



Zambia Elections Information Centre

ZEIC

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ZEIC WEEKLY REPORT

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Report by
Zambia Elections Information Centre

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important rights of Zambian citizens is the right to vote. It is a right that cannot be denied, regardless of race, religion, sex or disability and is guaranteed that every citizen of Zambia will receive equal treatment under the law and not be deprived of their rights without due process.

For practical purposes to ensure this right to vote is enhanced, the Zambia Elections Information Centre (ZEIC) has established several ICT based platforms that allow citizens to actively engage on the electoral process ahead of the 11th August tripartite elections. These platforms were designed with the understanding that the best way to create change in a society, is to connect the people that can make it happen and give them an opportunity to voice out on issues that matter most to them as a collective.

The aim of the Zambia Elections Information Centre is improve the quality of elections through sharing information at various stages of elections with key stakeholders with the hope of resolving the challenges that may arise as the process unfolds with key focus on monitoring the following components of the election cycle;

- 1. Media**
- 2. Campaign Financing**
- 3. Citizen's views**
- 4. Election observation**

With this report comes a weekly collation of issues emerging from our various interactive platforms that vividly highlights what is happening across the country as experienced or witnessed by citizens and observers deployed on the ground. This information is verified, validated and analyzed by a qualified team of analysts for purposes of aggregating the data received.

For three weeks, the ZEIC teams have been on the ground monitoring the campaigns and key happenings as part of ensuring that our discussions are not only informative but interactive and authentic. To this effect, our Radio and TV shows will have expert representation from key stakeholders in the election process to address some of the emerging issues. We would like to categorically state that as a platform,

we are non-partisan and we will not share unverified information. Citizens are rest assured that our reports are assessed by a team of qualified analysts who work round the clock to ensure that we remain credible and factual as a platform.

The following emerged as key on our platforms this past week;

KEY ISSUES OF THE WEEK

- Media Coverage
- Political Party Campaigns in Zambia: Communication, Manifestos and Structure

MEDIA COVERAGE

The role of media during election time is of great value as the power to ensure that citizens are well informed of the happenings that may influence their vote can come from a source such as this. The media play an important role in disseminating information to the public and it is important that good ethics are upheld in reporting, especially during election period.

‘During elections, the media must be aware of their duty to inform, rules governing elections coverage, protection of freedom of expression and how election guidelines apply in the electoral process.’ – ***Summary extract of the rules regarding election coverage from the Electoral Commission of Zambia.***

Understanding the gravitas duty that this is, media monitoring is one of the areas that ZEIC has a keen interest in.

The following challenges have been observed with regard to media coverage:

- Majority of the media outlets in Zambia, from print to television are state owned and have been criticized by the public of being biased in their coverage of political parties during this campaign period.
- A ZEIC Twitter follower described the public media to be “mono voice” in its reporting.

- Public media seems to find challenges reporting on issues that negatively shed light on their financiers and so they stick to the “agenda”.
- Freedom of press is challenging to exercise as there are no laws that protect and govern the media making it challenging for them to be truly independent.
- Government interference and intimidation of both public and private media explicitly and implied.
- Private media who are considered more independent may sometimes be compromised as they have a leaning towards surviving as a business.
- Private media also have been known to use their reach to push their own agendas, sometimes personal. This week, The Post Newspaper was shut down by the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) over unpaid taxes of up to K53million.
- Some online reactions pointed out how the Times of Zambia and Daily Mail and other government owned companies equally are not up to date with their tax payments but never get shut down.

The Post paper has been known to have headliners that challenge the Patriotic Front Government and President Lungu. One Twitter users reacted to this by saying the paper was shut for throwing stones whilst living in a glass house. Whilst another said “Persecution of private owned media to silence voice of dissent is the number one characteristic of a dictatorship.”

The debate weighed on two ends, those who felt that taxes must be paid at all costs while others agreed but felt that the timing was wrong and that press freedom was being infringed upon. The closure received international recognitions with BBC Africa reporting on it as well as the diplomatic community (US Embassy) expressing sadness on the development.

