in politics. They have not seen politics contributing to any change in terms of the quality of living of many people. Secondly, they don't have confidence in the electoral systems. They don't believe that elections will make a difference," Nkomo said.

Ncube said, "They are not motivated by politics. The politics as we have has not been providing what youth expect from the government in particular, and therefore cannot link their aspirations with the government."

In a paper titled: "Managing the born-free generation: Zimbabwe's strategies for dealing with the youth" researchers Marjoke Oosterom and Simbarashe Gukurume argued that the country's politics offer little incentives to the youth.

"ZANU-PF is an increasingly ageing party with the majority of its councillors, parliamentarians, and ministers being over 50 years old. While the MDC was meant to be a young party, and indeed draws support from young, urban voters, Hodzi (2014) argues that neither ZANU-PF nor MDC offer real political power to the young," the research paper reads in part.

The researchers said ZANU-PF has resorted to patronage politics to boost youth support.

Analysts have argued that the lack of voter education has led to widespread political lethargy among the youth which ultimately results in low voter turnout.



www.zesn.org.zw