



IMPLEMENT ELECTORAL REFORMS IN LINE WITH ACDEG

ZESN has implored the government to implement electoral reforms in line with the dictates of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) which it ratified in 2022. The call was made against the back drop of the 60th anniversary of Africa Day observed on 25 May which ran under the theme "Acceleration of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) implementation."

In recognition of the importance of democracy, African governments adopted the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). Article 2 (3) of the ACDEG accentuates the significance of 'regular free and fair elections to institutionalize legitimate authority of representative government as well as democratic change of governments'. ACDEG also seeks to 'promote best practices in the management of elections for purposes of political stability and good governance' and to ensure 'effective participation of citizens in democratic and development processes and in governance of public affairs'.

The Charter sets standards for better governance across Africa by promoting and emphasizing on good governance, popular participation, rule of law and human rights. It also speaks strongly against 'unconstitutional changes of governments' and encourages 'change of power based on the holding of regular, free, fair and transparent elections conducted by competent, independent, and impartial national electoral bodies.' Further, the Charter encourages state parties to adopt and implement sustainable development policies, promote transparency in public sector management and create conducive conditions for civil society organizations to exist and operate within the law.

ZESN Chairperson Mr. Andrew Makoni reiterated that, "the implementation of electoral reforms in the spirit of the ACDEG is essential for improving and consolidating the quality of democracy, elections and governance in Zimbabwe."

Some of these reforms include; the need to create a conducive electoral environment that will see the effective participation of citizens without fear; availing of the Voter's Roll; the implementation of the 50/50 mechanism as provided for in the Constitution; clear outlines on the Women and Youth Quotas; the need for tactile ballot papers to ensure secrecy of the vote; the inclusion of young people in Provincial Councils; a review of the accreditation fees and opening up the space to allow long term observation by domestic observers; the need to ensure there are punitive measures are put in place to address the violence that affects women's participation in politics and elections and the setting up of the Integrity and Ethics Committee to deal with the misdemeanors of Traditional Leaders in elections.

"The Network believes that reviewing outstanding electoral administration issues and promotion of peace before, during and after elections will lead to free, fair and credible elections in Zimbabwe," said Makoni.



ZESN Chairperson Mr. Andrew Makoni



the implementation of electoral reforms in the spirit of the ACDEG is essential for improving and consolidating the quality of democracy, elections and governance in Zimbabwe.





ACCESS TO ELECTORAL INFORMATION BY PWDs KEY IN ENSURING INCLUSIVITY IN ZIMBABWE

Democratic processes are by nature supposed to be inclusive beyond the participation of those competing to gain the mandate from the electorate. The Constitution of Zimbabwe under Section 22 (3) (c) on Persons with Disabilities states that: *"The State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must – encourage the use and development of forms of communication suitable for persons with physical and mental disabilities."*

Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) underscores the equal right of persons with disabilities to participate in political life and calls on States to: *"ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected."*

ZESN Executive Director Rindai Chipfunde Vava said, *"sign language is among the 16 official languages used in Zimbabwe as a means of communication and instruction, it would be prudent for all electoral stakeholders to come up with targeted messages in a language well understood by the intended beneficiaries of electoral information to enhance access to information."*

Vava added that, *"some of the things that impede PWDs from participating in electoral processes in Zimbabwe include chief among them, the non-availability of voter information in Braille, electronic format or any other form for those with visual impairments, fear of violence, inaccessibility of the polling stations and voting infrastructure, lack of secrecy (especially for the visually impaired voters), lack of communication with polling officers (especially for the hearing impaired), voting material not being in accessible formats."*

She implored the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to consider instituting measures that ensure participation of PWDs in particular those with a hearing impairment in electoral processes ahead of the 2023 polls. Inclusive electoral processes go a long way in boosting public confidence in the Election Management Body as well as help counter instances of voter apathy by PWDs as the needs of all voters are met.



ZESN Executive Director Rindai Chipfunde Vava

ENHANCE MEDIA REPORTAGE AHEAD OF THE 2023 HARMONIZED ELECTIONS AND BEYOND.

