

Zimbabwe Election Support Network
 Promoting Democratic Elections In Zimbabwe

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



ADVOCACY FOR
 ELECTORAL REFORM
 (AER)



ELECTORAL PROCESSES
 OBSERVATION (EPO)



ELECTORAL
 EDUCATION (EE)



MEDIA AND
 INFORMATION (MI)



MONITORING, EVALUATION,
 ACCOUNTABILITY AND
 LEARNING (MEAL)

CONTENTS

About ZESN	1
Chairperson’s Remarks 2025	2
Executive Director’s Annual Report	4
Summary of Results	6
Electoral Processes Observation (EPO)	7
Advocacy for Electoral Reform (AER)	7
Electoral Education (EE)	8
Media and Information (MI)	8
Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)	8
Programmatic Highlights	9
Electoral Processes Observation	10
Advocacy for Electoral Reform Programme	13
Electoral Education Programme.....	22
Media and Information Programme	28
Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning.....	32
Finance and Administration	33
ZESN Board	34
Human Resources and Secretariat Structure.....	35
ZESN Members	36

.



About ZESN

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), formed in 2000, is currently a Network of 37 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) coordinating election-related activities. The Network's major focus is to promote democratic processes in general and free and fair elections in particular. ZESN was also established to standardise NGOs' election-related activities and methodology, as well as to ensure wider geographical coverage of activities. The broad aim of the Network is therefore to enhance the election process in Zimbabwe to promote democracy and good governance in general as well as free and fair elections in particular whilst adhering to internationally acceptable standards.



Vision

A Zimbabwe where a democratic electoral environment and processes are upheld.



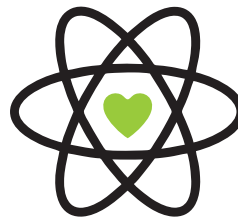
Mission

To promote democratic elections in Zimbabwe.



Objectives:

- To enhance citizens' participation in issues of governance and democracy;
- To promote democratic, free, and fair electoral processes through objectively and impartially monitoring and observing elections;
- To promote the creation of a legal framework and election culture for free, fair and credible elections; and
- To effectively gather, disseminate, and communicate objective information about elections and democratic processes.



Values

In pursuing its vision, mission and objectives, ZESN is guided by the following values:

- Democracy
- Mutual respect for human rights
- Transparency and mutual accountability
- Gender equality
- Integrity
- Non-partisanship



Programmatic areas

1. Electoral Processes Observation (EPO)
2. Advocacy for Electoral Reform (AER)
3. Electoral Education (EE)
4. Media and Information (MI)
5. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS 2025



Political and Economic Update

During the year 2025 a host of significant economic, electoral and political developments unfolded. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) appointed a new Chief Elections Officer on 1 April 2025, succeeding the former who retired in 2024. However, the low voter turnout in the by-elections conducted during the year highlighted growing political apathy, which prompted ZESN to call for renewed civic mobilisation. The 2025 Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Amendment Act was signed into law on 11 April 2025. The Act expanded state oversight, revised compliance obligations, and introduced new enforcement mechanisms. While the amendments intended to enhance transparency, many CSOs expressed concern over the amendments ushering in diminished autonomy and operational challenges.

Despite the speculation surrounding the PVO Act, ZESN played a crucial role in strengthening democratic processes throughout the year, focusing on observation, advocacy, and regional engagement. Below are some of the key highlights of ZESN's interventions in the year 2025.

- ZESN actively observed by-elections, including the Glenview South National Assembly by-election in April and local authority by-elections in Chegutu and Norton in March. Following the peaceful nomination processes for by-

elections in Gutu East and Insiza North, ZESN observed the seamless administration of the by-elections by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), but also used the platform to highlight persistent issues, such as the disqualification of a candidate and the **absence of female nominees**, urging political parties to take deliberate steps to promote gender equality.

- In a significant initiative, ZESN, in collaboration with UN Women and the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, convened a high-level dialogue titled "**Electoral Reform Through a Gender Lens.**" The October 2025 workshop brought together key stakeholders to examine best practices from Malawi, South Africa, and Namibia to inform gender-inclusive electoral reforms in Zimbabwe.
- ZESN extended its work beyond Zimbabwe by deploying a joint observation and learning mission to the **Malawi General Elections in September 2025**. This mission, in partnership with the Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA), allowed ZESN to observe the electoral process and share knowledge with observer groups from across the region.

While 2025 presented some challenges, ZESN contributed positively by diligently observing electoral processes, advocating for gender equality in political participation, and engaging in regional efforts to strengthen democratic governance.

In terms of the economy, 2025 was a year of notable recovery and stabilization. According to the World Bank, Zimbabwe's economy rebounded strongly with an estimated **6.6% GDP growth**, outpacing many regional peers. This growth was driven by a recovery in agriculture, iron and steel manufacturing, and services.

- The key economic developments of the year included:
 - Tight monetary policy helped ease inflation and stabilize the Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG) currency, with inflation expected to moderate to single digits in 2026.
 - The government's Presidential Ease of Doing Business Initiative made notable progress. A first phase of reforms, completed in September 2025, focused on reducing regulatory burdens for sectors like beef, dairy, and tourism. A reform agenda was also proposed to further simplify regulations, digitize services, and enhance transparency to spur private investment.
 - The improved macroeconomic stability and ongoing reforms helped attract private investment, particularly in the iron and steel manufacturing sector, contributing to the robust growth figures.

ZESN's Future Prospects

Building on the lessons drawn from 2025, ZESN will continue to leverage institutional resilience, strategic adaptation, and deeper engagement with stakeholders at national and community levels. The organisation will continue to contribute to policy discussions on electoral reforms, including the need for harmonised legislation, improved voter information systems, and enhanced transparency in electoral administration.

Throughout 2025, ZESN's Board and Management provided strong stewardship, ensuring continuity of operations despite funding pressures and regulatory uncertainty meeting four times and monthly respectively within the year. Their governance oversight, financial prudence, and commitment to accountability enabled the Network to maintain programme relevance and uphold value-for-money standards.

I would like to extend my profound gratitude to Pastor Masuku whose term as ZESN's Board Vice Chairperson ended following the end of his Secretary General position at EFZ in 2025. Your astute leadership was instrumental in the achievement of ZESN's interconnected goals over the years.

In this evolving political landscape, ZESN remained focused on safeguarding its mandate, supporting citizen participation, and promoting inclusive, credible, and peaceful electoral processes in Zimbabwe.



Mr Andrew Makoni
Board Chairperson



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

During the year in review, ZESN actively pursued various interventions aimed at ensuring inclusive, credible, and transparent electoral processes across Zimbabwe. A primary focus was on advocating for the adoption of political, legislative, and administrative reforms, as highlighted by observation missions and ZESN's evaluation of the 2023 Harmonised Elections, as well as regional and international agreements like the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). ZESN engaged multiple electoral stakeholders, educating them on the reform agenda and key elements of ACDEG, while maintaining oversight of electoral processes.

ZESN intensified its advocacy for electoral reforms based on findings from the latest elections and held numerous discussions with stakeholders to integrate ACDEG provisions into Zimbabwe's legislative and institutional frameworks. This engagement involved producing educational materials, conducting workshops, radio programs, and meetings with diverse stakeholders such as Parliament, government departments, Chapter 12 Institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the public.

Moreover, ZESN sought to improve transparency and oversight during electoral processes. It trained and deployed observers for various electoral activities, including nomination courts and by-elections, while also organizing learning missions to observe elections in the region. These experiences enriched ZESN's advocacy efforts for comprehensive electoral reforms. However, ZESN faced a significant challenge due to its non-accreditation after the first quarter of the year by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) for voter education and election observation. This limitation curtailed ZESN's potential to enhance electoral preparedness and civic participation, thereby affecting the dissemination of essential and neutral voter information at a time when public awareness of electoral processes was critical.



In 2025, ZESN undertook several initiatives aimed at promoting continuous citizen engagement in electoral processes, particularly emphasizing the involvement of women, persons with disabilities, and youth in governance. ZESN utilized various information dissemination methods, including Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, radio programs, and both print and digital media, to highlight the importance of electoral participation. There was a specific focus on making the provisions of the ACDEG more accessible and relatable to the general populace.

ZESN also concentrated on enhancing citizens' access to credible and objective information. This involved the implementation of social media campaigns, radio broadcasts, production and distribution of images, issuing press statements, providing editorial support for electoral processes, and distributing the print version of the Ballot Newsletter alongside the E-ballot Newsletter to broaden outreach.

Throughout the year, ZESN systematically monitored the execution of its multifaceted interventions to allow for proactive adjustments. The network commissioned various evaluative activities, including summative and formative assessments, and conducted numerous field verification visits and spot checks on all its initiatives across all ten provinces of Zimbabwe. This allowed ZESN to gather insights relating to the impact of their activities, drawing lessons to enhance the -

effectiveness of their interventions in future electoral engagements.

