![EISA logo](Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa)

OBSERVATION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE 2018 VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

At the invitation of the National Elections Commission (CNE), the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) is observing the voter registration process in Mozambique.

For the launching period of the registration process, EISA fielded a Mission of 11 observers[1], of which 7 international and 4 national, who observed 112 registration centres in 21 municipalities in 7 provinces[2] between 19 and 24 March.

This team will return to the field in mid-May to observe the end of the registration process and the period of display and verification of provisional lists. In the interim period, EISA will carry out intermittent visits to municipalities that were not covered in this first phase.

FINDINGS

EISA hereby presents preliminary and summarised findings regarding the launching period of the 2018 voter registration process[3]. A detailed report will be issued after the end of voter registration in May.

Operationality of Voter Registration Centres

The overwhelming majority of observed VR centres (88.4%) began operations on the scheduled date and time, ie at 8am on 19 March. On subsequent days, 80.4% of the

---

[1] Observers came from Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Nigeria, Portugal, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

[2] Pemba, Montepuez, Mueda and Mocímboa da Praia in Cabo Delgado, Nampula, Nacala, Ilha de Moçambique and Angoche in Nampula, Quelimane, Mocuba, Gurué and Alto Molocué in Zambézia, Chimoio and Gondola in Manica, Beira and Gorongosa in Sofala, Manhiça, Matola, Boane and Namaacha in Maputo and Maputo City.

[3] These findings are valid only for the VR centres observed directly by the EISA teams, which were located only in municipal areas, and during the observation period.

centres observed opened at the scheduled time. The main cause of the late opening of the remaining centres was problems with the equipment.

During the observation period, 34% of the VR centres visited by the EISA Mission suffered some kind of interruption in their operation. These interruptions generally lasted a maximum of a few hours, although in two cases - one in Mocuba and one in Gorongosa - the interruption lasted several days. Problems with printers and, to a lesser extent, power sources were the main cause of the interruptions. In general, these problems were promptly resolved by the STAE technical support teams, and did not have a significant impact on the pace of operations of the affected centres.

On the fifth and sixth days of the registration process in the city of Nampula, 2 registration centres had to stop their operations for a few hours because they had run out of registration forms, as a result of higher turnout than initially expected.

Turnout

In all the observed centres posts there were queues of citizens waiting to register, regardless of the time of the visit by the observation teams, and these queues ranged from 30 to 120 people. In general, there was a balance between men and women in the queues, although there was a predominance of young people and the elderly in terms of age groups, which can be explained by the fact that the observation period coincided with regular working hours.

Environment and Security

The environment at the observed VR centres was generally calm and orderly, although in some cases the queues were disorganised, which sometimes made it difficult to control the flow of citizens into the centres.

Police agents were present at all observed VR centres visited, and their presence was generally discreet and largely passive. The only exception was in the municipality of Mocímboa da Praia, where, due to the security situation in the area, the presence of the police agents was more visible and interventive.

Materials and equipment were usually stored at VR centres overnight, and kept under guard, except for 2 stations without minimum security conditions, and where materials and equipment were stored at STAE's premises.

Composition, Preparation and Competence of VR Teams

The VR teams at the observed centres were always complete, overwhelmingly comprised of young people, and 53% of them were female.

The overwhelming majority (95%) of the observed teams demonstrated a good command of the registration procedures, and the handling of the equipment. However, there were some inconsistencies in the application of procedures that have to do with inconsistencies in the training process.

One of the most common inconsistencies was observed in the process of collecting and registering voters' data, namely oral verification and insertion of data concerning the place of residence, which led the CNE to issue an instruction on the mandatory completion of all fields related to the place of residence.

Several teams did not instruct the registrants to verify, in the small screen where the signature is placed, their data as they were inserted, to avoid errors that otherwise can only be detected after the card is issued.

At some polling stations, especially in the Gorongosa municipality, teams were impatient with the fingerprint capture process, and sometimes resorted unnecessarily to the option of not capturing all the fingerprints. At times, the difficulty in capturing fingerprints was due to the instruction that the teams gave the citizens to move their fingers around on the sensors, which instead of facilitating the capture process had the opposite effect of "confusing" the sensor.

There was also inconsistencies in the messages that the teams transmitted to citizens in the act of delivering the voter cards. Most teams urged voters only to appear on 10 October to vote in the same location, or in some cases gave them no messages. Few teams took the opportunity to inform voters about the public viewing and verification period that will run from 19-22 May.

Finally, there was an inconsistency in the treatment of the citizens who were in the queues at the closing time of VR centres at 4pm. In some cases, citizens were simply told to return the next day without any kind of priority. In others they received numbers or left their IDs with the teams so that they were the first to be registered the next day. Some VR centres decided to remain open beyond closing time until all citizens in line were registered.