Media Practitioners have called on electoral stakeholders to enhance their capacities on coverage of electoral processes and systems in Zimbabwe ahead of the August 2023 harmonised polls. The call was made at a ZESN Twitters space discussion that was held in April on 'The Nexus between Effective Electoral Democracy and Media in Zimbabwe.' The call is also in sync with recommendations proffered by the Election Observer Missions (EOMs) who in 2018 called for the standardization of election reporting in Zimbabwe.

EOMs noted that the media fell and fall short of informing and educating citizens on elections in line with laws on elections, flagging out Commissariat journalism, absolute and deliberate attempt by the media to distort information, breaking unsubstantiated information, toxic online media with no due diligence on fact checking and running of file videos and photos as current news.

The Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) Chairperson Professor Ruby Magosvongwe stated that it is impossible for a media practitioner to cover elections when he or she is not even conversant with the Electoral Laws governing the conduct of elections. *"There is need for capacitation of media practitioners to enable them to disseminate adequate and accurate information on elections."*

Professor Magosvongwe noted that the security of media practitioners during elections is of great concern. *"In preparation for the 2023 harmonized elections the ZMC has acquired media jackets for journalist which clearly state that they are on duty and this should prevent them from being harmed or mistaken for troublemakers,"* said Magosvongwe.

ZMC Principal Director Chinamhora propounded that, *"the Commission has come up with an Elections Reporting Manual that guides journalists in covering electoral processes and electoral systems premised on fairness, balance, truth and accuracy, no perpetuation of hate speech, no bribes and inducement."* Chinamhora also brought to the fore that social media has caused a rise in information disorders that are difficult to control.

Media Institute in Southern Africa (MISA) Zimbabwe Advocacy Officer Malvern Mkudu identified major constraints in reportage of elections as a difficult working environment, coupled with lack of electoral knowledge, lack of funds and polarization. He further cited that the legislation has not been fully aligned to the Constitution and some laws restrict media freedoms. Commenting on the current legislation that is regulating the media, including Statutory Instrument 33 of 2008, Mkudu reiterated that,

"Parliament should not enact legislation that is restrictive and that has the effect of resurrecting repealed legislation such as the AIPPA that can bring back the criminalisation of journalism."

Rutendo Mawere a Communication for Development Specialist Rutendo Mawere detailed that the media's important role in enhancing electoral democracy can only be fulfilled when there is an independent, responsible and capacitated media. She further recommended that counselling provision be made for media practitioners, as they cover traumatic events around elections which impact on their psychological well-being.

The media play a fundamental role in elections through factual and fair information dissemination to the public; analyses the electoral process, management and evaluates its fairness; plays a watchdog role and serves as a conduit for political and public debate and discussion as well as social representation. The Media in Zimbabwe is polarized and this reflects in the reportage and coverage of electoral processes by media practitioners. More should be done to enhance media reportage of elections in Zimbabwe.



There is need for capacitation of media practitioners to enable them to disseminate adequate and accurate information on elections.



ZESN CONVENES TOWN HALL COMMUNITY MEETINGS

ZESN organized and convened four Community Town Hall Meetings in May 2023 to sensitize and encourage eligible citizens to register and vote peacefully in Beitbridge, Gwanda, Matobo and in Makokoba, Bulawayo. The Beitbridge community meeting was conducted virtually (zoom) whilst others were done physically.

The aim of the community meetings attended by 268 people was to provide citizens with an opportunity to access information on the importance of their participation in voter registration which is a continuous process in Zimbabwe. Facilitators were drawn from People with Disabilities (PwDs), Women, Youth and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) who highlighted gaps, challenges and opportunities for citizens to access continuous voter registration at all ZEC district and provincial offices nationwide.

During these community engagements, participants appreciated the importance of women, youth and PwDs' participation in the voter registration process and all electoral processes at large. They indicated that inclusivity helps in participation and representation of all within the electoral cycle. FBOs identified and indicated their roles in the promotion of peaceful participation in electoral processes outlining their current efforts in the creation of such an environment.