In September, ZESN suffered a great loss with the passing of Shepherd Shumba, who tragically died in a car accident. His professionalism, commitment, integrity and gentle spirit strengthened our work. We honour his memory and extend heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and the ZESN team.

Beyond 2025: the programmatic thrust

Although hamstrung by a downturn in support from the traditional development partners, ZESN will continue to be a beacon in the pursuit of promoting democratic elections. In the next year ZESN will continue in its crusade to oversee the conduct electoral processes, engendering a conducive environment for the universal participation in the elections and governance within the country. Owing to the seismic shifts in the donor architecture due to the continued strife in Ukraine and the Middle East in the new year and those to follow ZESN may be forced to rationalise the size of its Secretariat pending new avenues of support.

Conclusion

I express my never-ending gratitude towards various stakeholders who contributed to the success of the organisation's activities and interventions. Firstly, appreciation is directed towards technical and financial partners, highlighting their unwavering and steadfast contributions. The recognition extends to Network members, who are viewed as the foundational support for the Board's mandate. The Board is commended for its diligent strategies that ensure effective governance, programmatic success, and financial health, as reflected in a favourable audit report. Finally, special mention is made of the Secretariat for their persistent efforts throughout the year. Thank you to staff leaving after a long service with ZESN.



Rindai Chipfunde Vava
Executive Director

SUMMARY OF RESULTS



ELECTORAL PROCESSES OBSERVATION (EPO)

- Successfully deployed accredited observers to key electoral events, including local authority by-elections (Chegutu RDC Ward 3, Norton Town Council Ward 3) and National Assembly by-elections (Glenview South), ensuring oversight despite a constrained environment.
- Conducted observation of Nomination Court proceedings for multiple by-elections (Glenview South, Gutu East, Insiza North), tracking candidate registration and legal adherence.
- Enhanced regional capacity and learning through participation in the ESN-SA Elections Academy in South Africa, contributing to regional discussions on electoral integrity.
- Executed a joint International Observation and Learning Mission to the Malawi General Elections with ESN-SA, deploying 12 short-term observers and generating valuable comparative insights.
- Progressed on a core knowledge product by updating constituency profiles for all 210 constituencies in Zimbabwe for future electoral analysis.
- Maintained provincial coordination through Taskforce Meetings in all 10 provinces, facilitating updates and peer learning among member organizations.
- Provided direct technical support to a member organization (Zimbabwe Union of Journalists) by conducting their internal union elections, promoting democratic practices within the network.



ADVOCACY FOR ELECTORAL REFORM (AER)

- Developed a strategic framework by commissioning and drafting a comprehensive four-year **CSOs Engagement and Advocacy Strategy on Elections and Good Governance**.

- Strengthened institutional partnerships through high-level courtesy calls and dialogues with key Chapter 12 Institutions: the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC), Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC), and Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), exploring areas for collaboration and formal partnership (e.g., proposed MoU with ZHRC).
- Engaged the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security to outline ESN-SA's work and explore collaboration avenues.
- Built stakeholder capacity and awareness on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) by convening **10 workshops** across multiple cities (Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo, Mutare, Harare) and for specific groups (youth, women, PWDs), reaching over 145 participants and identifying key advocacy gaps.
- Facilitated broad CSO input into the advocacy agenda by convening a workshop with over 15 organizations to present and gather feedback on the draft Electoral Reform Advocacy Strategy.
- Advanced inclusive representation advocacy by co-hosting (with WCoZ, YETT, NASCOH) a direct engagement with Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Justice and the Women's Caucus on barriers facing women, youth, and Persons with Disabilities.
- Enhanced organizational and leadership profile through external recognition: the Executive Director received the **Women Leading Zimbabwe Excellence Award**, and ZESN won the **International Institutional Engagement Award** at the 21st International Election Awards.
- Generated and disseminated influential research and position papers, including "Exploring Gender and Age Disparities in Parliaments" and the "SADC EPEA Political Economy Analysis," to inform regional advocacy.



ELECTORAL EDUCATION (EE)

- Generated evidence-based insights by commissioning and completing a comprehensive **Voter Apathy Research (VAR)** study, incorporating FGDs and KIIs to understand drivers of disengagement.
- Conducted direct civic education outreach by distributing **12,350 branded calendars** in high-traffic areas of Harare and Bulawayo, reaching travellers and communities with electoral process information.
- Built the capacity of 54 electoral stakeholders (including ZEC, ZHRC, ZMC staff, CSOs) through two customised **BRIDGE workshops** in Bulawayo and Mutare on Electoral Administration and Management.
- Increased public visibility and disseminated IEC materials by participating in major exhibitions including the **Zimbabwe International Book Fair**, **NANGO Northern Region Expo**, the **Zimbabwe Agricultural Show** (reaching 900+ visitors), and the **Matabeleland South Agricultural Show** (where ZESN won 3rd place for CSOs).
- Leveraged commemorative events for civic engagement by participating in **Africa Human Rights Day** exhibitions in Bulawayo and Harare (engaging 143+ visitors) and the **Run for Rights** exhibition, distributing materials and conducting interviews.



MEDIA AND INFORMATION (MI)

- Achieved significant digital reach by disseminating electoral information to an estimated **6 million Zimbabweans** through coordinated social media campaigns on Facebook, X, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp.

- Produced and physically distributed **35,000 copies of the Ballot Newsletter** across multiple provinces, providing critical electoral information to communities with limited digital access, including through targeted outreach at bus termini.
- Maintained a robust digital hub, with the ZESN website receiving **61,224 visitors and 420,706 hits**, indicating its sustained relevance as a source for detailed electoral information.
- Amplified electoral reform discourse in the public sphere by facilitating the publication of **57 articles** across a wide range of national print and online media outlets.
- Issued **7 press statements** on key electoral events and commemorative days, clearly articulating ZESN's positions and maintaining its voice in public discourse.
- Enhanced visual communication and message retention by producing and disseminating **100 civic education still images and infographics** across social media platforms.



MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING (MEAL)

- Ensured programmatic integrity and adaptive management by conducting **spot checks and verification visits** on activities nationwide to assess implementation fidelity and alignment with plans.
- Fulfilled a key governance requirement and fostered stakeholder accountability by successfully convening the **24th Annual General Meeting (AGM)** with 65 representatives from members and partners.
- Demonstrated organizational financial health and good governance, as indicated by the receipt of a **favourable audit report**.

PROGRAMMATIC HIGHLIGHTS



ELECTORAL PROCESSES OBSERVATION

During the reporting period, ZESN undertook several initiatives to strengthen electoral oversight, enhance observer capacity, and contribute to regional democratic governance. Despite not being accredited to observe certain by-elections and voter education activities, ZESN remained actively engaged in promoting transparency and accountability in Zimbabwe's electoral processes. ZESN deployed accredited observers to observe local authority by-elections held on 9 March 2025 in Chegutu Rural District Council (RDC) Ward 3 and Norton Town Council Ward 3, the Nomination Court proceedings for the Glenview South National Assembly by-election on 13 March 2025 and later observed the National Assembly by-election in the same Constituency on 12 April 2025.

On 15 May 2025, ZESN observed the Nomination Court proceedings for the Gutu East and Insiza North National Assembly by-elections held in Masvingo and Gwanda, respectively. Although accreditation to observe the by-elections themselves was denied, these observation efforts allowed ZESN to track candidate nominations, assess adherence to electoral laws, and maintain public accountability in the lead-up to the polls.

Electoral observation plays a critical role in strengthening democratic governance. By monitoring processes such as nominations, campaigning, and voting, observers help ensure transparency, fairness, and credibility in elections. Even in the absence of full accreditation, ZESN's continued engagement contributed to promoting confidence in the electoral system and supporting the broader goal of credible elections in Zimbabwe.

Regional Elections Academy

ESN-SA convened an Elections Academy on Strengthening Electoral Integrity in Southern Africa Regional Electoral Integrity Academy to review lessons from the 2024 elections across the region in from 23 to 25 April 2025 in South-

Africa. The discussions underscored the Academy's role in fostering collaborative reflection and generating practical recommendations to enhance electoral credibility. Representatives from the EU Delegation, UNDP Africa, GNDEM, regional observer networks and leading academics highlighted democratic gains, including peaceful transitions of power and expanded gender representation, while noting persistent challenges such as declining voter turnout, technological vulnerabilities, mistrust in institutions, and rising information disorders.



Group photo of participants at the Election Academy

Election Management Bodies from Namibia, Botswana and South Africa shared experiences on new technologies, inclusivity efforts, logistical challenges, and the management of politically sensitive environments. The Academy also saw the launch of two key ESN-SA publications: the 2024 Southern Africa Election Compendium of Observers' Recommendations and the General Observers' Training Manual. Discussions further examined youth disengagement, late legal reforms, social media manipulation, campaign finance opacity, and the future impact of AI on electoral processes. Participants emphasised that technology must support, not supplant, human agency, and reaffirmed the need for robust safeguards to strengthen democratic processes across the Southern African region.

