

Democracy and Elections

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**Zimbabwe APRM Popular Sensitization Project (ZAPS)
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SIVI
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Key Issues

- The quality of democracy is usually first measured through its electoral processes - Zimbabwe has held regular elections since Independence
- Elections in Zimbabwe have been highly contentious, with allegations of intimidation and rigging, and consequent suspicions about the legitimacy of their outcomes.
- For elections to be free and fair, they have to be administered by a neutral, fair, and professional body that treats all political parties and candidates equally. This is in line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines on Democratic Elections.
- The country's electoral system is well conceived, but subject to significant failings. - these include the institutional design of the ZEC – its chairperson is appointed by the President and it is not financially independent – and its conduct, as it has been widely criticised for acting in a manner which appeared to defer to the Executive.

Elections

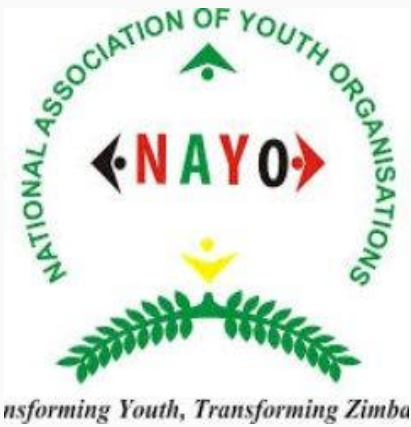
- A key element of electoral democracy is the ability of citizens to enjoy full participation in the political process - Section 67 sub section 1-4
- Political parties are generally recognised as an important component of a democratic system, allowing citizens to band together to pursue common political objectives.
- Traces from 1985 the transition to a one Party State, the rise of opposition parties and how such efforts were thwarted by the Government.
- For an election to be fair, there should also be equal opportunities for all political parties to access the state media. All must have the right to campaign freely, to present their proposals to the voters both directly and through the mass media - Section 61(4) and Section 248 on the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC).

Key Issues

- An independent Judiciary is an important element supporting the electoral process, according to the SADC elections guidelines. This is especially so where cases of electoral fraud are identified and brought before the courts.
- However, the impartiality of the Courts has been questioned.
- Among its principles for democratic elections, SADC also lists political tolerance as one of the democratic principles that promotes free and fair elections.
- Zimbabwe has a long tradition of political intolerance, stretching back to the colonial era, and continuing after independence. This has often manifested itself around election times. Electoral violence has been witnessed in cases where the ruling party has faced real challenges from opposition parties.

Recommendations

- Bodies (AU and SADC) to take more robust actions to bring into line member states and governments that disregard the SADC and AU principles and guidelines for conducting of democratic and credible elections.
- There is need for a comprehensive review of Zimbabwe's electoral Framework that addresses existing flaws, gaps and inadequacies in the administration of elections spearheaded by an all-inclusive electoral reform committee.
- The ZEC should strengthen its engagement (consultations and dialogue) with stakeholders throughout the electoral process, in particular political parties and CSOs.
- The Electoral Act should be amended to include provisions for developing and elaborating the electoral Framework for boundary delimitation.
- CSOs should be involved in the whole electoral process instead of flooding during election period - and stronger CSO Coordination in the Electoral Cycle.



THANK YOU



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