Representatives from FBOs committed to up-scaling meeting the candidate meetings that will inculcate a culture of peace ahead of the harmonised elections. They further pledged to collaborate with ZEC in disseminating voter information during church gatherings whilst cascading current peace building efforts to grassroots level in rural communities.

Youths present called for targeted voter education and voter registration activities at tertiary institutions. The incorporation of Civic and Voter Education into the education curriculum was proposed as a way of curbing apathy. The proposal was directed to ZEC for the decentralization of district voter registration centers to ward/constituencies to help reduce long walking distances. Participants called for the return of special voting to enable especially people with disability to vote in the upcoming harmonized elections.



Participants of Makokoba community town hall meeting



Nkashe BICC church - Gwanda participants pose for a group photo

The women's sector implored the Zimbabwe Gender Commission to deal with issues of gender related electoral violence. The PwDs urged ZEC to embark on a training programme in basic sign language for voter educators, in pursuance of the vision 2030 mantra and also urged the Commission to consider carrying out a feasibility study on the prospects of introducing the tactile ballot system for the benefit of the print-handicapped. ZEC was recommended to come up with a disaggregated data capturing methodology to ascertain the percentage of persons with disabilities on the voter's roll.



The proposal was directed to ZEC for the decentralization of district voter registration centers toward/constituencies to help reduce long walking distances.

#voteinpeace



EFFECTS OF ONLINE VIOLENCE ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

Zimbabwe is a State Party of regional and international instruments that recognize the need for having women in politics and the removal of all barriers in female participation. The Constitution of Zimbabwe, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women, SADC Protocol on Gender and Development all mandate State Parties to eliminate all barriers that impede women from actively participating in politics. Despite these protocols, reality is women are still underrepresented and the chief reason is Violence Against Women In Elections and Or Politics.

Online violence against women is a form of gender-based violence committed, assisted or intensified by the use of ICTs e.g mobile phones, the Internet, social media, text messaging, and email against women.

In her presentation at the Media Training Workshop on Women's Political Participation convened by Gender and Media Connect in partnership with UN Women from 19 to 21 April 2023 in Harare, ZESN Media and Information Officer Emilia Bundo outlined that social media has become toxic, particularly for women in the political sphere.

"There are so many impediments to their participation, chief among them being online violence. It (using online platforms) is the new norm that we have embraced, you saw during the COVID-19 period when the pandemic was at its peak, and everyone migrated to online platforms to campaign, solicit votes and de-campaign other candidates. But what is worrying is that social media has become a very toxic platform for female politicians," she said.



Emilia Bundo ZESN Media and Information Officer

However online media did not create these undesirable behaviors, it is the prevailing political culture which set a very low standard of what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior in politics.

Bundo added that misogyny proves to be the biggest challenge with male politicians denigrating women's efforts through spewing sexist comments which qualifies as verbal abuse. Despite the enactment of the Data Protection Act in 2021 to curb cybercrime, there are very limited restrictions to harassment, defamation and online threats to women.

If online media is used effectively, it can help women candidates improve their communication strategies during their campaigns since there are high levels of engagement on social media by citizens on election-related matters.



There are so many impediments to their participation, chief among them being online violence...





AHIBHULENI HEHLENI KA DZVOLONGA RI ENDLEKAKA HI NKARHI WA MINHLOWULO

Section 155 (1) (a) na (d) ya nawukulu watiko ra Zimbabwe uvula leswaku minhlawulo le yifanelaka kuendliwa kota tolovelo, na tirheferendamu, tifanela kuendliwa kuhina kurhula, tirhitshutshekile, katiendliwa kahle, nakambe tifanela kuendliwa kurhahava dzvolonga, kutani swin'wani swinga handle kaminawu ya minhlawulo.

XIVUTISO: Dzvolongaraminhlawulochini?

HLAMULO: Dzvolonga ra minhlawulo xikongo-misiwa ke varhangeli va minhlawulo, vavhoti, vakamberiwa, van'wamahungu, tipahla titirhisiwaka hi vakamberiwa, swirhun'wa swe mavandla aendlaka minhlawulo, tindhawu to vhotela e xikarhi ka swin'wani, kuhina xikonghomelo xakuhlohotela a vuyelo wa minhlawulo.

