



# BALLOT e-Newsletter

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK(ZESN)

June Issue

ELECTIONS BULLETIN

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ZESN1

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## REGULARIZATION OF CODES OF CONDUCT, KEY DURING ELECTIONS

The Codes of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates and other Stakeholders must be fully enforced, while ZEC must also be given powers to make and enforce codes of conduct to be observed by traditional leaders, members of the disciplined forces (i.e. security services), civil servants and media personnel. This is part of recommendations contained in the Draft Comprehensive Electoral Amendment Bill submitted to Parliament in September 2020 by the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) and other civic society organisations (CSO's).

The Draft was developed following extensive consultations and input with various stakeholders while also incorporating some provisions of the SADC Model Law on elections. The recommendations by ZESN and partnering CSO's seek to promote the holding of democratic elections in the country.

Under Part XXXII of the Draft Electoral Amendment Bill, ZESN proposes that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) be empowered by law to prescribe a code of conduct for various stakeholders.

"The Commission shall by regulation prescribe codes of conduct to regulate the conduct and activities of traditional leaders, civil servants, members of all disciplined forces, journalists and media operators in relation to elections," the Draft reads in part.

It adds: "(7) When preparing a code of conduct in terms of subsection (6) for— (a) traditional leaders, the Commission shall consult the National Council of Chiefs; (b) civil servants, the Commission shall consult the Civil Service Commission; (c) members of a disciplined force, the Commission shall consult the Defense Forces Service Commission, the Police Service Commission or the Prisons and Correctional Service Commission, as the case may be; (d) journalists and media operators, the Zimbabwe Media Commission.

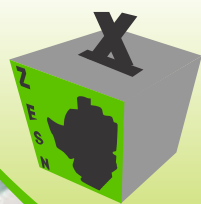
"(8) Regulations made in terms of this section— (a) may provide for penalties for any contravention thereof, not exceeding a fine of level ten or imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or both such fine and such imprisonment; (b) shall not have effect until they have been and published in the Gazette."

Independent election watchdogs and other civic groups have in the past raised complaints over the conduct of civil servants, media, traditional leaders and security forces during elections as they argued that this resulted in disputed election outcomes.

Currently, elections remain suspended under COVID-19 regulations to contain the spread of the global pandemic. However, ZESN in collaboration with other CSOs has on several occasions called on the government to lift the suspension on the holding of elections arguing this was tantamount to the quarantining of democracy. This is against the background that several countries in Southern Africa such as Malawi, South Africa, Namibia and Tanzania just to name but a few have held elections even in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

***The Draft was developed following extensive consultations and input with various stakeholders***





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## DIGITIZATION OF CVE MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

As the nation continues to grapple with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and embracing the new normal of migrating to cybernetic platforms, ZESN's operations on electoral education and capacity building had been stalled since most work requires physical interaction.

However, since voter education is a continuous processes, ZESN had to find other means to reach its targeted audiences. From the period of March to May 2021, ZESN hosted a series of virtual training workshops aimed at capacitating its members and partners on digitizing Civic and Voter Education (CVE) and developing targeted messages and hashtags for various audiences that will be used in the mobilization of citizens to participate in electoral processes such as the delimitation and voter registration exercises using various digital media platforms.

The training workshops were in line with ZESN efforts to complement the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) in the mobilization of citizens to register to vote and to engage in the forthcoming delimitation process and in by- elections in the event that they are proclaimed.

Apart from the use of technical channels such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and the Website, ZESN is also making use of traditional media such as national and community radios to reach communities of interest and geographically marginalized communities with CVE messages.

Voter registration data has a bearing on the outcome of the delimitation of electoral boundaries, hence the need for to mobilize citizens particularly the youth, women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) before the delimitation process commences. A collaborative and coordinated approach in CVE campaigns is greatly needed as there is strength in numbers and can yield a higher turnout and active citizen participation in key electoral processes.

- #leavenoyouthbehind
- #registerzw.
- #yourvoteyourvoice
- #yourvoteyourright
- #yourvotematters
- #registertovote

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**#staysafe**  
but don't forget...

**ZEC** should provide voter education in all the 16 languages to ensure participation of all Zimbabweans in electoral processes

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**#staysafe**  
but don't forget...

**ZEC and CSOs must avail civic and voter education materials in easily accessible and understandable formats for persons with disabilities (sign language, captions, audio, and braille among others).**

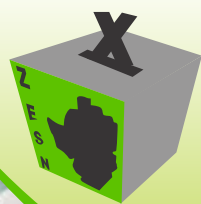
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## MIDLANDS FEMALE POLITICIANS IN DRIVE FOR EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS.

