

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



ZESN STATEMENT ON THE PROCUREMENT OF THE CENTRAL DATABASE SOFTWARE FOR BVR

Harare - 26 July 2017 - The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) calls upon the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to expedite the procurement of the software for the central database or central Automated Finger Identification System (AFIS). While the BVR kits will capture each voter's fingerprints, facial photograph and other personal information such as name, surname, sex, address, another integral component of the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) system is the AFIS. Thus the quality of the central database and AFIS software in use will affect the ability to store all pertinent registration data and the speed with which the registration details will be processed in order to check for duplicate records in the entire database.

ZESN believes that in light of the tight timelines provided by the Commission regarding the commencement of the BVR exercise, it is imperative for ZEC to timely procure the software for the central database and the AFIS through an open tender. In addition, there is need to procure relevant equipment such as back-up remote servers that will be stored in secure places. The timely procurement of the software and back up equipment will give the Commission an opportunity to conduct training of registration officers and data clerks on operating the system. In addition, this will also allow ZEC to conduct pilot tests for the compatibility with the enrolment software, i.e. the software that is used in the BVR kits to capture the necessary information from the registrants/claimants and the software that will be used by the central server. This is pertinent for potential glitches to be identified and rectified ahead of the roll out of the actual registration of voters.

ZESN further urges the Commission to be cautious of vendor locked systems as this is likely to increase the cost of running and maintaining the BVR system equipment. The use of different suppliers for the BVR kits and the software for the servers may help reduce dependency on a single supplier. Furthermore, the two suppliers may provide checks and balances and may even encourage the sharing of vital information such as source codes with ZEC.

In order to enhance stakeholder confidence in the data management systems, ZEC should adopt the open data policy, where information to stakeholders is provided timeously, in granular form so as to make all stages of the voter registration process more transparent. Obscurity of information including procurement of the software and back-up equipment will erode trust, not only amongst stakeholders, but also eligible voters and this might impact on the turn-out.

ZESN encourages ZEC to allow the observation of the whole voter registration process and clarify whether observers and political party agents will be accredited for it. ZESN reiterates its calls for the continuous accreditation of civil society organisations for voter education and voter registration. In addition, ZESN calls upon the Commission to put in place all other necessary administrative and logistical mechanisms to ensure a credible voter registration process.

ZESN is committed to the promotion of democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

ZESN Chairperson Mr Andrew Makoni: [+263772234891](tel:+263772234891)

ZESN Director Mrs Rindai Chipfunde Vava: [+263712415902](tel:+263712415902)

zesn2011@zesn.net, info@zesn.net

Facebook: Zimbabwe Election Support Network | **Twitter:** @ZESN1