

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



ZESN WELCOMES MOVE TO ADOPT BIOMETRICS IN VOTER REGISTRATION

10 September, 2015 – The Zimbabwe Election Support (ZESN) welcomes pronouncements by the Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to engage with citizens on the possible adoption of a biometric voter registration system. ZESN urges the Commission to urgently engage with key electoral stakeholders such as political parties and CSOs in order to ascertain the feasibility and nature of the biometric voter registration system to be adopted.

A biometric voter registration system is where one or more physical, biological behavioural characteristics are stored usually in a database and used for identification and verification. It is a highly advanced biometric information system that allows for the identification of millions of voters quickly and unmistakably using biometric identifiers. Biometric voter registration ensures multiple methods of identifying voters quickly, directly and is a more efficient way of capturing voters' records. It enhances security and privacy of voter information thereby improving integrity and reliability of information.

ZESN believes that the adoption of a biometric voter registration system will eliminate duplicate registration and fears of alleged multiple voting while also ensuring that there is a clear audit trail for accountability purposes. Noting the previous challenges that Zimbabwe has faced in past elections related to the state of the voters' roll, the biometric voter registration system will go a long way in cleaning the voters' roll and instilling confidence in the electoral process.

ZESN reiterates its calls for the resourcing of the ZEC to fully implement the polling station based voting system and adopt the use of the biometric voter registration system in order to enhance the voters' roll's integrity, credibility and accuracy. In addition, ZESN calls for the adoption of a system that is simple and that can enhance the accuracy, verifiability, security, accountability and transparency.

Despite disadvantages associated with biometric voter registration such as the need for expertise to implement, understand and monitor the system and fear of technology, the system will significantly improve the electoral voter registration processes in Zimbabwe.

ZESN calls for the setting up of strict measures and adequate voter education programmes to accompany the adoption of the polling station-based voter registration to ensure that voters are protected from intimidation and retribution. It is also necessary to consult broadly and educate the public on the advantages, disadvantages and other aspects of the process in order to instill confidence and trust in the proposed voter registration system and polling station based voting.

ZESN also urges ZEC to embrace technology in all electoral processes in preparation for the 2018 polls, in particular results management and transmission. ZESN will continue playing an oversight role in monitoring all electoral processes including the voter registration exercise. The Network remains committed to the promoting democratic, free, fair and credible elections in Zimbabwe. //ENDS/

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE
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