Female politicians in the Midlands Province have set aside political differences and are rallying for a common cause to foster equal participation with their male counterparts in the 2023 elections.

This comes amid realization that there is very low representation of women in political positions in local authorities and parliament. It was established that out of the 6800 candidates who contested in the previous elections for seats in the 92 local authorities, only 17 percent were women.

Speaking during an online Grassroot Linking and Networking meeting recently organized by the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, Gweru Ward 13 Councillor Cathrine Mhondiwa said there is need to advance women interests at political party level.

"We need to advocate for review of our political party policies so that gender equality starts from there. We must go beyond the quota system. While our parties recognize the need for equal participation, implementation remains a huddle. It is imperative that we push for gender equality while we also lobby for the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, to disregard any political parties lacking on gender equality of representation."

Shurugwi North Ward 14 Councillor Charllote Ndau said there is a need to mobilize women at grass root level and raise awareness on constitutional literacy so that they can gain the much-needed confidence.

"For rural women, the starting point is to create constitutional awareness, many do not know that they have a right to participate equally in democratic electoral and governance processes. Our communities are still deep-rooted in patriarchal dominance with the belief that all leadership should be reserved for men. A culture of patriarchy in Zimbabwe, especially within local power structures, make it often next to impossible for women to compete for political power. There is need for mentorship of women at grass root level so that we push the numbers of women in local authorities."

Councillor Melody Chingarande of Kwekwe City Ward 5 said young women should break the barriers of participation and demand their political share in 2023.

"I believe greater women's representation in politics contributes to a more equitable distribution of community resources, including more gender-sensitive spending on programs related to health, nutrition, and education.

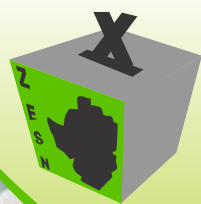
Councillor Nyembesi Shumba of Mberengwa RDC reiterated on the need for women to remain resolute in the face of a violent political field as female contestants experience many forms of violence which may in turn be a huge setback for participation.

**"We need to advocate for review of our political party policies so that gender equality starts from there ..."**

# V-R-S

It takes 'u' and 'i' to fight COVID-19





## EMBRACE UNITY AND REFORM: 41 YEARS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The year 2021 marks just over four decades since independence from white colonial rule and the government still needs to implement sound electoral reforms to fully promote democratic processes in general and; free and fair elections in particular.

Election disputes owing to opposition parties not accepting election results have led the country to be stuck in election mode which has negatively impacted on socio-economic and political development.

ZESN has continuously pushed the government to implement electoral reforms to ensure an improved electoral environment. In 2019 ZESN petitioned the Parliament of Zimbabwe to review the legal framework on elections with a view of bringing them into conformity with the letter and spirit of the 2013 Constitution. ZESN raised critical electoral issues to be addressed before the holding of the next elections such as; enhancement of the independence of the Election Management Body, need for diaspora vote, wholesome inclusivity of Persons with Disabilities in all electoral processes, results management and tabulation, gender main streaming, devolution, effective youth participation and the setting up of a committee which deals with the misdemeanors of Chiefs in elections as well as setting up of effective election dispute mechanisms.

The Petition also emphasized on the need to give meaning to aspects of the African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance (ACDEG) that Zimbabwe signed in February 2018, a few months into the new dispensation. Reforms improve impartiality, effectiveness and credibility of election administration and management.

The Network is of the view that, an important aspect that fosters equality and inclusivity is devolution. The results of an effective devolution system would be good governance, swift delivery of goods and services, creation of jobs, eradication of poverty, increased women representation in decision making positions starting at local level and the ending of corruption in local government.

In addition to this, extending the franchise and the right to vote to all citizens of Zimbabwe, regardless of where they are domiciled in the world, is prudent for the electoral inclusion agenda. The reform agenda should also focus on reforms to improve coherence and sufficiency of electoral laws.

All this can be achieved if political leaders embrace unity as an end to political and socio-economic crises through an all-inclusive dialogue.

***In 2019 ZESN petitioned the Parliament of Zimbabwe to review the legal framework on elections with a view of bringing them into conformity with the letter and spirit of the 2013 Constitution.***

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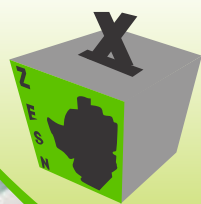
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# UNITY





## DIASPORA VOTE REMAINS KEY TO ELECTORAL REFORMS

CIVIC SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS in Zimbabwe have said the Diaspora vote remains key to their electoral reform agenda as this emerged several times from the 2018 election observer missions' (EOMs) recommendations.

