

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



STATEMENT ON ZEC'S PILOT VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE

17 February, 2015 - The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) observed the pilot voter registration exercise conducted by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) in Mt Darwin West and Chirumanzu - Zibagwe from the 3rd to the 10th of February in preparation for by-elections to be held on the 27th of March in these two constituencies.

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

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

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

ZESN's Observations

ZESN observed that although the new Constitution now allows "aliens" to obtain Zimbabwean citizenship thereby becoming eligible to register as voters, a significant number of them were turned away on the basis that they did not have identification documents or had not renounced their citizenship in other countries. This is a clear violation of the rights and protections offered to such individuals in the new Constitution.

ZESN observers also noted that in resettlement and farming areas the number of new registrants and those seeking to transfer was higher as compared to other areas.

ZESN observed that the new registered voters were issued with voter registration slips to be used during the by-elections if their names do not appear in the voters' roll on polling day. This is of concern as it would be difficult to ascertain the authenticity of slips on Election Day as has been the case with previous by-elections and the national elections of 2013.

Recommendations

- Government should demonstrate its commitment to supporting the holding of credible elections by among other things supporting the creation of an enabling legislation that supports the efficient administration of elections.
- Government should provide adequate financial support to enable the ZEC to discharge its voter registration duties in an effective manner.
- The Commission should create awareness on their role in the process of voter registration, and the requirements of voter registration as this will assist in building confidence in Zimbabwe's electoral processes.
- ZESN therefore calls upon ZEC to ensure that the voters' roll for the respective wards is updated before the date on which by-elections are held so that voter registration slips, and the danger they pose to a credible poll, is prevented.

ZESN remains committed to promoting democratic, free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. //ENDS

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE



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