



BALLOT e-Newsletter

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK(ZESN)

Issue
09

ELECTIONS BULLETIN



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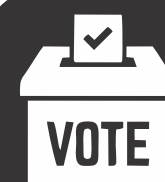


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EFFECT ELECTORAL LAW CHANGES NOW — ZESN



THE Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), has called on parliament and government to speed up the amendments on the Electoral Act ahead of the 2023 harmonised elections, saying it would be crucial in creating credible elections.

ZESN chairperson Andrew Makoni, in an interview said last minute changes to the law were not good for Zimbabwe's electoral processes.

"This Electoral Law must come into effect sooner rather than latter, we cannot as we have done in the past attend to changes in the Electoral Act just before elections. This is what we have been doing in the last 40 years," Makoni said.

Zimbabwean authorities have been effecting electoral changes a few days before the proclamation of polls in the past. This has caused a lot of confusion and alleged unfair advantage to the incumbency.

ZESN said late implementation of electoral reforms could affect elections and their credibility and if changes are not effected at least years before the polls.

"The downside of amending the Electoral Act on the eve of the elections is two-fold, firstly if the amendments are done when the elections have been called those amendments cannot be used in the proclaimed elections.

For instance if the President proclaims elections in January 2023, before the Electoral Act is attended to any amendments thereafter will not apply to the 2023 harmonised elections."

"The fact that amendments are coming on the eve of an election may mean that it may take time for people to appreciate what those amendments may entail, for instance if the amendment is such that voter education may be carried out by

widespread group of people and organisations and if it's coming at the eve of the elections an opportunity to participate is lost," said Makoni.



Andrew Makoni
ZESN
CHAIRPERSON

Makoni said ZESN went as further as addressing parliament where the watchdog was given a chance to produce a Draft Comprehensive Electoral Amendment Bill which the legislature could draw from.

ZESN complied a compendium of recommendations made by all election observer missions which were part of the 2018 general elections processes. The elections watchdog presented this compendium to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), parliament and government in an effort to push for electoral reforms ahead of the polls.

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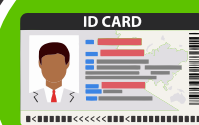


#registertovote

www.zesn.org.zw



CIVIL REGISTRY OFFICE SHOULD EXPEDITE THE ISSUANCE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS



THE Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has postponed the Mobile Voter Registration which was scheduled to commence on 6 December 2021 to February 2022, after realising that the Registrar General's Office is currently not in a position to issue out national identity cards (IDs), citing lack of resources. ZEC has said that it cannot conduct its massive voter registration blitz, unless and until eligible voters have acquired national identity cards (IDs), which are a prerequisite for voter registration. Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) implores government to resource the Civil Registry in order to empower it to conduct an inclusive exercise of issuing national identity cards to eligible citizens.

ZESN Chairperson Mr Andrew Makoni highlighted that voting is a democratic right which only those who are registered to vote can enjoy. A national ID or valid passport is a requirement for one to be able to register to vote. Young people, citizens who lost IDs and those who have become eligible have been finding it difficult to get the IDs, threatening their disenfranchisement in electoral processes. Given that young people constitute the biggest demographic group in Zimbabwe, their participation in elections is critical as democracy is essentially about the participation of the majority.

"The Network hopes that the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage will heed to President Emmerson Mnangagwa's call, while addressing his party supporters in Gokwe earlier this month, to decentralise the process of acquiring birth certificates and national identity cards so that everyone can easily register to vote," said Makoni.

ZESN calls upon the government to address challenges that affect meaningful participation of youths in democratic electoral processes, chief among them the ease of getting national identity particulars. Further, there is need to decentralize the issuance of national documents to enable all citizens and youths, including those in High Schools who have attained the voting age, to take part in voter registration which is a key electoral process that bears on the overall credibility of an election.

ZESN calls upon the government to address challenges ...

Makoni reiterated that government should avail adequate resources to the Civil Registry's office to enable them to procure the necessary materials needed for processing national documents. "ZESN envisages that by February 2022 when ZEC is set to commence the voter registration blitz ahead of by-elections and the boundary delimitation exercise, the Civil Registry would have complemented ZEC through issuance of the relevant national documents to the eligible voters to ensure their participation in the key electoral processes," said Makoni.

Voter registration is a continuous process, citizens are encouraged to register to vote at their nearest ZEC district and provincial offices now and to take advantage of the voter registration blitz early next year to ensure that they register as voters ahead of the 2023 Harmonized Elections.

