

# ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



## BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTRATION UPDATE - NUMBER 16

**19 January 2018** – ZESN continues to closely follow the ongoing Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) Mop-up exercise. The following are highlights of reports from ZESN’s mobile and static observers that have been deployed to some of the registration centers countrywide.

### Registration Turnout

At the majority of centers where ZESN deployed static observers the number of people who turned up to register remained relatively low, especially in the rural areas. For instance on 12 January 2018; 8 people registered at Hode Primary School in Chimanimani West, 9 at Beitbridge Primary School in Matebeleland South, 13 at Kudzanai Primary School in Ward 12 of Kariba rural district council, and 5 at Nsimbi Primary School in Ward 13 of Gwanda District in Matabeleland South. On the other hand higher registration rates were recorded on the same day in urban areas such as Chembira Primary School in Ward 28 Glen Norah where 81 persons registered, Kwayedza High School in Ward 26 Highfield West where 144 persons where registered, Glen View 2 Primary School in Ward 30 of Glen View North where 155 people registered.

ZESN commends ZEC for availing registration kits at some of ZESN’s roadshows where a number of people managed to register, for example on 13 January 2018 in Karoi Chikangwe township, Karoi TM and Magunje ZEC registered 70 people. During the ZESN roadshow in Gwanda at Phakama open space and Zebrine taxi rank on 17 January 2018 ZEC registered 91 people. However, ZESN urges ZEC to increase the number of static centers in order to increase the chances of attracting more registrants.

### ZEC Mop Up Registration Centers

Below is a summary of registration centers and BVR kits that are in use during the ongoing ZEC BVR mop up exercise.

ZEC BVR MOP UP CENTERS		
PROVINCE	NUMBER OF CENTRES	NUMBER OF KITS
HARARE	65	26
MASHONALAND CENTRAL	214	47
MASHONALAND EAST	432	58
MASHONALAND WEST	338	56

MANICALAND	250	48
MASVINGO	333	48
MIDLANDS	402	69
BULAWAYO	62	11
MATEBELELAND NORTH	393	36
MATEBELELAND SOUTH	389	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,878</b>	<b>449</b>

Taking cognizance of the fact that Harare with 54.5% and Bulawayo 50.3% recorded the lowest registration percentages at the end of the phased registration, it was prudent for ZEC to deploy more registration centers in the two cities for the mop up exercise in order to increase the number of registrants in those areas. In addition, ZEC publicized that it will allocate Harare 33 kits yet on the ground, these have been reduced to 26. From the reports received from ZESN observers, it is apparent that ZEC needs to continue assessing its deployment strategy for the BVR kits to allow for optimum distribution and targeting of potential registrants. Places such as popular shopping centers, bus terminus and growth points need to have BVR kits permanently stationed there as high volumes of people always pass through. Furthermore, there is need for adequate publicity of the mop-up exercise in the areas that are set up so that potential registrants are informed of the facility.

### **Turned Away**

The need for all electoral stakeholders, including ZEC to make concerted efforts to educate voters cannot be over-emphasized. The lower registration turnout in some areas can be partly explained by the fact that some locals were not aware of the specific days when the registration center closest to them was open. The need for robust voter education efforts is also evident in reasons accounting for why some potential registrants are turned away. These reasons include failure to bring required documents for registration such as the national identity documents or proof of residence. The registration center at Nyanhewe Primary School in Ward 3 of Kariba turned away 10 people mostly because of failure to bring the required documents for registration, coincidentally on the same day (14 January 2018) the same registration center only registered 3 people a figure which is 30% less than the number of people turned away. Regrettably, this trend has been observed countrywide, resulting in significant numbers of potential registrants being turned away for reasons that could have easily been addressed by effective voter education.

### **Challenges facing citizens with Alien Status**

ZESN also noted that quite a significant number of those turned away are citizens regarded as “Aliens”. It is apparent that there is need to upscale the publicity of the requirements for registration for citizens who fall under this bracket. The need for a long birth certificate in addition to the national ID has been noted as one of the major reason why potential registrants with an “alien” status are being turned away. There is therefore need to ensure that these citizens have access to regularize their documentation and the process should be free to ensure that no citizen is disenfranchised.

As of 17 January 2018, ZEC had registered 4,968,975 since the commencement of the BVR Blitz. Over the same period 84,714 have been turned away for various reasons including Aliens without long birth certificates, having no identity documents (IDs), defaced IDs, and being underage, among other reasons.

### **Political Environment**

ZESN continues to receive numerous reports of intimidation of registrants by political players and traditional leaders who continue to record serial numbers of voter registration slips under the pretext that they will be able to establish voting trends of persons whose serial numbers they have recorded. An example of where this trend was reported is Chivi Central where a ZANU-PF councilor in Ward 16 was asking registrants in his ward to submit the serial numbers of their registration slips to the village heads. Moreover, villagers are being told that if they do not comply, they will not have access to food aid. ZESN has since requested ZEC to publicly denounce these intimidatory actions and demystify the serial numbers and their inability to determine the choice of vote. ZESN also calls upon the police to arrest such culprits.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. ZEC needs to increase publicity of the mop up exercise. Given that most registration centers are at schools, school children can be used as a source of information dissemination.
- ii. ZEC needs to liaise closely with the Register General's department so that the process of issuing national identity documents can be synchronized with the itinerary for the BVR kits.
- iii. ZEC should consider opening sub district registration centers as permanent registration centers during the BVR mop-up, in addition to other high traffic places such as growth points and bus terminus.
- iv. ZEC should convene the Multiparty Liaison Committees in districts where reports of intimidation of registrants have been made.
- v. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission should investigate the reports of intimidation in particular the recording of voter registration slips' serial numbers by political actors.

### **PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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