XIVUTISO: Dzvolonga ra minhlawulo rikombisiwa rivaleni hindlela muni?

HLAMULO: Dzvolonga rikombiwa hikulwa, Kutani vurhena byikatsaka kukhoma hintamu, kucha-viseta, kurhukana, kuhumeta mahungu orhukana ka michini yachisweswi sweswi, kupfinya, kudlaya, na kuvavisana kevasekeli ve mavandla angha ka minhlawulo.

XIVUTISO: Dzvolonga riendleka hi xikhati xihhi xaminhlawulo?

HLAMULO: Dzvolonga riendleka swikhathi hinkwaswo, Kutani xikhati xakutsalisa kuvhota, xikhati xavukamberi bya minhlawulo, xakulava swirhun'wa swa minhlawulo, hi siku ra minhlawulo, hi xikhati xakutivisa vuyelo wa minhlawulo, na le ndzaku ka minhlawulo.

XIVUTISO: Dzvolonga rivavisa hindlela muni kulungiseriwa nakuendliwa ka minhlawulo?

HLAMULO: Rionha vuyelo wa minhlawulo, yivoneka yi nghari ya ntiyiso, hikota yaku rivavisa vaxisati, vevanuna, ne vanghalemala. Dzvolonga rivavisa tshutsheko yaxitshungu hikota yaku vavhoti vatachava kuvhota. Dzvolonga laswikota kambe kuhlwelisa, kuonha nakutsandisa kuendliwa ka minhlawulo, na kutisa vuyelo wa minhlawulo ungharhiko wa ntiyiso.

XIVUTISO: Chini chifaneleko kuendliwa kuhunghuta timhaka ta dzvolonga?

HLAMULO: Minhlawulo yifanela yiiandzelerisiwa, kulaviwa maqinga ya kusirhelela kuendliwa ka dzvolonga, na ku kucetela mavandla hinkwawo kuhlayiseta kurhula.

Mihlengheletano yi vonaka hiswatifanelo ta xitshungu, Mavandla ya swikholwa na mihlengheletano yi pfunetelaka xitshungu – yaswikota ku sungula minonghonoko yi kuceteteraka kuhlayisiwa ka kurhula, kulemukisa xitshungu hehleni ka nawukulu wa tiko na tifanelo te swati politik.

Khomixini yivonaka hiswakurhula na kurhivalelana, xa National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) – Yifanela ku lavisisa, na kusola kuendliwa ka dzvolonga, yihumeta rivaleni timhaka titisaka dzvolonga, yi pfunetela vaxanisiwa nakuolovisa mabhulo e xikarhi ke mavandla a ti politik, vaakatiko e xikarhi ka migangha, ne man'wani mavandla, na kuhuma na tindlela ta ku sirhelela kuendliwa ka dzvolonga.

Khomixini ya minhlawulo ya Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) – yi fanele kuva na ntiyiso ya ku minhlawulo yi fambisiwa kahle hindlela yilanghuteriwaka hi mavandla atirhisanaka ke swa minhlawulo.

Khomixini yivonaka hiswatifanelo ta xitshungu ya Zimbabwe Rights Commission (ZHRC) – yifanele yisirhelela na kulemukisa vaakatiko va Zimbabwe hehleni ka tifanelo tavona, akuva vanavela kutienchisa, kuhumeta hiku amukeriwa ka swivilelo swa xitshungu, na kulavisisa timhaka ta dzvolonga ra minhlawulo.

Mavandla e swa ti politik – afanele alemukisa vasekeri hehleni ka ku xiya na ku enchisa fambiselo wa minhlawulo, yikatsaka kuolovisa huwa kutani tinyipi, na ku amukela mavonele e mavandla okaneta.

Ve Swaminawu – Vafanele vahatla ku lamula huwa na kutiyisa minawu ya minhlawulo a ku va vakamberiwa ne lava rhanghelaka minhlawulo vaendla ntirho wavona rivaleni.