- Rise of online news sources that have both trained and untrained journalist breaking stories without fact checking. The nature of online news and its easier sharability sees falsehood spread extremely quickly. This week an online paper shared a story that claimed that opposition party (UPND) running mate; Geoffrey Bwalya Mwamba’s business plant was burnt down

by PF cadres. A story that later was reported as untrue after seeing several people get worked up about political violence and the extents it has gone to.

- Private media efforts frustrated by government. #ThePostClosure an example.

The opportunities that are there are as follows:

- Digital media outlets are increasing and if they could use their platform and reach more responsibly by improving the quality of work they put out and subscribing to good media ethics on reporting, it would give the people a wider coverage of issues around the election period.
- The government has been criticized for intimidating the press. There is currently an opportunity for the government to prove itself to be a supporter of press freedom being above board and not suspected of using its power to pounce on the press, both public and act on independent media.
- The national newspapers and broadcaster have the opportunity to be seen to show a balanced view of the current political situation that covers all parties and is objective in its reporting.
- Private media could pick up the slack of public media by showing content that they might not show.

POLITICAL PARTY CAMPAIGNS

Communication, Manifestos and Structure

With the 11th August 2016 General Election campaigns in progress, various political parties taking part in the elections, in an effort to win the favor of the Zambian people, have been conducting political rallies across the country.

Various political party regalia and campaign materials have been distributed and manifestos shared so far with some holding rallies in Lusaka, Luangwa , Rufunsa, Kafue, Kabwe, Chingola, Mpongwe and Luanshya.

Though campaigns have so far have been marred with violence, ZEIC has taken note of some of the issues coming out of the manifestos of some political parties. The following are a few gathered thus far;

Patriotic Front (PF) has promised to

- Create more jobs,
- Build better roads and medical facilities
- Industrial development
- More government involvement in the running of the economy.
- Increase copper production to two million tones by end of 2017
- Review Mining policy framework to bring stability in the sector
- Wipe out energy deficit within one year
- Make Zambia a net exporter of energy
- Attain cost reflective tariffs
- Deliver electricity to rural areas at subsidized rates
- Improve Agriculture by through crop diversification, value addition and exports.
- Introduce a law that will compel financial institutions to give 10% of their credit to agriculture sector

United Party for National Development (UPND) has promised to

- Provide free education
- Provide stable and consistent policies to the mining industry
- More private sector involvement in the running of the economy
- Use of public-private partnerships to attract new investments
- Tap into alternative sources of energy
- Reduce fuel prices
- Improve outputs from Indeni Refinery, TAZAMA and Ndola Fuel Terminal through private sector involvement
- Improve Agriculture sector by improving extension services, irrigation and supply of farming inputs.
- Cheaper fertilizer
- Cut government waste and run a lean government in order to eliminate corruption in public procurement.

Green Party (GP) has promised to

- Establish a manufacturing industry that will make construction materials

- Generate biofuel from marijuana.
- Demystify public misconceptions about marijuana.
- Attain Zambia's economic, social, environmental and political sustainability through optimization of the country's vast natural resource endowment
- earn Zambia at least US\$36 Billion per year from marijuana industrialization
- End poverty and grow the economy

Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) has promised to

- Increase the capacity of resource-poor small scale farmers to enable them generate higher incomes from agricultural activities.
- Provide incentives that enable farmers to increase productivity and diversify into agro-processing to add value to their produce.
- Ensure high quality education, retention (especially the girl child) and sustainable access to education for all.
- Offer free education up to Grade 12 level and make soft student loans for tertiary education available to all Zambians to increase enrolment in further education both locally and abroad.
- Introduce basic industrial skills in education from lower basic (primary) school
- Introduce night school in all schools and offer incentives to teachers and students.
- Improve and expand the administration of the government Bursary Scheme.
- Democratic decentralization aimed at securing the full participation of people in the governance of the nation.
- Deepen and Retention of a Private-Sector Driven Economy in Zambia in which nationals are the principal players and beneficiaries
- Retention and fostering of the family. Including the extended family, as the primary unit of the nation through which children get socialized and their good character gets molded.
- Treat traditional leaders, freedom fighters, retirees, the youths, women, senior citizens and the differently abled in the nation with honor
- Strict observance and respect for human and property rights and the rule of law



