

## ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



### **POSITIONING OF THE VOTING BOOTHS MUST SAFEGUARD SECRECY OF THE VOTE**

**17 July 2018 – Harare** - The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) notes with concern the proposal by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to change the positioning of the voting booths for the 30 July 2018 harmonised election. This development violates Section 86 of the Electoral Act and international best practice as it threatens the secrecy of the vote. ZESN calls upon Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to revisit the decision on the positioning and placement of the booths and put in place mechanisms that ensure that the secrecy of the vote is not compromised.

If the new set up of the polling station is maintained, voters will not be guaranteed that their preference is secret as people in the polling station may be able to see their voting choices. ZESN's position is that the previous set up whereby the voting booths allowed voters to vote in secret must be reinstated.

While ZESN appreciates the reasons provided by ZEC in relation to the changes, such as deterring voters from taking photographs and serial numbers of their ballot papers, it is critical to ensure that voting remains secret within the polling stations as well. The ZEC, political parties, CSOs and institutions supporting democracy must conduct comprehensive voter education on the secrecy of the vote to deter the intimidation that takes place on election day. In addition, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission must closely monitor the political environment in the run up to the election day to deter any voter intimidation that seeks to threaten the secrecy of the vote.

In spirit of transparency ZEC should have consulted with contesting political parties electoral stakeholders before the decision to change the positioning of the booths was made to allay fears and conspiracies around the issue. ZESN therefore calls upon ZEC to take into consideration the concerns raised by electoral stakeholders to enhance trust and confidence in the various electoral processes being undertaken for the 2018 elections.

ZESN continues to monitor and observe the pre-election environment and electoral processes.

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**PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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