The data entry system is user-friendly, with a series of drop-down menus, making it necessary to type only names, addresses and telephone numbers, which facilitated the teams' work.

Control of Eligibility and Efficiency of Registration

There were very few cases of people whose registration was not accepted. The main reasons were underage, not residing in the area where they intended to register, or submission of expired identification documents.

In the municipality of Mocímboa da Praia, in particular, several citizens who are refugees in the village due to security situation in some localities outside municipal boundaries were prevented from registering within the municipality, and instructed to look for VR centres in their zones of origin. However, these citizens were reluctant to return to their areas of origin to register because of the fear.

In Mocímboa da Praia it was also common not to accept witnesses as proof of identity, unless testimony was provided by official entities, such as the neighbourhood secretaries, allegedly for security reasons.

In the observed centres, the average processing time was 5 minutes per person, and an average of 70 people were registered daily[4].

About 90% of the citizens who registered at the observed centres received their voter cards immediately after registration. The exceptions were due to problems with the printing of the cards, and these voters were instructed to go back to the VR centres the following day to collect their cards.

Monitoring and Observation

In all the observed VR centres there were political party agents. Frelimo was present in 91.5% of the centres, Renamo in 86% and MDM in 61%. In Nampula province, AMUSI party agents were present in about half of centres.

The behaviour of party agents varied from centre to centre. In most of the observed centres, agents closely monitored the process, took note of the number of registered people, and helped the VR teams with managing the queues. However, in some cases they stood outside the VR rooms paying no attention to te registration process, and only concerned with taking note of the names and card numbers of registrants. Where this "parallel registration" was observed, it was conducted by all parties present. In some VR centres, party agents were allowed to serve as witnesses to confirm the identity and residence of the registrants, which although not prohibited by law raises some questions about the integrity of this confirmation.

The EISA observation teams did not see any national observers at the observed centres.

Public Information, Visibility and Accessibility of VR Centres

In the city and province of Maputo, there was lack of suficiente information about the existence and location of new VR centres in locations that had not previously been VR centres or polling stations. As a result several citizens went to the locations where they are accustomed to register, and were informed that they should register in the new centres closer to their homes. However, in a number of these cases, citizens preferred to return home rather than to queue again at the centres to which they were redirected.

In the provinces of Maputo and Zambézia, there was also lack of sufficient information on the schedule and itinerary of mobile registration teams, both on the part of the citizens to be registered by them, and of the teams themselves.

About 35% of the observed VR centres were not accessible to people with disabilities, because they were located in elevated places without access ramps, or because they were surrounded by uneven terrain.

In several VR centres, priority was not given to the elderly and people with disabiities.

---

[4] Each VR team needs to registeran average of 56 people daily to reach the target of 8.5 million registered voters planned by the CNE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the recommendations presented below can still be implemented in the current voter registration drive. Others can only be adopted for next year's update process.

Recommendations for possible immediate implementation:

- To improve response time to technical problems, by among others increasing the number of technical assistance teams.

- To improve the distribution process of registration forms to VR centres to prevent them from having to stop operations because they have run outo f forms.

- To issue instructions to the VR teams to improve the fingerprint capture process, especially the need for finger immobility on the sensors, and to avoid the easy way out of "jumping" fingerprint capture step.

- To instruct the VR teams to ask registrants to monitor the insertion of their data through the small screen attached to the VR machines to reduce typographical errors.

- To instruct VR teams to inform registered voters about the need to go back to the VR centres as of 19 May to check their details on the provisional lists.

- To instruct the VR teams to standardise the treatment of citizens who are in the queues at the centres' closing time.

- To clarify the role/rights of party agents, including whether they are allowed to serve as witnesses.

- To improve and intensify public information campaigns on the location of new VR centres and the schedules of mobile teams.

- To instruct the VR teams to always give priority to people with disabiiies, the elderly, and pregnant and lactating women, in order to standardise the treatment of these groups.

Recommendations for possible implementation in 2019:

- To format the data capture system in such a way as to make mandatory the filling in all the fields on place of residence.

- To improve the training process on the method of fingerprint capture.

- To improve the training process so that VR teams instruct literate registrants to monitor the insertion of their data on the small screen to reduce typos.

- To improve the training process so that VR teams can inform registered voters about the need to go back to the VR centres to check their details on the provisional lists.

- To improve the training process to standardise the treatment of citizens in the queues at the centres' closing time.

- To strengthen public information campaigns on the location of new VR centres and the schedule of mobile teams.

- To improve training of VR teams on the treatment of people with disabiities, the elderly, and pregnant and lactating women, in order to standardise the treatment of these groups.