Regional Compendium and Joint Observation Mission to Malawi

ESN-SA and ZESN jointly deployed an Observation and Learning Mission to the Malawi General (Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government) Elections held on 16 September 2025. The Mission comprised 12 accredited short-term observers from five Southern African countries who were deployed to four districts in the Central Region, namely Lilongwe Central, Salima, Dowa and Dedza. The Mission undertook a comprehensive review of the political, administrative, and legal frameworks governing elections in Malawi. In addition, the Mission held consultations with key electoral stakeholders, such as citizen observer groups, women's organisations and other international observer missions. These engagements were instrumental in enhancing the Mission's understanding of the broader electoral environment.



ESN-SA & ZESN Observer learning mission to Malawi



Voters and polling officials at a polling station in Malawi

Complementing this engagement, ESN-SA produced a Compendium of Recommendations for Southern African Elections held in 2024, consolidating key findings from Election Observer Missions in Botswana, Comoros, Namibia, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, and Mauritius. The publication highlights¹ legal, administrative, and political issues requiring attention to strengthen electoral integrity in the region.



The front cover of compendium of the Southern Africa 2024 election observers' recommendations

Constituency Profile Book

ZESN progressed with the production of a book of updated constituency profiles for all 210 constituencies in Zimbabwe. The book is a consolidated single reference volume to support future electoral analysis and civic engagement. It aims to inform voters and key stakeholders about the political landscape and issues that matter most to communities. The constituency profiles are expected to go a long way in empowering voters by providing comprehensive information about their electoral constituencies and help them make informed decisions at election times. The constituency profiles will be also key in strategic planning, such as political campaigns and policy development.

Provincial Taskforce Meetings

ZESN convened Taskforce Meetings across all ten Provinces, providing members with updates on organisational activities, developments relating to the African Charter on ACDEG, and progress on knowledge products such as voter information materials.

¹<https://www.esn-sa.org/?s=compendium+>

Member organisations also shared updates on their respective programmes, strengthening coordination and peer learning.



Attendees of the Masvingo Taskforce meeting

Membership Servicing

As part of servicing the membership, ZESN offered balloting services to the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists to elect their President, Vice, Secretary General, Treasurer and Committee Members on 13 September 2025. The objective of this activity was to promote transparent, credible, and democratic internal electoral processes within member organisations.



ZESN Officers conducting the ZUJ Election, looking on ZUJ's Programs Lead

This service is critical in strengthening institutional governance, enhancing trust in leadership selection, and reinforcing democratic norms that align with ZESN's broader mandate of promoting credible elections.



ESN-SA Training of Trainers on Conflict Prevention and Management - Malawi 2025

ADVOCACY FOR ELECTORAL REFORM PROGRAMME

In 2025, ZESN forged ahead with its post-election strategy on closing reform gaps exposed during the 2023 polls. This involved sustained outreach to major stakeholders, synthesising recommendations from Election Observer Missions and other lessons learned. Through its advocacy program, the organisation worked to align diverse perspectives, establishing a platform to push for systemic reforms. Key activities undertaken during the year are summarised next.

Four-year Strategy for CSOs Engagement and Advocacy on Electoral issues

ZESN developed a Strategy for Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) Engagement and Advocacy on Elections and Good Governance. This Strategy aims at providing a comprehensive framework that gives focus and direction as well as guide CSOs to effectively lobby for electoral reforms in a way that makes greater impact, after the 2023 Harmonised Elections. To come up with the strategy, the Consultant used Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) mostly targeting political actors, academics, human rights lawyers, gender advocates, the youth, institutions supporting democracy, election experts and other electoral stakeholders in Zimbabwe.

Advocacy Meetings with Chapter 12 Institutions

Meeting with Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC)

In pursuit of its objective to foster constructive relations with key electoral stakeholders, ZESN held a productive courtesy visit to the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC), one of the five independent commissions established under Chapter 12 of the Constitution. The meeting was held at the ZMC offices on 13 March 2025. Engaging in a dialogue aimed at promoting a robust democratic process, the ZESN Executive Director Rindai Chipfunde Vava and four (4) Programme Officers met with the ZMC Chairperson Professor Ruby -



ZMC and ZESN representatives pose outside of the Zimbabwe Media Commission

Magosvongwe, the Executive Secretary Godwin Phiri, Finance and Administration Director Brain Mangoro and the Manager Training, Research and Development Tariro Shoniwa.

The meeting was characterised by a shared commitment to transparency, dialogue, collaboration and the advancement of Zimbabwe's democratic institutions that contribute to ensuring electoral integrity and credibility. Emphasising the crucial role of media in promoting democracy, ZESN outlined several successful collaborations with the ZMC, including workshops and training programmes on election observation, election reporting, and gender-sensitive reporting. The ZESN Executive Director highlighted the Constitution's guarantee of media freedom, underscoring its importance in protecting civil and political rights. Both organisations agreed to continue strengthening their partnership, reinforcing media's vital role in ensuring credible elections.

The ZMC Chairperson underscored the crucial role of the media in promoting democratic elections, emphasising the need for responsible journalism to avoid inciting chaos during the electoral process. Celebrating milestones such as the '*Election Reporting and Peace Journalism Manual*,' she acknowledged its significance in training journalists and fostering ethical reporting.

The manual's regional recognition as a best practice in journalism training highlights the strides made towards responsible media coverage. Strides towards responsible media reporting were also realised through the signing of a Peace Pledge by journalists and the development of an Association of Election Reporting Journalists which indicates a commitment to peaceful, transparent elections in Zimbabwe.



ZMC Chairperson Professor Ruby Magosvongwe, Tariro Shoniwa, Brain Mangoro and Executive Secretary Godwin Phiri

Meeting Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC)

Aligning with the objective of constructive engagements with key electoral stakeholders, the ZESN paid a courtesy call to the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) on April 15, 2025. This visit aimed to strengthen and advance the existing relationship between the two institutions by identifying possible areas of collaboration that would promote inclusive electoral processes in Zimbabwe. ZESN Executive Director Rindai Chipfunde Vava, accompanied by four programme officers, engaged with ZGC Chairperson Margret Mukahanana Sangarwe, Chief Executive Officer Virginia Muwanigwa, the Director of Gender Equality Promotion-Caroline Matizha the Director of Finance, Human Resources and Administration, Mateo Mateo and the Protocol Manager, Tatenda Kamutando.



Meeting with ZGC Chairperson Margret Mukahanana Sangarwe

Women's participation in electoral and political processes is essential, as underscored by the Constitution, which mandates equal representation at a 50/50 ratio. There was consensus that participation of women in electoral and political processes is essential, as underscored by the Constitution, which mandates equal representation at a ratio of 50/50. In this context, the meeting reflected on the current national landscape of women representation and participation in electoral and political processes. It was noted that the likelihood of achieving gender equality under the existing electoral system is extremely low. Consequently, the meeting highlighted the pressing need for enhanced advocacy efforts aimed at having a system which better facilitates women's participation. In line with this, the ZGC Chairperson emphasised the necessity of unified voices in advocating for reforms on women participation and the Chief Executive Officer buttressed this perspective, further highlighting the importance of adopting an electoral cycle approach in advocacy which prevents the decline of initiatives and efforts in between elections.

Meeting the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC)

On 16 April 2025, ZESN paid a courtesy call to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen partnerships that advance democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe. The ZESN delegation, led by the Executive Director and accompanied by senior programme staff, met with the ZHRC Chairperson and senior officials to present an overview of the Network's current work and to explore areas for enhanced collaboration.

Building on a longstanding relationship marked by productive cooperation, both institutions underscored the value of formalising their partnership. The ZHRC Chairperson proposed developing a Memorandum of Understanding to define joint areas of work and establish practical mechanisms for coordinated implementation.

The meeting reflected on the persistent need to follow up on recommendations issued by Election Observer Missions. ZESN shared its recent efforts to consolidate these recommendations into comprehensive compendia following the 2018 and 2023 Harmonised Elections. Notably, the 2023 set distilled into five priority reform themes: electoral integrity, alignment of the Electoral Act with the Constitution, administrative justice, political party strengthening, and the promotion of fundamental freedoms and inclusive participation was identified as a critical advocacy tool for both institutions.

The ZHRC Chairperson emphasised the imperative need for inclusive electoral processes, particularly the need to strengthen women's political representation, including through gender-delimited constituencies. ZESN further highlighted the importance of ensuring meaningful participation of young people and persons with disabilities in electoral processes.



Members of the ZESN and ZHRC Chairperson Fungayi Jessie Majome during the meeting

ESN-SA Meeting with a Representative of the SADC

As part of its mandate to promote democratic principles and strengthen electoral processes in the region, the Electoral Support Network of-

Southern Africa (ESN-SA) held a meeting on 16 April 2025 in Harare with Prof. Kula Ishmael Theletsane, Director in the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. ESN-SA was represented by Executive Director Mrs. Rindai Chipfunde-Vava and Programmes Director Mrs. Ellen Dingani.

