

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



ZESN BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTRATION UPDATE - NUMBER 10

Harare – 17 November 2017 – The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) concluded phase 2 of the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) blitz on Monday 13 November 2017. Phase 3 of the blitz commenced yesterday, 16 November 2017 and was marred by a few challenges which include; destruction of registration tents by heavy rains and failure to open some of the registration centres owing to late arrival of either ZEC registration officers or equipment. ZESN observed phases 1 and 2 and continues to observe the BVR process to cover every ward under phase 3 and phase 4.

Data transfer and transmission

As part of its methodology ZESN deployed mobile observer teams to all the 10 Provinces to observe the data transfer and transmission processes at the conclusion of phase 2. At voter registration centres and district centres where ZESN observed closing and data transfer, the stipulated ZEC procedures were duly followed in some centres and were done in a transparent manner showing how the information was exported from the BVR kits to the USB drives. ZESN commends ZEC for availing observers the opportunity to observe and track the transfer and transmission of data as this enhances transparency and credibility in the electoral process.

However, ZESN observed that in some centres for example in Bulawayo province, the data transfer from the BVR kits to the USB drives was done at the District offices instead of being done at the registration centres. There were instances where voter registration officials were reluctant to have observers track the data transmission process and these were reported in areas like Sinoia Primary School in Mashonaland West and Girls High School in Harare province among others.

Turnout

ZESN observed a generally low turnout during the last week of phase 2 with some centers going for 2 or 3 days without recording any registrants for example in Uzumba Ward 14 Morris Primary School did not register a single person for two consecutive days, Carlsvile Tent ward 14 in Umguza, Simanje ward 15, Buda Primary School Umguza and Manguta Tent ward 2 Tsholotsho North which registered 1 person on 12 November 2017. During the last week of the phase 2 some areas such as Mberengwa, Zvishavane, Harare, Mutasa, Nyanga, Mutasa and Masvingo experienced heavy rains which could have contributed to the low turnout observed in the final days of phase 2. However, ZESN observed long queues on the last day at some places such as Harare Girls High School, Zvishavane District Hospital and Cooksey Hall in Chinhoyi.

ZEC reported that as at 13 November they had registered a total of 2,361,433. By the time of compiling this update ZEC had not yet released the official figures for registered voters under phase 2. ZESN continues to

call upon ZEC to provide stakeholders with disaggregated data on sex and age of registered voters at the end of each phase.

Power challenges

ZESN observed that due to the cloudy and rainy weather experienced across the country during the last week of the Phase 2 of the BVR exercise, a number of registration centres had to stop registering voters because the BVR kits had run out of power. This was observed in areas such as Rengwe Primary school, Mberengwa Primary School, Cheshinga Primary in Mberengwa district, Madzima Business centre ward 10 Makonde district and Gapara Masosonwa Hall Ward 15 Uzumba district. As a result, some centers ended up closing for hours whilst the kits were being recharged at other registration centres or at shopping centres. In areas where there is no electricity supply ZEC should put in place alternative power back up options to ensure that when the solar systems are affected by weather registration does not come to a halt.

Phase 3 set up and commencement

The phase 3 of the BVR process commenced on 16 November 2017 albeit with a number of challenges being reported by ZESN observers. ZESN observers in Chirumanzu Zibagwe ward 18 and 22 have reported that there is no registration taking place in the two wards as scheduled under phase 3. ZESN has engaged ZEC which has confirmed the reports indicating that the two wards will be covered under phase 4. The reason for the rescheduling of voter registration in the two wards is due to the fact that there were not enough kits to cover all the wards hence the decision to move them to the next phase. ZESN urges ZEC to ensure that in case of such changes to the schedules information is timeously and widely shared in the affected areas to avoid confusion.



ZESN observers reported that some centers either opened late or did not open at all on 16 November due to a number of factors such as poor road networks in some remote areas, heavy rains, and late arrival of registration officials. In addition, the state of vehicles being used by ZEC to deploy officials is very poor thus leading to breakdowns before they reach their centers. Instances of registration centres that did not open or opened late include Crushers Inn in Silobela Ward 4, Construction Houses centre in Ward 6 Norton, Bullet Shopping Centre and Tent near SDA church in Nkulumane Ward 22, Pumula Shopping Centre in ward 19, Manyame Ward 12 and Mabvuku Red bull community Hall. Furthermore, at Khalanyoni in Mangwe ward 16, registration was stopped yesterday after registering only 5 people because the kit ran out of power and the laptop malfunctioned.

Recommendations

1. ZESN recommends that ZEC standardizes the data transmission process in order to ensure consistency and uniformity in all the provinces.
2. ZEC needs to put in place regulations and procedures on data transmission and management as well as publicize procedures that are in place for the data transfer and transmission process.
3. ZEC should ensure that there are alternative sources of power in the event of solar failure or power failure so that registration is not disrupted.
4. ZESN continues to call upon ZEC to provide stakeholders with disaggregated data on sex and age of registered voters at the end of each phase.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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