The Electoral Act only guarantees government employees such as diplomats the right to vote from outside the country under the postal voting model. Observer missions of the 2018 harmonized elections called on the government to facilitate postal voting to every Zimbabwean as guaranteed under Section 67 of the Constitution which speaks to universal suffrage and guarantees every citizen above the age of 18 the right to vote.

A Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) tracking project report on the implementation of EOMs recommendations however notes lack of political will to implement postal voting. "Special voting rights have not yet been expanded. It appears that political will to expand the category of personas eligible for special voting is absent," the ZESN tracking project reads in part.

However, opposition parties said the demand for a Diaspora vote remains key to their electoral reform agenda.

"The question of the diaspora vote is key to our electoral reforms agenda as indicated in our alternative policy document on electoral good governance. The fact that ZEC can facilitate postal voting means it has the capacity to ensure citizens in the diaspora vote in the same manner," MDC Alliance (MDC-A) spokesperson Fadzai Mahere said.

"The MDC-A is currently engaging like-minded stakeholders and diaspora representatives to compel ZEC to institute the diaspora vote and the necessary electoral reforms that will ensure a free, fair and credible election that permits all eligible Zimbabwean to cast their votes and not be disfranchised because of location..."

MDC T leader Douglas Mwonozora added: "We are expecting a comprehensive amendment to the Electoral Act, and our demand must be the diaspora vote. That is the major amendment that we are looking for because according to statistics, we have about 4 million Zimbabweans living outside the country and those people do have a vested interest in the country."

In 2018, the Constitutional Court barred millions of Zimbabweans abroad from voting in that year's July elections.

This followed an appeal filed by three Zimbabweans, Gabriel Shumba and Sibonile Mfumisi (both based in South Africa), and United Kingdom-based Darlington Nyambiya seeking the right to vote.

**"The question of the diaspora vote is key to our electoral reforms agenda ..."**

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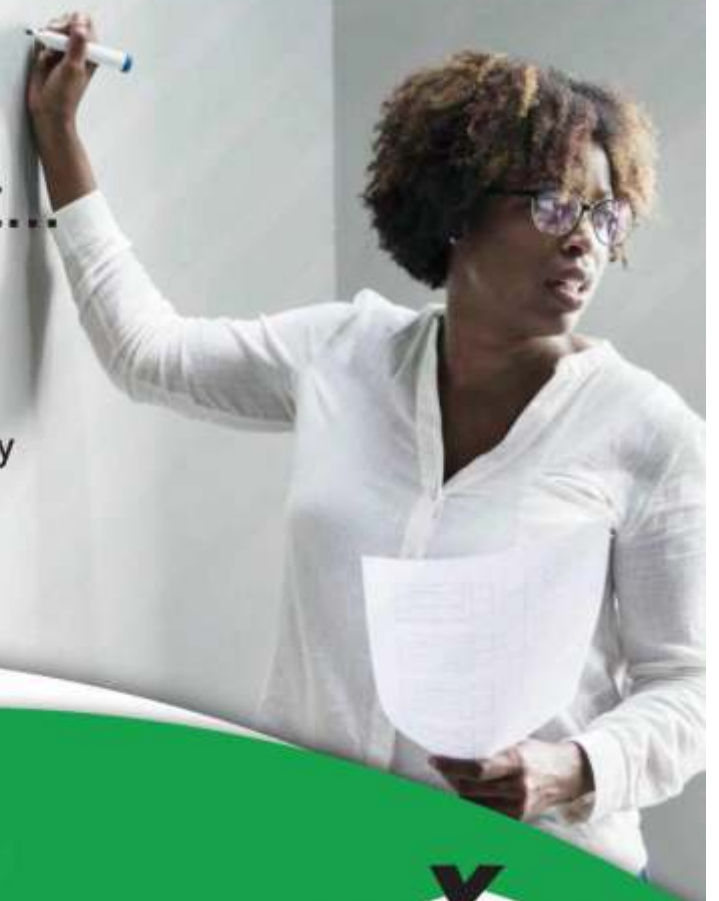
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### #stayhome but don't forget...

Civic and Voter Education should be provided on a continuous basis and expand its reach into institutions of higher learning and secondary schools and target first time voters



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