The meeting allowed ESN-SA to outline its expanding scope of work, including advocacy for electoral reforms, follow-up on Election Observer Mission recommendations, learning missions, election academies, research, knowledge resources, and network-strengthening under the AHEAD project. The team also highlighted emerging electoral trends and challenges across the region. Prof. Theletsane shared insights into SADC's operational framework, its engagement mechanisms with non-state actors, and the approval processes required for partnerships, reaffirming SADC's commitment to meaningful collaboration with organisations like ESN-SA.

African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) Provincial Workshops

ZESN convened four half-day workshops on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) in the cities of Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo, and Mutare. These workshops ran concurrently on June 11 and 12, 2025, attracting a total of 114 participants from the designated regions. The primary objectives of these workshops were to *deepen participants' understanding of the ACDEG framework and to equip them with the necessary knowledge for effective engagement with this important instrument*. Additionally, the workshops aimed to *promote collaboration among civil society organisations (CSOs) in advocacy efforts related to the ACDEG*. Participants included representatives from diverse groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, youth, media, academia, residents' associations, ZESN provincial taskforce members, faith-based organisations, community-based organisations, and individual electoral stakeholders.



Bulawayo ACDEG Workshop Participants

The sessions revealed significant knowledge and engagement gaps regarding ACDEG across all regions. Importantly, participants across all regions further expressed a strong desire for increased awareness and advocacy around the ACDEG. There was a collective agreement that future initiatives should prioritise collaboration among civil society organisations, leverage technological advancements, and ensure that information is accessible to all communities, with particular emphasis on marginalised communities.



Mutare ACDEG Workshop Participants including a nursing mother

The four sessions across Bulawayo, Masvingo, Mutare, and Gweru revealed a significant gap in knowledge and engagement regarding ACDEG. Participants expressed a strong desire for increased awareness and collaborative advocacy efforts. Moving forward, it is essential to focus on community education, leverage technology for information dissemination, and ensure that all stakeholders are included in the advocacy process.

Democracy Elections and Governance (ACDEG) Workshops for Youth, Women and Persons with Disabilities CSOs

As part of its ongoing Workshops on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), ZESN convened a half-day session in Harare on 19 June 2025, attended by 31 participants from women's groups, persons with disabilities, youth, the informal sector, media, residents' associations, and other CSOs. The workshop aimed to deepen understanding of ACDEG, strengthen participants' capacity for effective engagement, and enhance collaboration among CSOs in related advocacy. Discussions centred on key chapters and articles of the Charter. While some participants were familiar with ACDEG, representatives from the informal sector expressed concern over limited dissemination of information despite their large national demographic.

Participants highlighted several needs and commitments: CSOs called for dedicated ACDEG programming; women's organisations pledged to integrate ACDEG into trainings; persons with disabilities requested inclusion in awareness efforts; and other CSOs committed to embedding ACDEG in democracy and governance activities. ZESN emphasised the importance of continuous capacity building to ensure knowledge is cascaded widely. Strengthening ACDEG-focused initiatives will support inclusive participation and amplify marginalised voices in Zimbabwe's democratic processes.



Group photo of Harare ACDEG Workshop Participants

ACDEG Workshops for Youths

ZESN convened a half-day workshop on 8 July 2025, following an initial session on 3 July, to deepen youth understanding of the ACDEG and its relevance to democratic participation. The workshop also highlighted human rights obligations contained in regional and international instruments and their connection to ACDEG implementation. Youth CSOs from Harare actively engaged in the session, demonstrating strengthened knowledge of electoral principles and the Charter. Participants identified key barriers to meaningful participation, including limited access to essential information and documents. They also underscored the vital role of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and recommended stronger support for other Chapter 12 institutions ZHRC, ZGC and ZMC to ensure they effectively complement ZEC in promoting credible, inclusive elections.



Participants at the 8 July ACDEG Workshop in Harare at the Jameson Hotel



Participants at the 3 July ACDEG Youth Workshop

CSOs Engagement Meeting on ZESN's Electoral Reform Advocacy Strategy

On 5 June 2025, ZESN convened a half-day workshop to present the CSOs' Engagement and Advocacy Strategy on Elections and Good Governance. The meeting brought together representatives from the Zimbabwe Gender Commission, the Law Society of Zimbabwe, and a wide range of Harare-based CSOs, including Albino Trust of Zimbabwe (ATZ), Chitungwiza and Manyame Rural Residents Association (CAMERRA), Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (DZT), Media Association of Zimbabwe (MAZ), Media Monitors, National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH), National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO), Project Vote 263, Women's Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE), Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU), Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT), Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS), Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET) and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR).



Participants at the Electoral Reform Strategy presentation meeting at ZESN offices in Harare

ZESN Executive Director, Mrs. Rindai Chipfunde-Vava, opened the session by outlining the Strategy's purpose and inviting stakeholder feedback. Participants also shared sector-specific updates, with WiPSU and WALPE highlighting efforts to combat sexual harassment in politics and promote safer digital spaces.

Organisations representing persons with disabilities reported ongoing advocacy on the Persons with Disabilities Bill to strengthen assisted voting provisions, while youth organisations emphasised initiatives to increase youth participation across the electoral cycle. Media groups outlined reforms promoting co-regulation and improved citizen engagement.

ZESN's presentation by the Programmes Director, Mrs. Ellen Dingani on the Electoral Reform Advocacy Strategy focused on integrity, legal alignment, political party strengthening, justice and inclusivity sparked robust discussion. Participants underscored the importance of engaging traditional leaders, the executive and Parliament, while expanding electoral literacy efforts. The workshop successfully secured broad support and valuable input toward finalising the Strategy.

ZESN, WCoZ, YETT and NASCOH engage Parliament on disability, Youth and Women's representation

WCoZ together with NASCOH, YETT and ZESN, held an engagement with the Parliament of Zimbabwe's Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and the Women's Parliamentary Caucus on 21 July 2025 in Harare. The meeting brought civil society organisations and Parliament together to discuss the participation of women, youth, and Persons with Disabilities in electoral processes.

Representatives from the three groups outlined the key barriers affecting their participation. Common issues included high nomination fees, limited financial and technical resources, harmful social norms, and the growing impact of digital threats such as misinformation, AI-amplified attacks, and online harassment. Women's representatives highlighted persistent gender-based exclusion and Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWIE). Youth organisations emphasised that current quotas have not meaningfully advanced youth leadership and called for targeted strategies such as mobile voter -

registration in youth-dense areas and technology-driven engagement. NASCOH stressed the need for disability-friendly voting procedures, including braille ballots and sign language in civic and voter education.



Workshop Participants at the Parliamentary engagement at the Monomotapa Hotel in Harare

Parliament representatives acknowledged these challenges and reinforced their commitment to strengthening inclusive participation. They highlighted ongoing efforts to align electoral laws with the Constitution, support ZEC through effective oversight, and explore technological innovations that can enhance accessibility and reduce barriers, especially for remote communities.

In closing, ZESN Board Member and Executive Director of the Media Monitors, Mrs. Farisai Chaniwa emphasised the importance of continued collaboration with the Parliament of Zimbabwe to advance representation and participation of special interest groups throughout the electoral cycle.

Accolades and Awards

On 22 August 2025, ZESN Executive Director was honoured at the prestigious Women Leading Zimbabwe Excellence Awards, held at the Hyatt Regency (former Meikles Hotel), Harare. Organised by the Zimbabwe CEO's Network, the ceremony celebrated distinguished women whose leadership, innovation, and resilience continue to shape Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic landscape. Thereafter on October the 6th, ZESN received the International Institutional Engagement award at the 21st International Election Awards hosted by the Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana and -

the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS). The ZESN Executive Director received the award on behalf of the organization.



Award from Zim CEO's Network



ZESN Programmes Director (2nd left) receiving the award on behalf of the Executive Director



ZESN Executive Director receiving International Institutional Engagement Award at the 21st International Electoral Awards

The Executive Director received the award for Outstanding Woman Leader, in recognition of her unwavering dedication to democratic governance, civic empowerment, and her trailblazing role in electoral reform.

Her leadership exemplifies a legacy of courage, vision, and commitment to inclusive development. This accolade not only affirmed Mrs Chipfunde Vava's individual achievements but also reinforces the organisation's ongoing role in fostering democratic resilience and inspiring transformative leadership across all sectors of society.

ZESN and WCoZ Dialogue on Electoral Reform Through a Gender Lens

In partnership with the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), ZESN held a high-level dialogue titled *“Electoral Reform Through a Gender Lens: Insights from Malawi, South Africa, and Namibia”* on 27 October 2025 at Monomotapa Hotel in Harare. The meeting brought together more than 40 representatives from women's organisations, civil society, academia, the media, and electoral experts to examine regional practices that may inform gender-inclusive electoral reforms in Zimbabwe.