Mahungu a ntiyiso hehleni ka minhlawulo afanele ahumetiwa hi **xiyenghe xa kuhanthalasa mahungu**, kurhahava mahungu orhukana, kota leswi kurhukana xingha xikombiso xa kuvoyamela thlelo n'we, ka kukota kambe kuvangha dzvolonga.

Varhangeli Veswa tumbuluxo: vane ntirho lo kulu wa kuolovisa dzvolonga ri kuceteriwaka hi risima kutani swikholwa switolovelaka huwa, na kuolovisa huwa mitini na le xikarhi ka migangha, na kukucetera vutikhomi.

Vaxisati, Vatsva ne Vaghalemala – vafanela kukumisiwa matimba a ku hatla kulava kupfuneka loku vavona tifanelo tavona tingha antwisiwi, nakuhatla kulava kusirheleliwa, na kukumisiwa mikandla yifanaka nevan'wanai vaakatiko hinkwavo e xikarhi ka migangha. Vafanele kambe vakumisiwa dyondzo yatintanga yikhumbaka kuantwisa kurhula, kuamukerana, nakuamukera mavonelo yo hambana ya ti politik.

Maporisa a Zimbabwe (ZRP) – alanghuteriwa kutlakusa kuenchisiwa ka minawu, ku xiya xiya timhaka ta dzvolonga ra minhlawulo, na kukhoma vavangi va swo biha.

Vaakatiko hinkwavo vafanele vatshutsheka kunghena ka minhlawulo kutani varhi vatirhi, vavhoti, vakamberiwa, vaxiya xiyi nakuendla vundzemukiso **hi kurhula, vahitshutshekile**. A **hikucetereni a kurhula minhlawulo yinghoso endliwa, chikhathi cha minhlawulo, na le ndzaku ka kuendliwa ka minhlawulo! VHOTANI HI KURHULA.**





KHA RI AMBE NGANDWA KHA ZWAKHETHO

Tshipida 155 (1) (a) na (d) tsha Ndaoteywa ya Zimbabwe i khou divhadza uri Khetho, dzino fanela u farwa, dzi tea u vha na mulalo, u vhotholowa nau edanisa husina ndwaa ana zwiñwe zwothe zwi nga fhambanisa khetho.

Ndi mini Ndwa kha Zwakhetho?

Ndwa kha zwa khetho ndi u di imisela u lwisana na vhano shuma kha zwakhetho, vhavoti, vhano khosedza nga zwa khetho, vhano toda u voteliwa, vharafhi vhamafhungo, thundu yau shumisa kha zwakhetho, goloi, ofisi, bulege dza khetho na zwiñwe zwine zwinga fhambanisa u tshimbila zwa vhuḍi kha zwa u farwa ha khetho na u divhadzwa ha mbvelele dza khetho.

Ndwa kha zwakhetho dzi thoma hani?

Ndwa i dzi dzinga thoma ngau diyana kana dziñwe ndila dzisatakadzi vhañwe dzi ngavha u sema vhañwe, u shushedza vhañwe, maipfi a luvhengo, u vhumala, u kombetshedza uya dzithovhoni, u hu vhadzana vhukati ha vhatikedzi vhosiyana khathihi na zwiñwe .

Ndwa i dzi dzinga thoma kha tshipida tshi fhiyo kha khetho?

Ndwa dzi thoma nga tshifhinga tshothe tsha zwa khetho ufana na nga tshifhinga tsha u ñwalisa madzina a vhanodo vota, nga tshifhinga tsha u toda thikhedzo nga vhapolitiki, nga tshifhinga tshakhetho, duvha la khetho, ngatshifhinga tsha u divhadzwa ha mbvelele dza khetho na ngamurahu hau farwa ha khetho.

Ndwa dzi fhambanisa hani u tshimbidzwa ha khetho?

Dzi fhambanisa u vha na pfulufhelo kha zwakhetho ngauri dzi khovhangela uri vhafumakadzi, vhanana, vhaolofhali na vhaswa vhadipfe vhothandedzwa. Zwi vhangela usa kona ukwameya kha zwakhetho ngandila dza u phweya u dzhena kha zwakhetho zwi tshi fhambanisa ndila dza u farwa ha khetho. Ndwa dzi nga lengisa, u fhambanisa nau lengisa u thoma ha khetho nau fhambanisa mbvelele ya khetho.

