

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTRATION UPDATE - NUMBER 14

21 December 2017 – The BVR Blitz which commenced on 10 October 2017 came to an end on 19 December 2017. As part of its efforts to promote democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe, ZESN observed all the four phases of the process in all ten provinces of Zimbabwe. This update is based on observations made during the last 7 days of the blitz and is informed by reports from ZESN static and mobile observer teams.

Turnout and Extension of the BVR exercise

According to statistics released by ZEC a total of 4,727,376 people were registered during the 72 day long exercise representing 65% of the 7,224,128 million projected by ZESN earlier this year. ZESN welcomes the reports of a possible extension of the voter registration exercise to 15 February 2018 in response to calls by various stakeholders due to low turnout in some areas such as Matabeleland provinces. ZESN calls upon ZEC to ensure that the methodology and modalities of the extension are communicated timeously with stakeholders to facilitate for planning of activities such as voter education, mobilisation and observation of the process. ZESN reiterates its calls for the Commission to also provide disaggregated statistics of sex and age of the registrants as well as by geographical breakdown. These statistics will ensure that electoral stakeholders are able to conduct targeted voter mobilisation and education initiatives.

ZESN BVR Roadshows

ZESN organised roadshows in Masvingo in Mucheke, Harare in Mufakose and Kambuzuma, Hwange in Empumalanga business centre, Colliery Hospital and in Seke at Dema aimed at mobilizing and encouraging potential voters to register to vote. In Masvingo at Mucheke A Bus Terminus ZESN managed to collaborate with ZEC in mobilizing voters to register, the ZEC Provincial Elections Officer provided a registration kit at the roadshow which registered

58 people of (21 females and 37 males). The Masvingo roadshow was aired on YaFM which enjoys wide listenership in most areas in Masvingo and Midlands provinces.

Percentage turnout per province

Table on registered voters per provinces compared to ZESN projections

Province	Women	Men	ZESN Projected figures	ZEC registered figures	Percentage registered
Harare	651,540	694,278	1,345,818	733,778	54.5%
Manicaland	405,871	506,891	912,762	640,591	70.2%
Midlands	397,689	467,496	865,185	644,913	77.3%
Mash West	411,007	423,407	834,414	472,760	56.6%
Masvingo	321,247	433,067	754,314	535,078	70.9%
Mash East	341,616	394,173	735,790	536,442	72.9%
Mash Central	296,783	323,496	620,279	463,745	74.8%
Bulawayo	186,055	223,334	409,389	206,124	50.3%
Mat North	177,596	2119,96	389,592	290,215	74.5%
Mat South	160,059	196,527	356,586	203,730	57.1%
Total	3,349,462	3,874,665	7,224,128	4,727,376	65.4%

Harare and Bulawayo recorded the lowest percentages of registered voters as compared to the other provinces. Previous interactions with stakeholders in Bulawayo and Matebeleland South indicated that a number of factors such as inadequate voter education and information, lack of birth certificates and National IDs, misinformation and disinformation regarding the BVR technology and the previous position where aliens were not permitted to register. In spite of fears that the timing of the BVR exercise would result in low turnout especially in remote areas, high percentage turnout figures were recorded in Midlands followed by Mashonaland Central and Matebeleland North with 77.3%, 74.8% and 74.5% respectively. According to statistics provided by ZEC a total of 80,327 people were turned away during the BVR blitz for reasons including, Aliens without long birth certificates, no IDs, drivers Licence, defaced IDs, photocopied IDs and non-citizen residents. Mashonaland West and Mashonaland East recorded the highest numbers of turned away voters with 13,546 and 12,030 respectively.

Data Transfer and transmission

ZESN mobile teams observed the data transfer and transmission process in all 10 provinces on 19 December 2017. As observed in the previous phases there were challenges with adherence to the data transmission procedures by ZEC Voter Registration Officers. For instance, at Jameson High school in Mashonaland West which was the designated District Centre, some of the registration teams from the Registration Centres could be seen completing the modalities of the packaging of flash disks into tamper-proof envelopes at the district centres with their Ward Supervisors. At Danda Primary, ward 3 in Zaka North, ZESN observed the data export process. The transfer procedures were completed in accordance with the laid down procedures with registration officials exporting registration data for phase 4 on to USB drives. A print out of the statistics was also made a copy of which was attached to one of the forms which contained the same statistics. The ZEC supervisor signed a number of forms acknowledging receipt of the flash disk which was put into a grey temper proof envelop for onward transmission to the district offices. The same procedure was conducted at Rudhanda primary school in Zaka East, Ward 25, and the only slight difference is that the registration officials decided to wait for their supervisor before commencing the data export process. At Matinunura A and B in Mkoba Ward 10 in Gweru, the registration officials were informed by the supervisor that they could only do the data transfer in her presence. However, at most centres where data transfer was observed, the handover process from the ward supervisor to the district level supervisor was largely free from irregularities and was done in accordance with laid down procedures.

The variations which ZESN noted with regards to how closely registration officials followed the data transfer procedures may be explained by the varying uptake of skills and knowledge during the training. However, the inconsistencies were not of a serious nature as ZESN observers did not find any evidence suggesting manipulation of registration data.

Issues with voter registration process

ZESN's previous update included reports of registration centres, countrywide, that ran out of critical materials including print rolls for voter registration slips. Observer reports over the last 7 days indicate that this issue has been addressed by ZEC. At centres that had run out of print rolls during the previous week, ZEC officials were contacting registrants to collect their registration slips. ZESN observers witnessed the collection of the registration slips by registrants who had been unable to collect upon registration at DDF Donga in Ward 10 Shurugwi South. However, at Mupawose Primary in ward 1 Sanyati and at Venice Secondary school ward 13 Muzveve voter registration slips there were significant number of uncollected registration slips with a few individuals making efforts to collect them.

Assigning of registrants to polling areas

In addition, ZESN received a few reports of people being posted and assigned to different polling areas to those they reside in because their streets names and polling areas were not available on the voter registration kits. ZESN urges ZEC to rectify these anomalies during the voters' roll inspection exercise to ensure that voters are not discouraged by being posted to polling areas far from their places of residence.

Recommendations

In light of the indication for extension of the voter registration exercise, the following recommendations could be adopted to improve the process:

1. In order to ensure that the BVR extension is inclusive and comprehensive in registering all eligible voters, ZEC should coordinate with the Registrar General to facilitate the issuing out of National Identification documents especially in farming areas where a lot of people were unable to register due to lack of IDs.
2. ZEC and all electoral stakeholders must comprehensively publicize the extension of the BVR exercise.
3. ZEC should timeously avail registration statistics for all provinces disaggregated by age, sex and geographical area to ensure that electoral stakeholders implement targeted and specific voter mobilisation and education for the BVR extension.

4. There is need to intensify voter education activities in areas that are largely inhabited by “aliens” to ensure that they register following the high court ruling which ordered ZEC to register aliens under the BVR exercise.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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