Group photo of the participants of the Electoral Reform Dialogue workshop

The workshop was officially opened by ZESN Executive Director, Mrs. Rindai Chipfunde-Vava, who highlighted the importance of drawing lessons from regional experiences to strengthen women's participation in electoral processes. Mrs. Virginia Muwanigwa, Chief Executive Officer of the Zimbabwe Gender Commission, served as the workshop facilitator. Introductory remarks were made by Mrs. Fadzai Traquino, the UN Women Representative, who provided a regional overview of recent electoral legal reforms in Malawi, South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique, noting both progress achieved and persisting gender gaps, particularly the limited inclusion of explicit gender provisions in many of the 2023–2025 amendments.



ZGC Chief Executive Officer Mrs Virginia Muwanigwa

Discussions throughout the workshop reflected on opportunities for Zimbabwe to strengthen gender responsiveness within its electoral framework. Participants identified the need to align the Electoral Act with constitutional gender equality provisions; establish a regulatory framework for political parties to reinforce gender balance in candidate nomination and internal decision-making; and explore public funding or incentive mechanisms to support women candidates. Further reflections emphasised the potential benefits of mixed or proportional representation systems, the importance of coordinated institutional reform efforts, and the value of promoting a political culture that supports women's leadership. Additional recommendations included the establishment of a national gender and elections observatory and the institutionalisation of peer learning initiatives within SADC to support continuous exchange on gender-inclusive electoral reforms.



Mrs. Fadzai Traquino, from the UN Women giving introductory remarks at the Electoral Reform Workshop

Advocacy brief “Exploring Gender and Age Inequalities in Parliaments: A Regional Comparative Analysis”

The ESN-SA through its host Secretariat ZESN commissioned a position paper titled “Exploring Gender and Age Disparities in Parliaments: February 2025 A Regional Comparative Analysis”. The paper concluded that an analysis of inclusive participation in most countries within the SADC region underscores a complex landscape in which progress coexists with significant challenges. As the region grapples with evolving political dynamics and the imperative for more representative governance, it is crucial to prioritize the integration of women and youth voices into the political arena. Failure to do so risks perpetuating a cycle of disengagement and disillusionment among these marginalised groups, ultimately undermining the democratic fabric of the region. This position paper was shared widely with stakeholders, including ESN-SA members, other CSOs, policy makers, development partners, and the citizenry at large with the region.

SADC EPEA “2024 in Retrospect: Political Economy Analysis of National Elections in Southern African Countries”.

ESN-SA commissioned the study to highlight the significant developments, shifts, continuities and discontinuities during this period in the region. The paper provided an overview of the political, economic and electoral landscape in Southern Africa in 2024. In addition to this the paper highlighted the significant political developments within the year 2024 to be critically analysed (e.g. leadership changes, rise of new political forces, policy shifts). Analysis and few comparisons of broader regional and international trends, opportunities and challenges emerging from political, economic and electoral trajectories in the year under review.

ZESN and ESN-SA Launch the Gender Checklist for Credible Elections in SADC

On 5 December 2025, ZESN and the Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA) launched a Gender Checklist to enhance women's participation in elections within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2025. This standardised tool promotes gender-sensitive practices in electoral frameworks. The checklist was launched on December 3, 2025, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Harare and streamed online on ZESN's YouTube channel.

The launch attracted a diverse audience, including Chapter 12 Commissions, development partners, CSOs, media and women's organisations, among others. The Ministry of Women Affairs, Small, Community and Medium Enterprise delivered the Keynote Address. Representatives from the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), UN Women and Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) shared goodwill remarks.



Launching the Gender Checklist for Credible Elections, from left to right: ZGC, ZEC, ZESN, Ministry of Women Affairs, UN Women, and ZHRC Representatives

ELECTORAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

During the year in review, ZESN's Electoral Education programme's main preoccupation was on educating the Zimbabwean population the key aspects of the electoral reform discourse and on further understanding the idiosyncrasies around voter apathy amongst various cross sections in Zimbabwe. In addition to this, the mobilisation of citizens to participate in the various by-elections held during this period was also a major preoccupation. Furthermore, ZESN also focused on increasing understanding of the content of the ACDEG.

Voter Apathy Research

In 2025, ZESN commissioned a comprehensive Voter Apathy Research (VAR) study to investigate the causes and consequences of voter disengagement in Zimbabwe, aiming to foster a more active and informed electorate. The study employed a qualitative design, combining a desktop review, Focus Group Discussions, and Key Informant Interviews, drawing on sources including ZESN and CSO reports, observer mission findings, UN publications, and academic literature. Findings highlighted political, economic, and structural drivers of apathy, including disillusionment with leadership, party fragmentation, gender-insensitive practices, perceptions of elite capture, and restrictive electoral procedures, which particularly affected youth, women, and marginalised communities.

To enrich the research, ZESN convened virtual meetings via Zoom on 9, 11 April, and other dates, engaging 33 participants from CSOs, community-based organisations, FBOs, youth groups, women, students, and persons with disabilities across Harare, Mashonaland East, West, Central, and Manicaland. Facilitated by the ZESN Secretariat in collaboration with an independent consultant, discussions explored citizens' experiences, political barriers, economic pressures, service delivery challenges, and electoral frustrations such as missing ballot papers and unfulfilled promises. Participants proposed solutions including targeted civic education, community outreach,

simplification of information, and the adoption of international best practices to increase women's and marginalized groups' participation. The findings are expected to inform future ZESN strategies for enhancing civic engagement and strengthening Zimbabwe's democratic processes.



Publication of the Voter Apathy Report

Calendar distribution

In February 2025, ZESN conducted extensive civic and voter education through calendar distribution in both Harare and Bulawayo. On 12 February, 9,100 branded 2025 wall calendars were distributed in Mbare, Harare, targeting the bustling Mbare Musika marketplace and bus terminus to educate residents and travellers on electoral processes. Subsequently, on 18 February, ten ZESN volunteers distributed 3,250 calendars in Bulawayo at the Renkini long distance bus terminus targeting rural buses, reaching remote areas including Nkayi, Lupane, Hwange, Binga, Tsholotsho, Plumtree, Matobo, Gwanda, Filabusi, Esigodini, and parts of Beitbridge. The initiative received high uptake, with communities requesting additional calendars, demonstrating strong public interest in voter education and civic engagement.

BRIDGE Customised Workshops on Electoral Administration and Management

In May 2025, ZESN convened two customised BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) workshops designed to strengthen the capacities of civil society organisations, Chapter 12 institutions, and other electoral stakeholders. Held in Bulawayo from 27 to 29 May and in Mutare from 20 to 22 May, the workshops brought together a combined total of 54 participants drawn from the ZEC, ZHRC, ZMC, faith-based organisations, and community-based organisations in Bulawayo and Mutare.

The Bulawayo workshop, attended by 25 participants, centred on the *Introduction to Electoral Administration* module. The training covered key concepts such as democracy and governance, electoral standards, voter registration, delimitation, and the participation of minority groups. Participants engaged in debates, role plays, quizzes, and group exercises, producing tailored civic and voter education messages. The workshop was widely praised for its interactive approach and for fostering knowledge exchange and networking.



Participants at the Bulawayo BRIDGE workshop

In Mutare, 29 participants took part in the *Introduction to Electoral Management* module. Discussions focused on global electoral principles, ethics and good governance, electoral systems, delimitation, voter registration, ICTs, cybersecurity, and disability inclusion. The workshop also contributed to ZESN's ongoing work on its Compendium of Recommendations from the 2023 Election Observation Missions.



Participants at the Mutare BRIDGE workshop

Across both trainings, participants underscored the need for strengthened public understanding of electoral processes and for continued alignment with international standards. The workshops concluded with certificate presentations and calls for additional capacity-building initiatives to support credible and inclusive electoral processes in Zimbabwe.

Exhibition at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair

On 30 and 31 May 2025, ZESN exhibited at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF)'s Reconnect Book Festival at the Harare Gardens in Harare. The exhibition had exhibitors ranging from traditional publishers, colleges, universities, and several civil society organisations (CSOs). ZESN showcased its publications including election reports, books, flyers, and newsletters. ZESN also disseminated branded wrappers, newsletters, and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) flyers with information on voter registration and the role of parliament to 150 people that visited the exhibition stand. The exhibition also presented an opportunity for ZESN to enhance its visibility and reach new and existing stakeholders.

NANGO Northern Region Expo

ZESN participated in Day One of the NANGO Northern Region NGO Expo and Winter School, where its civic engagement stand interacted with 75 citizens. The stand raised awareness of ZESN's work, distributed civic education materials, and gathered public views on electoral reforms and peacebuilding.

Visitors showed strong interest in the reform landscape, ZESN's advocacy efforts, and opportunities for domestic observer enrolment, particularly among youth and professionals. Many engaged in discussions on peaceful elections and requested materials to share in their communities. The activity highlighted high demand for accessible, multilingual information and reinforced ZESN's role in promoting electoral integrity, civic education, and ongoing public engagement.



