



Introduction

This Factsheet is based on a summary of concerns and recommendations by several International, regional and local election observation missions who observed the 2018 Harmonised elections in Zimbabwe. The electoral concerns and recommendations are captured under the theme 'Electoral Framework' in the *2018 Compendium of Election Observers Recommendations* and the *ZESN 2018 Harmonised Elections Report*. This is a general comment on ZEC's mandate of voter' registration under section 239 of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe. In essence, this Factsheet aims at highlighting several concerns that need redress in a bid to improve the general procedural and substantive issues in Zimbabwe's electoral cycle.

Diagrammatic Summary of Issues on Voter Registration



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- **Timeframe to Avail the Voters' Roll** - there is concern on ZEC's failure to avail the final Voters' Roll to political parties, candidates and other relevant stakeholders within a reasonable time to allow for a comprehensive voter audit and verification, as well as facilitate effective participation in the process.
- **Notification process** - There are problems related to ZEC notification to persons placed on the exclusion list. A less cumbersome procedure for redress doesn't exist.
- **Cleaning and updating Voters Roll** - The Voters Roll has not been cleaned regularly; neither is it timeously updated. ZEC has been unable to provide a clean updated Voters Roll free of errors and duplication. De-duplication is frequent.
- **Independent Audit** - ZEC constantly fails to commission independent audit of the Voters Roll for purposes of transparency and accountability.
- **Address System** - The Voter registration process is generally defined as cumbersome due to the residence requirements. The Prerequisite of commissioned affidavits as the basis of allocating a polling station / ward / constituency for each voter is cumbersome.
- **Data Publication** - Publication of data is not given serious consideration. When this is done by ZEC, the data of the voters roll is not in an analyzable format that allows for an independent audit and verification in a timely manner.
- **Under-registered groups** - opportunities for disenfranchisement of under-registered groups exist. ZEC has no strategy to address this flaw.

Key Recommendations

Timeframe to avail the Voters Roll

Access to the final voters' roll must be improved and guaranteed for all contestants as provided by law, and within a specific time-frame. ZEC should avail the voters roll to stakeholders in time to enhance transparency.

In this vein, the Electoral Law should be amended to include specific timelines when the voters' roll ought to be made available to stakeholders. Further, the law must establish clear timelines for the production and distribution of the preliminary and final voter rolls, which provide meaningful opportunities for a serious audit of the quality of the voters list which should be made available prior to the nominations process.

Notification process

The electoral law must compel ZEC to inform registrants who are removed from the voters' roll. Those put on the exclusion list must be notified, and there must be a less cumbersome process for redress.

Availing a clean and updated Voters Roll

Copies of the roll must be availed to party agents at polling stations, and ZEC must invest in the procurement of integrated systems that allow one gadget to be used for multiple purposes, such as enrolling voters, voter verification on Election Day and transmission of results. The law must provide for the publication of the de-duplication process to enhance transparency.

Independent Audit

In order to build public confidence, the ZEC should commission independent external audits to assess the quality of the voters' roll. These must be done at key times prior to voting.

Address System

In order to ensure universal and equal suffrage as well as the right to vote, there is a need to review procedures for the identification of voter addresses (lessening the over-use of pre-commissioned affidavits), to ensure the correct allocation of polling station / ward / constituency for each voter, and to ensure a consistent format for the capturing and registering of voter addresses.

Data Publication

The preliminary (provisional) and final voters roll should be made available to contestants and other relevant stakeholders electronically and in a form that allows the data to be analysed/sorted easily and enables an audit/verification of the accuracy of the roll.

Location on Inspection centres and under-registered groups

The ZEC should enhance citizen access to the voters roll inspection process through more localized inspection centres or by placing lists of registered voters at specific polling stations. There should be more permanent registration centres established in urban areas in view of the lowest registration statistics in Harare and Bulawayo in particular; and these should be open throughout the electoral cycle.

Conclusion

ZEC is mandated by section 239 of the constitution to facilitate voter registration, as such, ZEC has a duty to adopt a voter registration process that is transparent and accessible to the public and many other stakeholders to encourage inclusive participation in the process and promote legitimate democratic outcomes. The Zimbabwean voter registration system has undergone various changes scientifically with the adoption of the BVR system, and progressively, can lead to more democratic outcomes if proposed changes and improvements are made. In addition, ZEC must improve by adopting regional best practices and norms from the international system must be incorporated in the Voter Registration framework for purposes of enhancing democratic processes and outcomes which are legitimate and credible.

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