



**ZIMBABWE ELECTION
SUPPORT NETWORK**

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FACTSHEET

CIVIC AWARENESS AND VOTER EDUCATION

Introduction

Civic and voter education provides the public with information that enables democratic participation and motivates citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities. It should, therefore, empower citizens with the knowledge and skill to make informed choices, and motivate positive attitudes that will overcome apathy. In Zimbabwe, however, there has been challenges in the provision of CVE as highlighted by international, regional and domestic observers to the 2018 Harmonized elections who called for serious transformative issue-based civic and voter education. This factsheet presents a summary of recommendations to improve CVE based on the findings of international, regional and national observer groups to the 2018 Harmonized Elections.

Summary of key issues and recommendations

KEY ISSUES	KEY / OVERARCHING RECOMENDATIONS
	OBJECTIVE OF CVE
Current CVE programs have a limited objective and narrow scope	CVE should emphasize citizen awareness and participation in all aspects of democratic society. It should not be limited to the election season only. In order to better fulfill Zimbabwe's international obligations on the right to access information, the Electoral Act should be reviewed to expand the ZEC's mandate, requiring the Commission to deliver programs that include both civic awareness and voter education
	CONTINUITY OF CIVIC AWARENESS PROGRAM
Currently civic and voter education is restricted to the elections season and is neither comprehensive nor continuous	The civic awareness program should take place continuously throughout the electoral cycle, with and voter education taking place over a longer period. CVE should be institutionalized by supporting the adoption of curricula, textbooks, and manuals in schools and universities.
	CVE STRATEGY, REGULATIONS, PLANNING DOCUMENT
Lack of a clear and comprehensive national CVE strategy	The ZEC should review its regulations, policy/strategy documents, manuals and planning documents related to civic and voter education (CVE) to ensure that a robust and appropriate approach is taken towards ensuring the accuracy, consistency (standardisation) and comprehensiveness of the program content/messages, and a systematic program rollout and delivery.
Regulations and guidelines that restrict implementation of CVE	The country should review regulations and guidelines on who should conduct Civic and voter education to include a wide variety of organisations and individuals. Key implementers should include, the ZEC, government through various state agencies and/or offices; constitutionally established bodies such as Human Rights Commissions and domestic civil society organisations. Resources must be availed to these entities to conduct civic and voter education on a continuous basis.

Summary of key issues and recommendations (CONT.D)

KEY ISSUES	KEY / OVERARCHING RECOMENDATIONS
	PARTNERSHIP WITH CSO's
Partnerships between CSOs and ZEC to deliver voter education are limited in scope and coverage, and there is little appreciation of improvements in voter education its scope and coverage.	The ZEC should, within the framework of a coordinated partnership agreement, deepen its cooperation with CSOs and institutions of learning (secondary and higher), and government ministries in the design and delivery of civic and voter education. Political parties should also be involved in election-related awareness-raising activities.
	CVE TARGETING
CVE targeted towards marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities, women, and youth is still limited in its scope and coverage	CVE content provided by key stakeholders in the field must address the needs of all electors, prioritising information needs of the following: <i>Women; Young adults; Students (in secondary and higher education); First-time voters; Persons with Disabilities (PWD); the unlettered (illiterate), and Rural and remote communities.</i>
	CVE MESSAGING & CONTENT
The content and scope of CVE is not standardised, and at times is not accurate and timely.	The ZEC should review its voter education materials to reinforce messages on the BVR system, the actual voting process, emphasising the secrecy of the vote, and better explanations of the modalities and management of the postal voting system. Voter education should be delivered in a timely manner and accessible to all Zimbabwean citizens. Content should place emphasis on the importance of other elections apart from the presidential election particularly local government elections.

Conclusion

Civic and voter education should be provided on a continuous basis and expand its reach to institutions of higher learning and secondary schools and target first-time voters. Both voter and civic education must be carried out concurrently to ensure a sense of responsibility is inculcated among citizens. Civic education, that includes voter education, will assist in addressing the broader issues of democratic participation and responsibility. This will entail extending civic and voter education to institutions that support democratic processes, targeting minority groups, PWDs and first-time voters to ensure their increased participation in future elections.

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