Civic education quiz underway at the ZESN Stand



Some of the participants during the civic education quiz session at the ZESN Stand

Zimbabwe and Matabeleland South Agricultural Shows

ZESN participated in the 115th Zimbabwe Agricultural Show (ZAS), held at the Harare Exhibition Park from 25 to 30 August 2025 under the theme “Building Bridges: Connecting Agriculture, Industry and Community.”

The event brought together government ministries, parastatals, private sector entities, academic institutions and civil society organisations. ZESN's exhibition aimed to advance civic education, promote democratic participation and engage a wide spectrum of electoral stakeholders. Over six days, the stand attracted more than 900 visitors, facilitated interactive quizzes and discussions, and distributed newsletters alongside a range of IEC materials, including branded sun hats, caps and wrappers.



ZESN stand during an interactive civic education quiz session

Engagement increased steadily throughout the week, with growing interest in electoral processes, voter registration, the role of Parliament and the wider electoral cycle. Visitors included representatives from ZEC, ZGC, ZHRC, ZMC and members of the security services. The popularity of multilingual materials, particularly the *Ballot Newsletter* in English, Shona and Ndebele highlighted the importance of accessible information for diverse audiences.

ZESN also exhibited at the 2025 Matabeleland South Agricultural Show in Gwanda from 4 to 6 September, themed “From Farm to Factory: Unlocking Industrial Growth.” The exhibition underscored the link between democratic governance, policy stability and long-term economic development. Farmers, government departments and community groups visited the stand to access newsletters, flyers and branded IEC materials, with quiz sessions drawing strong participation. Women farmers showed particular interest in ZESN-branded regalia, while security personnel requested the publication *Zimbabwe's Elections and the Democratisation Process: 1980 to Present*. A total of 513 people received voter education, and ZESN was awarded third place in the Civic Society Organisations category.



The ZESN stand at the 2025 Matabeleland South Agricultural Show

National Gender Forum Exhibition

ZESN participated in the National Gender Forum exhibition, where its civic engagement stand attracted significant interest. Visitors sought information on ZESN's role in promoting electoral transparency and citizen participation, and many commended the newsletter's accessible design, noting that the large fonts and soft colour palette enhanced readability for the elderly and persons with visual impairments. Attendees also appreciated the range of educational materials available on voter registration, electoral reforms and the roles of Members of Parliament. Interest in ZESN's branded observer T-shirts prompted inquiries about accreditation procedures. The Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) visited the stand and expressed appreciation for ZESN's continued efforts to advance inclusive electoral participation. Additionally, Senator Solani Moyo requested information on electoral reforms and indicated plans to use the materials to support a motion on electoral reforms in Parliament.



ZESN Programmes Director, ZGC Chairperson Commissioner Margaret Mukahanana Sangarwe, ZESN Media & Information Officer and some of the ZGC Commissioners

Africa Human Rights Day Commemorations – Bulawayo and Harare Metropolitan Provinces

During the period under review, the ZESN participated in Africa Human Rights Day commemorations organised by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) in both Bulawayo and Harare Metropolitan Provinces on 21 October 2025. The commemorations were held under the continental theme, “Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations,” which underscores the imperative of accountability, historical redress, and the promotion of human dignity.

In Bulawayo, ZESN took part in an exhibition convened by the ZHRC to raise awareness of human rights and democratic governance. The Network showcased various information, education, and communication (IEC) materials, including publications, flyers, pamphlets, and branded wrap-overs focusing on human rights, election observation, and civic and voter education. ZESN's Provincial Chairperson delivered a solidarity message highlighting the intrinsic link between human rights and democratic processes, with particular reference to Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Although overall attendance at the exhibition was modest partly due to the weekday scheduling and venue choice the ZESN stand attracted 143 visitors (58 males and 85 females), including a notable number of-

young people (25 males and 41 females). Exhibitors comprised Government departments, civil society organisations, and academic institutions.



Visitors making enquiries on ZESN work at the civic engagement stand in Bulawayo

In Harare, ZESN participated in the commemorations held at Africa Unity Square on 21 October 2025. The event, led by ZHRC Chairperson Commissioner Fungai Jessie Majome, brought together representatives from the Commission, diplomatic missions, and a broad array of stakeholders. The delegation conducted a tour of exhibition stands and expressed keen interest in ZESN's key publications, including the *2023 Harmonised Elections Report*, the *Compendium of Election Observers' Recommendations*, and the historical elections compendium *Elections in Zimbabwe: 1980 to Present*. Commissioner Majome commended the 2008 Elections Report, describing it as a valuable historical record warranting preservation.



Diplomats from Botswana and the EU Delegation at the ZESN stand



ZHRC representatives & members of diplomatic missions led by Chairperson Commissioner Fungai Jessie Majome (in the right corner)

ZESN further disseminated educational materials such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) booklet and voter registration information. The Network also participated in a live outside broadcast with Star FM, during which ZESN's Senior Electoral Education Officer, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to dignity, justice, and inclusive participation in electoral processes, drawing on Articles 4–10 of the ACDEG on democracy, rule of law, and human rights. She underscored that “election observers are human rights defenders,” echoing the position of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor (2022).



ZESN Senior Electoral Education Officer being interviewed by Star FM

Collectively, the commemorations in both provinces provided important platforms for engagement, collaboration, and reflection on shared commitments to human rights, justice, and democratic governance across Zimbabwe and the broader African continent.

Run for Rights Exhibition

On 7 December 2025, ZESN participated in the Run 4 Rights Half Marathon exhibition organised by Amnesty International as part of the International Human Rights Day commemorations. Aligning with the theme “Ending Child Marriages and Gender-Based Violence,” the event brought together local and international NGOs and corporate exhibitors at First Capital Sports Club. ZESN engaged more than 100 participants, distributing voter-registration flyers, information on the role of MPs, and simplified ACDEG copies. Many attendees sought guidance on voter registration, election observation and ZESN's mandate, appreciating the organisation's continued presence and commitment beyond election periods.



Some of the exhibitors making enquiries at the ZESN stand at the Harare Agricultural Show



MEDIA AND INFORMATION PROGRAMME

During the reporting period, ZESN's Media and Information Department implemented targeted interventions to enhance citizens' access to credible electoral information and to increase the visibility of its programmatic work. Key activities included social media campaigns, radio programmes, television interviews, press statements, editorial support for articles on electoral processes, and the distribution of the Ballot Newsletter.

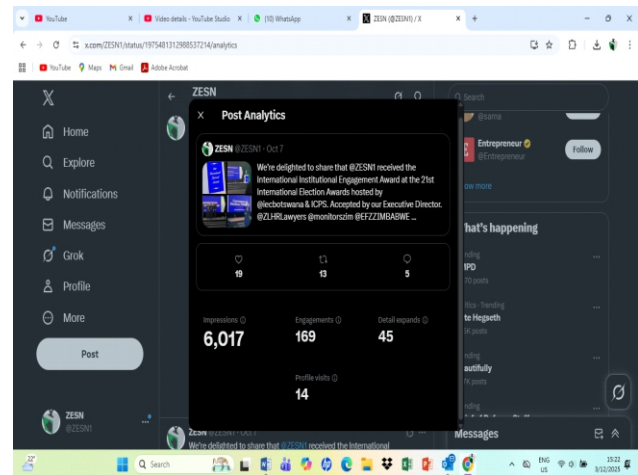
In 2025, sustained engagement with electoral stakeholders focused on key electoral processes and reforms required ahead of the 2028 Harmonised Elections, resulting in a significant volume of reform-focused content in both mainstream and online media. These efforts contributed to improved quality of print and electronic media coverage of electoral reform discourse.

Citizen and stakeholder access to timely, relevant, and well-packaged electoral information was enhanced through the distribution of 35,000 copies of the Ballot Newsletter; publication of 57 articles and 7 press statements, and extensive use of Facebook, X, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, collectively reaching approximately 6,000,000 Zimbabweans. Communication and engagement were further strengthened through increased use of the ZESN website and digital platforms.

Social media promotions and communications

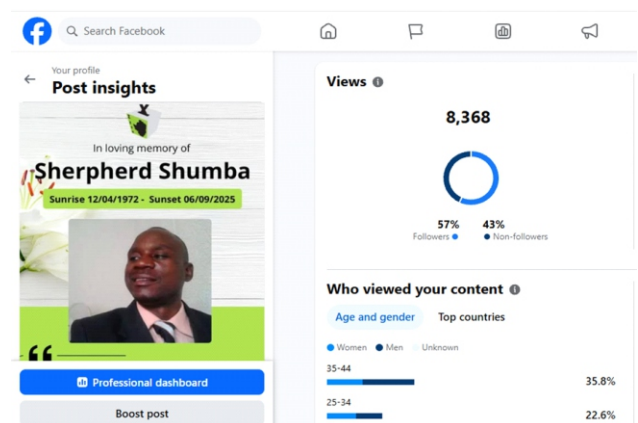
During the review period, ZESN's social media efforts focused on disseminating credible electoral information, including updates on continuous voter registration, political developments, by-elections, and ongoing electoral reform discussions. Additionally, ZESN actively shared information on electoral reforms and issued press statements addressing significant electoral issues.

