



Electoral Reform: The Missed Opportunities-Bridging the Gap for Posterity

Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST)

Who are we & what do we do?

- Parliament support programme
- Regional programme
- Support to the budget process
- Women leadership programme
- Child-friendly budgeting
- Social accountability monitoring
- Information dissemination & promotion of civic engagement of Parliament

Missed Opportunities...

- Electoral cycle ending with 2013 elections
- Election observer mission reports for 2013 polls
- Capturing the spirit of the Constitution on:
 - Gender parity (50/50-2023?)
 - Inclusivity
- The signing by Zimbabwe of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) in March 2018 (adopted in January 2007, and which came into force in 2012)
- Signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

What has happened in the last electoral cycle?

- Public bills on the Electoral Law
 - Driven by the Executive
- Petitions on the electoral legal framework
 - Lodged by diverse stakeholders

What is Happening in the Post-2018 Electoral Phase...

- Petition by ZESN on the electoral framework
 - Tackles several aspects of the electoral process

Windows of Opportunity-what needs working on...?

- Advocacy on enactment of legislation and implementation of policies or actions that enhance management of democratic polls
- Advocacy for review of current legal framework in line with application of electoral cycle approach
- Promoting increased citizen participation in parliamentary processes (in line with the Parliament of Zimbabwe strategic plan)
- Enhancing leadership skills
- Media framework & engagement (sections 61 & 62 of the Constitution)

Windows...

- Litigation?
- Appreciation of the role and functions of parliament
- The parliamentary sitting calendar & how best to engage
- Enhancing public knowledge on how to engage parliament
- Engaging policy makers
- Synergies with relevant institutions and bodies, including parliamentary committees
- Increased public awareness of the Constitution

Windows...

- A review of the reports of the various electoral observer missions on the previous Zimbabwean polls, up to 2018
- Progressive provisions of the Constitution on Parliament:
 - Section 119-Parliament must protect the Constitution and promote democratic governance in Zimbabwe
 - Section 141-Parliament must consult its stakeholders
- Perceptions of stakeholders on the institutions & processes related to the polls

Legislative Agenda of the 9th Parliament (SONA 2018)

- Includes some Bills relevant to electoral issues:
 - Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Bill
 - Zimbabwe Media Commission Bill-to open up media space
 - Broadcasting Services Amendment Bill
 - Constitutional Court Bill
 - High Court Amendment Bill
 - Traditional Leaders Amendment Bill

Bridging the Gap...

- What are the stakeholders saying (dealing with perceptions)
- Building consensus
- Addressing fear and violence
- Ongoing reviews of the electoral framework necessary
- Reports of local and international election observer missions
- Building a legacy of credible polls

In Conclusion

- Elections not an event
- They are a process
- The electoral cycle approach should help stakeholders focus
- The law on its own may not be the panacea
- Effectiveness also critical