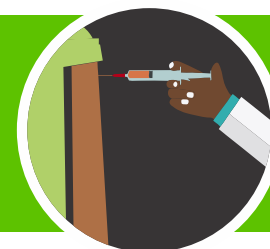


It takes 'u' and 'i'
to fight COVID-19
V-R-S





CALLS FOR TARGETED VACCINATION IN VACANT CONSTITUENCIES



THE Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) has called on the government to consider targeted Covid-19 vaccination programmes in vacant constituencies to pave the way for the holding of pending by-elections.

Vice President and Minister of Health and Child Care Dr. Constantino Chiwenga in October 2020 issued Statutory Instrument 225A of 2020 indefinitely suspending elections over Covid-19 fears.

At the time of the announcement, the country was scheduled to hold by-elections in December following the recall of MDC Alliance legislators and councillors by the MDC then led by former Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Thokozani Khupe.

By-elections remain suspended to date despite several calls from rights groups, opposition parties and other stakeholders who insist the ban is an assault on 'democracy.'

In July 2021 Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi told Parliamentarians that by-elections will remain suspended until the country achieves herd immunity by vaccinating about 60% of the population.

ZESN has however argued that the vaccination programme could deliberately target constituencies and wards where by-elections are due.

"Given the extended suspension of by-elections on account of Covid-19, the government could consider a targeted vaccination programme in constituencies and wards where elected representatives were recalled or died to pave way for the holding of by-elections to ensure representation of the citizenry," the ZESN said in its recommendations contained in a recent situational report titled 'Monitoring Responses to COVID-19.'

Currently, there are twenty-eight vacancies in elective seats of Parliament, 105 in local government, 1 in Senate and 1 for a proportional representation.

In an interview, Community Working Group on Health (CWGH), Executive Director Itai Rusike weighed in saying the country can take a leaf from the recent Zambian election where the risk of Covid-19 transmission was minimal by observing WHO Covid-19 preventive standards such as wearing masks, temperature screening and social distancing.

"Targeted vaccination for the vacant constituencies that are due to hold by-elections can be another option as this will not be the first time that Zimbabwe has carried out targeted vaccination having done a similar vaccination programme in the resort town of Victoria Falls and thereby reaching a localised herd immunity that allowed for increased tourists arrivals," Rusike said.

Rusike added that "we can also consider staggering or extending the voting hours to reduce the number of people voting at the same time as this can help to lower the risk of Covid-19 transmission."

In September, President Emmerson Mnangagwa further relaxed Covid-19 regulations as he moved the country from Level 4 to Level 2 but remained silent on lifting the suspension on elections.

Several countries have held elections despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Zambia and South Africa being recent examples.



"Targeted vaccination for the vacant constituencies that are due to hold by-elections can be another option as this will not be the first time that



APPEALS FOR MORE FUNDING TO ZEC TO CONDUCT DELIMITATION



THE Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Portfolio Committee has appealed for increased budgetary allocations to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) in the 2022 budget to enable the electoral body to effectively conduct the delimitation exercise.

This call comes after ZEC Commissioner Justice Priscilla Chigumba has also appealed to the government and its other agencies for adequate funding to enable the Commission to conduct the exercise.

The last delimitation exercise – the creation of new electoral boundaries was conducted in 2008 under the old Constitution and based on the voters roll compiled by the then Registrar-General of Voters'.

The upcoming delimitation will be conducted by ZEC who is mandated by the Constitution to conduct voter registration in the country.

Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube allocated ZWL\$2.3 billion to ZEC in his 2021 budget, of which ZWL\$1.744 billion is meant to fund the boundary delimitation process.

Observers have however said the allocation is meagre given the inflation and a fall in the value of the local currency against the United States dollar.

"In line with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), of which Zimbabwe is a signatory, Treasury should ensure adequate and timely provision of funds to institutions that support democracy, so that they can perform their assigned missions efficiently and effectively," Misheck Mataranyika, the Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Portfolio Committee Chairperson said presenting the Committee's budget proposal during a pre-budget seminar held in Victoria Falls between October 22 and 26.

"There is a need to adequately fund the ZEC towards the delimitation exercise, since the 2023 harmonized elections are fast approaching," Mataranyika added.

Addressing diplomats on October 22, Justice Chigumba added: "Delimitation requires compliance to several statutory guidelines. Further, it has significant financial outlays, and is heavy on material resources. To facilitate smooth conduct of the exercise, there will be the need for support from government and collaboration with Government ministries, departments and agencies."

A delimitation exercise is provided for under section 161 (1) of the Constitution on Delimitation of Electoral Boundaries.



Justice Priscilla Chigumba
ZEC
COMMISSIONER

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