

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



BALLOT UPDATE

Issue No 14: August, 2010

INTRODUCTION

The month of August saw the unfolding of a number of political developments in Zimbabwe. The SADC Summit in Namibia, the Kenyan referendum, the sad passing on of the Minister of State in the Organ of National Healing Mr Gibson Sibanda among others. Elections remained high on the political agenda as evidence by various media reports on Zimbabwe's readiness for elections. This update provides an analysis of events that transpired during the month of August 2010 and their implications on Zimbabwe's electoral processes.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network remains dedicated to the promotion of democratic elections in Zimbabwe. In line with this objective, we continue to analyse the political environment and the 45 rural constituencies that have been systematically selected. The constituencies were especially selected owing to a number of reasons including those where by-elections are long overdue, areas that experienced inordinately high levels of political violence in the 2008 elections as well as constituencies in which candidates succeeded by notably small margins. This update is informed by observations from the chosen constituencies and broadly captures national political developments in August 2010.

<p>The Constitution Making Process</p>		<p>the YES vote prevailed. It is important to note that the Kenyans had a different process to the one that has been adopted by Zimbabwe and we hope that our process will result in a people driven constitution that espouses the core values of Zimbabweans. ZESN also observed that the constitution review process in Kenya was grounded in a solid legal framework with benchmarks that provided timelines and specifications for the conduct of the process, further to this the institutions tasked with the review and conduct of the referendum were independent and open to scrutiny.</p> <p>The COPAC constitution outreach process continued amid controversy regarding the process of public consultations. While meetings have been held in a number of provinces to date, the Zimbabwe Peace Project, Zimbabwe Election Support Network and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights Constitution Monitoring Project ZZZICOMP indicated that the process has been marred with some problems, some logistical and others process related. COPAC meetings to date have covered all the provinces except Harare and Bulawayo. It is important to note the importance of the process in the outcome and the disturbances that have been recorded have to be analysed in relation to their impact on the outcome of the process. It is also important to note that while a lot of attention has been placed on numbers of citizens that have attended, attendance in meeting has not translated to participation as only a few chosen voices have been heard. Inclusivity demands conditions that allow all citizens to participate freely in constitution building processes.</p> <p>Though COPAC launched a website to cater for the views of the diasporans, there are concerns that other stakeholders in COPAC seem to rebuff the participation of Zimbabweans living outside the country in the constitution making exercise. It is</p>
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<p>The GNU</p>		<p>important to note that Zimbabweans living outside the country have not been included in this process. Not all Zimbabweans living outside in neighbouring countries and overseas have no intention of returning to their country and neither can we equate living outside Zimbabwe with disinterest in one's country's political affairs. Zimbabweans living outside the country have contributed immensely to the livelihoods of family and friends that remained and therefore should be included in such important processes.</p> <p>ZESN notes with concern that talk of elections has taken attention from the important constitution making process and the focus has been centred on elections at the expense of issue based constitution making.</p>
<p>Electoral Reforms</p>		<p>The implementation of the provisions of the Global Political Agreement has suffered from setbacks due to misunderstanding related the unilateral appointments by ZANU PF of governors and other key posts and the issue of sanctions. ZESN notes that sanctions have been used as an excuse to prevent the full implementation of provisions of the GNU. Whenever they have been hitches in implementation of the Global Political Agreement the issue of sanctions is raised as an excuse for non-implementation. This has led to stalled reforms in critical sectors with a bearing on the political well-being of Zimbabwe.</p> <p>During the month ZESN responded to calls by the Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri who wanted the role of the police to be revised to return to provisions provided for by the Presidential Powers Temporary Measures Act in 2008 which would see the</p>

		<p>return of police officers inside the polling station. In addition, reference was also made to the controversial issue of police officers voting 30 days before election day which raises transparency concerns regarding the whole process. ZESN contends the role of the police is to provide law and order and not be part of electoral processes in the way in which they have conducted themselves in the past.</p>
<p>Media Reform</p>		<p>While it is worth noting that considerable space has been opened in the print media with some new publications such as the News Day now on the streets, it is also important to note that television and radio remain closed. Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) an organisation that monitors the media has recorded that the voice of ZANU PF and the President Robert Mugabe continues to dominate public media and the MDC voice continues to dominate private media.</p> <p>ZESN notes with interest that the constitution making process has not received the attention it merits on the media agenda. It is important to note that COPAC has not provided information on progress of the outreach process regarding their target of 1957 wards they intended to have meetings in. There is need for information regarding areas they have covered and where they are yet to cover and as well as problems they have encountered in the outreach process.</p> <p>ZESN observed that a number of stories published by the both public and private media houses focused on elections in Zimbabwe, with a number of them interrogating the readiness of Zimbabwe for elections. It is important that such critical issues remain on the agenda and providing opportunity for debate among Zimbabweans.</p>

<p>Human rights and fundamental freedoms</p>		<p>ZESN observers noted with concern the creation of “Bases” in order to drill youths in what to say during the outreach process in Kwekwe. This denies people freedom of expression and does not provide for the spontaneity. ZESN reiterates that people need to be free to speak out their minds and views for Zimbabwe to have a constitution that reflects the views of the people and not the views of a particular party. ZESN observers reported that political parties were ferrying people from other wards to speak at ward meetings in different areas. This is a reflection that there is something fundamentally wrong in this process, if citizens cannot be trusted to know what is good and bad for them in this process.</p> <p>ZESN observers in Gokwe and Kwekwe noted intimidation of citizens with dissenting views. It is important to note that genuine participation requires freedom from violence. Thus ZESN urges all political parties to have tolerance to dissenting views and accept that diversity is not synonymous with enmity.</p> <p>ZESN observers in Manicaland reported that COPAC dates were changed and at times with little notice given to residents and sometimes alternative dates given were not followed through, thus residents were left waiting for meetings which did not materialise.</p> <p>ZESN observers in Bikita East reported the presence of inter-party violence as an MDC-T supporter’s house was burnt to the ground by suspected war veterans aligned to ZANU PF after a dispute relating to the constitutional outreach process.</p>
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