Ndi mini zwingaitwa uri hu fhungudzwe ndwa kha zwa khetho?

Ndi zwa ndeme u sedzulusa nau da na ndila dza u thivhela zwothe zwi ngavhangela ndwa nau tutuwedza u pfana namulalo kha vhothe vhanu kwameya khethoni

Madzangano ano imela vhathu, a dzikereke na ano imela vhadzulapo mivhunduni – a nga thoma mitangano ino tutuwedza mulalo, u fundedza nga zwamilayo ya shango malugana na pfanelo kha zwa politiki na vhuthu.

Dzangano la National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) –

Li khou fanela usedzulusa, u amba ngaha u imisa dzindwa, u sedzulusa nga zwothe zwi ngavha zwo vhangela u sapfana, u thusa vhothe vho tanganaho na mathada a u sapfana, u vhangela uri huvhe na u ambedzana vhukati ha mahoro a zwa politiki, vhadzulapo, madzangano na zwiñwe zwi gwada, na u disa mano a no dovhangela u ri hu thivhelwe dzindwa na usapfana kha la matshele.

Dzangano la Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) –

Li fanela u vhona uri zwothe zwire malugana na khetho zwi khou tshimbidzwa zwa vhuḍi zwi tshifusha vhothe vhanu kwameya.

Dzangalo la Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) –

Li fanela u tutuwedza, u tsireledza, u tikedza nau vhangela u di phina nga pfanelo dzavhathu na mbofholololo kha tshitshavha tsha Zimbabwe ngandila dzau tangedza zwililo zwothe khathihi nau sedzulusa nga ndavha dzadzindwa dzino khou vha hone kha zwakhetho.

Mahoro a zwa politiki-

a tea u gudisa vhatikedzi ngandila dza u vhangela u pfana kha zwa khetho zwino fana nau kona u thivhela u lwisana khathihi nau pfesana naho huna mbono dzo fhambanaho.

Vha zwa mulayo –

vha tea u vha na ndila dza u tandulula ndwa nau vhangela u di netshedzela u shuma zwa vhuḍi ha avho vha no kwameya khazwa khetho.

U vhana ngoho nau sadzhiya lu thungo kha zwa u divhadzwa ha mafhungo a zwa khetho ndi zwone zwi no toda kha **Vharafhi vhamafhungo** vhasa divhadzi mafhungo ano vhangela u vha nambono dzo fhambanaho zwi ngavhangela u sapfana na ndwa.

Vhahulwane mivhunduni: vhana mushumo muhulu wau fhungudza ndwa dzinga vhangela ngau sapfana kha zwa u fhambana ha siyalala khathihi nau thivhela u lwisana vhukati ha vhadzulapo na ndwa dzire malugana na zwa siyalala dzino khou vhaone mivhunduni nau tutuwedza u pfana naho huna u fhambana ha siyalala nau ri vhathu vhadifare nga ndila yoteyaho.

Vhafumakadzi, Vhaswa na Vhaolofhali – vha tea u nekedzwa manda a u kona u humbela u pfiwa kha rali pfanelo dzavho dzo fhambaniswa khathihi na u dzhenisa vha mulayo nau humbela tsireledzo sa vhanwe vhathu vhothe vha lino shango. Vha tea u kwana pfunzo khamurole muthihi malugana na vhutogwa vha vhangela mulalo nau pfesana kha zwa politiki.

Mapholisa a Zimbabwe Republic Police – a tea u tutuwedza u tevedzelwa ha milayo nau sedzulusa nga ndavha dzire malugana nau lwisana nga zwa politiki nau fara vhothe vhanu khou vhangela ndwa idzi.

Vhathu vhothe vha napfanelo yau kwameya kha zwa khetho savha shumi kha zwa khetho, vhavoti, vha no khou toda u voteliwa, vhasedzi nau kona u toda thikhedzo huna mbofhololo na mulalo. Khari vhangela mulalo nga tshifhinga na ngamurahu ha khetho! KHA VHAVOTE HUNA MULALO