The ZESN X handle reached a total of 150,000 people, while the Facebook page engaged 150,000 individuals. Among the posts on X, the most impactful was the announcement on ZESN receiving the International Institutional Engagement Award at the 21st International Election Awards hosted by the Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana and ICPS. The tweet garnered 6 017 impressions with 169 engagements.



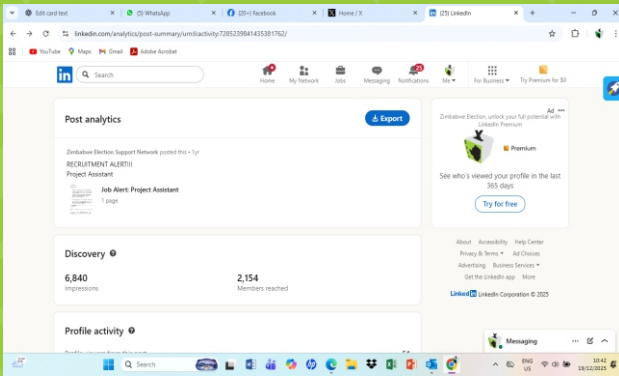
ZESN popular tweet on X

On Facebook, the announcement of one of ZESN Staff Members Sherpherd Shumba which reached 8,638 people.



Post with the most reach and engagements on Facebook

The ZESN LinkedIn page garnered 40,627 impressions with the most popular post being an advert on job recruitment with 6,840 impressions. Furthermore, ZESN maintained citizen engagement through the WhatsApp groups primarily under the Electoral Education and Advocacy programmes, to further amplify civic education and advocacy efforts.



Most popular post on LinkedIn channel

Ballot Newsletter Production and Distribution

Printed materials remained an essential channel for reaching communities with limited digital access, particularly in geographically marginalised areas. During the reporting period, ZESN produced and distributed 35,000 copies of the *Ballot Newsletter*, providing clear, accessible information on electoral participation, key reform priorities and strategies to strengthen the inclusion of women, persons with disabilities and youth in democratic processes. As part of this effort, 30,000 newsletters were disseminated across Bulawayo Metropolitan, Matabeleland North, Midlands and Harare Metropolitan Provinces through targeted community outreach.



Newsletter distribution at a Truck Inn in Hwange Matabeleland North Province



Recipients of electoral information reading the ZESN Newsletter while standing in a queue in Hwange

Distribution at major bus termini, public spaces and civil society events enabled ZESN to reach travellers, residents and grassroots groups across diverse districts. Public reactions ranged from scepticism to strong enthusiasm, with many recipients expressing appreciation for receiving information rarely available in their communities and requesting additional copies to share. Feedback also highlighted the value of multilingual content and reinforced the importance of continuous, rather than event-based, civic education. The exercise significantly strengthened ZESN's visibility and advanced its mission to promote informed democratic participation nationwide.

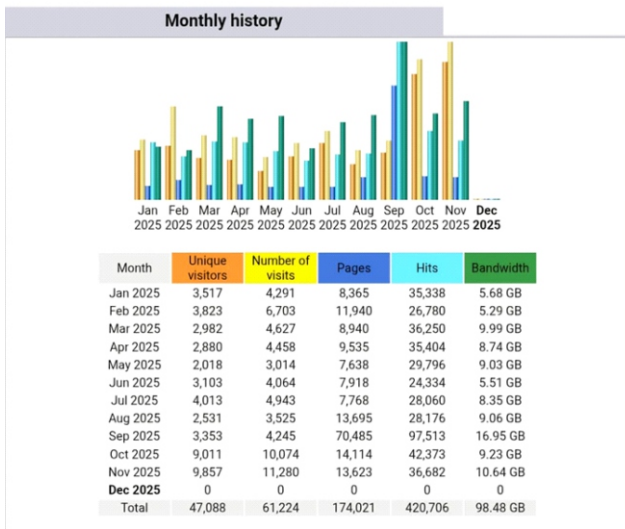


Community outreach through newsletter distribution to travellers on buses

Website Statistics

ZESN continued to strengthen and maintain its website as a reliable, up-to-date information hub, consistently uploading fresh content and facilitating meaningful interactions with both local and international audiences. Throughout the year, the platform attracted 61,224 visitors, including 47,088 unique users, and recorded a total of 420,706 hits an encouraging increase from the previous year. Although social media has become a dominant channel for rapid information sharing, the sustained growth in website traffic underscores the site's enduring relevance, particularly for stakeholders seeking detailed reports, statements, and electoral analysis.

The continued rise in engagement reaffirms the website's role as an authoritative, trusted source of information and a central pillar of ZESN's digital outreach.



Overview of website traffic and engagement statistics

Editorial Support

To promote the availability and dissemination of accurate and credible information on key electoral issues including continuous voter registration, priority electoral reforms drawn from the 2023 ZESN Compendium of Election Observer Mission Recommendations, and the by-elections held during the year, ZESN engaged a wide range of media outlets to produce 57 newspaper and online articles. These covered diverse election-related themes and were published across prominent platforms such as *NewsDay*, *ZimSeen*, *NewZiana*, *ConnectStories*, *The Herald*, *ZBC News*, *The Zimbabwean*, *Zimbabwe Independent*, *Great Dyke News24*, *Spiked Media*, *GemNation News*, *Open Parly*, *263Chat*, *ZimNow*, *Africa Press*, *Pindula News*, *New Zimbabwe*, *Midlands 98.4FM*, *CITE* and *Post on Sunday*. Through this strategic engagement, ZESN broadened its reach, strengthened public understanding, and contributed to more informed participation in Zimbabwe's democratic processes.

Press Statements

ZESN issued seven press statements disseminated via email, its website, and social media platforms including X, Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. These statements articulated the Network's positions on key electoral reforms and democratic developments in Zimbabwe, while providing timely updates on national by-elections and regional electoral processes, including Malawi elections which were held on 16 September 2025, such as National Youth Day, International Women's Day, the International Day of Democracy and the International Human Rights Day. and highlighted critical issues such as efficient democratic governance systems, strengthening ZESN's visibility and contribution to informed public discourse.

Production and Distribution of Still Images

Still images and infographics remained an essential component of ZESN's communication and advocacy strategy in 2025. Visual content offers a powerful means of conveying complex information in a clear, appealing and easily digestible format, making it highly effective for civic education, public awareness and engagement across diverse audiences. Recognising this value, ZESN produced and disseminated 100 civic education still images during the year, shared across major social media platforms including X, WhatsApp and Facebook as part of its broader media and publicity initiatives.

The images were carefully designed to highlight key themes such as the promotion of women's rights, the protection of human rights, and the commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. They also contributed to strengthening dialogue on electoral reforms and democratic participation. Through strong visual storytelling using concise text, compelling graphics and culturally relatable imagery, ZESN was able to enhance message retention, extend its reach and stimulate meaningful conversations within communities.



#HumanRightsDay2025
HUMAN RIGHTS: OUR EVERYDAY ESSENTIALS

- ✓ Human rights are everyday essentials – not privileges. They protect dignity, safety, freedom, and participation
- “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” – UDHR Article 1
- ✓ ZESN reaffirms that these rights belong to EVERYONE Regardless of gender, age, disability, or social status
- ✚ Let us champion inclusion, justice, and equality every day.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE DISPLAY OF THE VOTERS ROLL OUTSIDE POLLING STATIONS ENABLES VOTERS TO CHECK THEIR NAMES AND SERVES TO LESSEN THE NUMBERS OF REDIRECTED AND TURNED AWAY VOTERS ON POLLING DAY

Celebrating
NATIONAL YOUTH DAY

Empower Youth,
 Secure the Future

21 FEB. 2025

ZESN Key Electoral Reform Issues

Introduction

Following the 2023 Harmonised Elections, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), in collaboration with various relevant Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), undertook a comprehensive synthesis of the recommendations provided by the Election Observation Missions (EOMs). This collaborative effort culminated in the formulation of five (5) key reform issues that are essential for enhancing electoral processes in Zimbabwe.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM
 AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

WOMEN ARE NOT TARGETS. WOMEN ARE LEADERS, VOTER EDUCATORS, VOTERS, POLLING OFFICIALS, OBSERVERS AND ELECTORAL WORKERS.

RESPECT THEIR RIGHTS EVERYWHERE

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM
 AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

MEN AND BOYS CAN ALSO BE VICTIMS OF GBV. SUPPORT EVERY SURVIVOR.

NO ONE SHOULD SUFFER IN SILENCE

Pics: Some of the infographics that were produced for social media promotions

Importantly, visual content is easily shareable, enabling rapid dissemination and organic amplification by the public. This made still images a vital tool for increasing visibility, promoting civic awareness and ensuring that critical messages on democracy, rights and reforms reached a broad and diverse audience across Zimbabwe.

