
ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



ZESN CONDEMNS SUSPECTED ABUSE OF STATE RESOURCES AND VOTE-BUYING AHEAD OF THE LUPANE-EAST BY-ELECTION

19 July 2019 - The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) notes with concern the purported request by the ZANU PF Political Commissariat for medicine supplies at local clinics as assistance in respect of the Lupane East by-election campaign scheduled for 3 August 2019. While ZESN acknowledges the right for political parties to solicit for votes during the campaigning period, this act violates the principles of democracy. In terms of principle 4.1.4 of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, member States shall, "take all necessary measures and precautions to prevent corruption, bribery, favouritism, political violence, intolerance and intimidation."

The Network does not condone the trend of vote buying using food aid and other resources meant to benefit all citizens with no affiliation to a political party in line with the Constitution. According to The Electoral Knowledge Network (ace) argues that vote buying includes promising, offering or giving money; goods; services and/or other inducements (such as promises of employment or special favours or treatment) to voters and/or others, including voters' families or communities in the run-up to an election, after an election has been announced, or during the campaign, by a political party candidate or others (agents) operating on their behalf in a way which is intended or reasonably could be expected to influence how voters cast their vote or would likely do so. Furthermore, the Constitution **29 (i)** provides that, "the State must take all practical measures to ensure the provision of basic, accessible and adequate health services throughout Zimbabwe." It is therefore disturbing to note that essential drugs and medicines which should be readily available and accessible to every citizen are now allegedly tied to a political party's campaign for a National Assembly Seat.

Critical for a free and fair electoral context is a pre-election environment devoid of irregularities and malpractices such as vote buying and the misuse of government resources where food aid such as maize and rice and other resources are being distributed along partisan lines. This inevitably creates an uneven playing field for political contestants.

The Network reiterates the need for legislative measures prohibiting the use of State resources and vote buying in election campaigns. The regulations should include provisions for disclosure of sources of campaign funding and use of campaign funding, measures to address vote buying, as well as confer ZEC with authority to ensure that these provisions are adhered to.

ZESN remains committed to support the promotion of democratic electoral processes that are in line with best practices outlined in regional and international instruments governing the conduct of democratic elections./// Ends

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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