



ZESN PARTICIPATES IN THE ZEC VOTER EDUCATION STRATEGIC REVIEW WORKSHOP

A ZESN representative attended and participated at the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) hosted a Voter Education Strategy Review Workshop from the 29th of April to 2nd of May 2023 in Kadoma. The workshop sought to review the voter education strategy ahead of the 2023 harmonised elections, evaluate its relevance to the different eligible electoral demographics and minority groups in light of the prevailing environment. The workshop's objective was to also come up with a voter education that promotes democratic tenets such as promotion of tolerance, inclusivity, peace and stability in line with National Development Strategy and ensure Voter Education contributes and safeguards electoral integrity.

In attendance, were representatives from the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Zimbabwe Gender Commission and the Zimbabwe Media Commission, various Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) who presented on various topics. CSOs working with people with disabilities highlighted the need to come up with targeted messaging that is packaged to suit their various needs which is easily accessible and understandable. Women organisations emphasised the need to increase the participation and representation of women in electoral processes and systems as candidates, voters, observers and polling officials.

FBOs stressed that elections Christians should be educated on electoral issues. They underscored the need to foster peace before, during and after elections. The youth organisations also spoke on the need to have content that speaks to their constituency and to educate them on the importance of voting. Chapter 12 Commissions accentuated the need for concerted efforts and coordination to promote peace and inclusivity to avoid duplication in programming as well as the need to use various media platforms for voter education while taking measures to curb the spread of information orders on electoral issues.

ZESN presented on *The Adequacy or inadequacy of Voter education Zimbabwe: How Zimbabwe compares to the regional democracies*. The presentation was a content and situational analysis of voter education in Zimbabwe compared to Botswana, South Africa, Rwanda and Kenyan experiences on conducting voter education. The presentation focused on current political environment vis-à-vis voter education inadequacy and or lack of it after elections, elements that makes it relevant such as having a section that covers it in the Electoral law and the Constitution and involvement of other stakeholders, perceptions on the various electoral stakeholders by political leaders and policy makers.

ZESN recommended that information conveyed to citizens should be accurate, gender sensitive, continuous and impartial.

The workshop proffered a number of **recommendations** which include;

- The need for CSOs and other stakeholders to observe the ZEC Code of conduct when carrying out voter education.
- The CSOs, FBOs and other stakeholders accredited to conduct voter education should inform the ZEC District Officers wherever doing voter education in their areas
- All IEC materials should be translated in all the 16 official languages
- There should be a sign language interpreter whenever there are public engagement meetings.