MONITORING EVALUATION ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

During the reporting period, ZESN continued to track information across key indicators and to document lessons emerging from its virtual engagements. This ongoing learning process supported the improvement of interventions implemented during the year.

Spot Checks and Verification Visits

The ZESN Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) unit conducted spot checks and verification visits on various ZESN activities undertaken across the country. The exercises aimed to achieve the following:

- To determine whether the Electoral Education and Research and Advocacy Departments were implementing activities in line with agreed plans.
- To assess the suitability of the implementation plan in relation to expected outcomes, including whether selected locations and voter-education messages aligned with intended results.
- To gain insight into the challenges and opportunities influencing citizens' willingness to participate in elections.

Annual General Meeting

On 30 May 2025, ZESN convened its 24th Annual General Meeting (AGM), with 65 representatives from member organisations, the Secretariat, and partner institutions in attendance. The meeting provided an opportunity to review organisational progress, consider emerging operational risks, and outline priorities for the year ahead.



From Left: ZESN Executive Director, Chairman and Treasurer taking part at the AGM

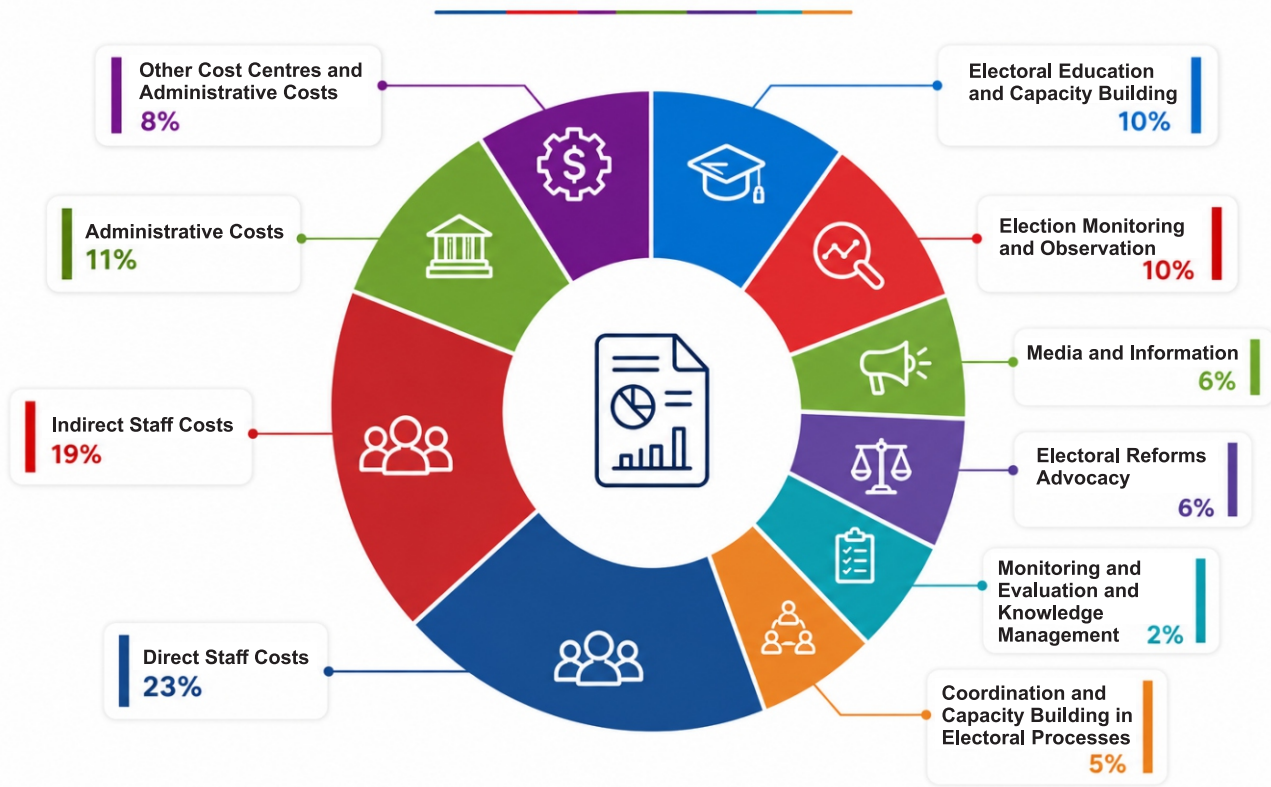


ZESN Taskforce members at the AGM



FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

2025 Expenditure Chart



Total expenditure reduced by 49% between 2024 and 2025. During the year under review, most of the programming funds went to electoral education and capacity building (10%) and election monitoring and observation (10%) and these expenses were mainly associated with by-elections. Both electoral reforms advocacy and media and information utilised 6% of the total budget each.



ZiG monthly inflation remained low and stable averaging 0.4% in 2025 (RBZ). The exchange rate remained stable in 2025 between Zig25-27 per US\$ and parallel market premium contained below 20% (RBZ). Annual inflation decelerated from peak levels of 95.8% in July 2025 to 15% by December 2025. The stabilisation in inflation can be attributed to a tight monetary policy being implemented by the Central bank.



Core staff compliment for 2025 was 20, however, 12 staff members contracts ended on 31 December 2025 as one of the major funders contract who was providing core funding came to an end. There is need for the Organisation to strengthen fundraising efforts especially during the post election period.



ZESN BOARD

1. Mr. Andrew Makoni- Chairperson
2. Ms. Rosewita Katsande - Vice Chairperson - Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT)
3. Mr. Raphael Bareyi - Treasurer
4. Mr. Bruce Nyoni - Albino Trust of Zimbabwe (ATZ)
5. Mrs Farisai Chaniwa - Media Monitors Zimbabwe (MM)
6. Reverend Useni Sibanda- Christian Alliance of Zimbabwe (CAZ)
7. Ms Roselyn Hanzi - Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR)
8. Ms. Samukeliso Khumalo - Women and Leadership Development (WILD)
9. Ms. Permanent Ngoma - Bulawayo Progressive Residents Association (BPRA)
10. Mr. Paul Muchena - Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ)
11. Mrs. Rindai Chipfunde Vava – Ex Officio Member



ZESN 2025 SECRETARIAT

1. Rindai Chipfunde Vava – Executive Director
2. Ellen Dingani – Programmes Director
3. Victor Kahari – Finance and Administration Manager
4. Ian Goredema – Electoral Processes Observation Manager
5. Emmaculate Chiseya – Senior Electoral Education Officer
6. Phikisayi Chiwawa Dzheka – Senior Finance Officer
7. Danisa Mushohwe - Finance Officer
8. Ethel Muchena – Advocacy Officer
9. Heather Koga – Research Officer
10. Emilia Bundo – Media and Information Officer
11. Komborero Nkomo – Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Officer
12. Ndodana Ndhlovu –Matabeleland Region Field Officer
13. Thandeka Tatsvareyi – Special Projects Officer
14. Brighton Taruberekera – Electoral Processes Observation Officer
15. Angela Gumbo – Administrative Secretary
16. Angeles Evans – Programmes Assistant
17. Grace Zhou – Programmes Assistant ICT
18. Benjamin Nkunga – Driver
19. Sherpherd Shumba – Security Officer
20. Grace Mazvimba – Office Orderly
21. Kudakwashe Nyanga - Caretaker



ZESN MEMBERS

1. Albino Trust of Zimbabwe
2. Association of Women's Clubs (AWC)
3. Bulawayo Progressive Residents Association (BPRA)
4. Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace Zimbabwe (CCJPZ)
5. Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET)
6. Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA)
7. Community Tolerance Reconciliation and Development (COTRAD)
8. Christian Alliance of Zimbabwe
9. Counseling Services Unit (CSU)
10. Chitungwiza and Manyame Rural Residents Association (CAMERA)
11. Evangelical Fellowships of Zimbabwe (EFZ)
12. Gender and Media Connect (GMC)
13. Habakkuk Trust
14. Legal Resources Foundation (LRF)
15. Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)
16. Media Monitors (MM)
17. National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH)
18. National Youth Development Trust (NYDT)
19. Organization for Rural Association for Progress (ORAP)
20. The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCOZ)
21. Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ)
22. Rooftop Promotions
23. Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIZ)
24. Women's Action Group (WAG)
25. Women Institute Leaders for Development (WILD)
26. Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT)
27. Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of the Offender (ZACRO)
28. Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET)
29. Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)
30. Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)
31. Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights)
32. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR)
33. Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU)
34. Zimbabwe Students Christian Movement (SCMZ)
35. Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ)
36. Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)
37. Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA)



Zimbabwe Election Support Network

Promoting Democratic
Elections In Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe Election Support Network

Tel: +263 242 250735, 798193, 791803

SMS/WhatsApp:

+263 733 703 181

Email: info@zesn.net, zesn2011@zesn.net

Facebook:

Zimbabwe Election Support Network(ZESN)

Twitter:

@ZESN1

Website:

www.zesn.org.zw