CLARITY OF MESSAGE IN MANIFESTOS AND IMPACT ON ELECTORATE

One of the things to note is that the framing and the delivery of the content in some of the manifestos highlighted above appears vague and quite general. While all of them aim to improve the lives of Zambians, they lack a component of marrying actions to the plans and setting a timeline to the intended objectives. The messages appear to have been written for a high level audience who would be assumed to already understand the issues discussed in the manifestos. This leaves an information gap for the ordinary citizens at grassroots level who require a more simplified and coherent presentation of issues so that they can relate.

When we monitored our citizen engagement platforms to gauge whether potential voters are in anyway impacted by the messages being channeled out at any of the rallies conducted so far, our findings were that most citizens are concerned more about the violence emerging from the rallies and the use of public resources in some instances. The campaign messages are evidently not part of the conversation by most citizens who are interacting with our platforms and instead appear to have been overshadowed by

- ❖ Violence
- ❖ Hate speech
- ❖ Concerns on Use of Public Resources
- ❖ Tribal remarks
- ❖ Political chants and slogans
- ❖ Political Songs
- ❖ Character Assassination by political rivals
- ❖ Intimidation by unruly cadres

The messages in themselves appear to be congested and bulky thus suffocating the central message and failing to give a clear plan of how some of the set objectives will be achieved. The politicians themselves seem to spend a great deal of time slandering and pointing out the faults of their political opponents than explaining their manifesto to the people during the rallies thus missing an opportunity to connect with the electorate on issues.

Most citizens have also rightly pointed out how talk about the forthcoming Referendum on the Bill of Rights is evidently missing from all politicians as they campaign in various areas. Some people have pointed out that as stakeholders in the election process, politicians have a duty to contribute on voter education especially with the limited amount of time left to educate the people about the Referendum.

Another issue that came out this week is how some members of Parliament had neglected their constituencies for years only to reappear now during election campaigns, A key example given is that of one named contestant who is reported to be drilling boreholes in his area yet had neglected his constituency and the people who voted for him for years. It remains to be seen how the Zambian people respond to these realities on 11th August, 2016.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The key areas of consideration.

- ❖ There is a need to engage the government on the importance of press freedom.
- ❖ There is need to for ZEIC to organize a show or public forum where representatives from all political parties can be featured and directly probed by the Zambian citizens regarding their manifestos.
- ❖ There is need for ZEIC to include a component of voter education on the Bill of Rights Referendum in the content or weekly slots on TV and Radio.

WEB AND SMS PLATFORMS USAGE

There have been a cumulative xxx SMS reports, xxx web reports to ZEIC platforms as of 24/06/2016

No.	Platform	SMS Report	Web Reports
1.	Citizens		
2.	Media		
3.	Observer		
4.	TIZ		

Twitter

NO.	TOPIC	DETAILS	STATISTICS
1.	Tweet impressions (number of times users saw the Tweet on Twitter)	254,000 in June	7,500 impressions per day
2.	Engagement rate (clicks, retweets, replies, follows and likes divided by total impressions)	1.3%	More engagement than 0.6% prior week
3.	Link clicks	20	Average 3 link clicks per day
4.	Retweets (sharing of a post by other users)	114	Average 16 Retweets per day
5.	Likes (affirmation/book mark of content)	123	Average 18 Likes per day
6.	Replies (responses to posts)	169	Average 24 replies per day

Facebook

NO.	TOPIC	DETAILS	STATISTICS
1	Page Likes	2,881	190 new likes 369 page views
2	Posts	341	460 Likes on posts 246 post engagements (7.1% increase) 3, 351 people reached
3	Page impressions	3, 351 people reached	Audience age range between 25-34 Audience mostly use mobile devices
4	Videos	85 video views	

Instagram

NO.	ITEM	DETAILS	STATISTICS
1	Followers	229	Avg of 5 new followers per week
2	Posts for the week	2	
3	Likes per week	3	Avg of 1 likes per post
NO.	Item	Details	STATISTICS

Whatsapp

NO.	TOPIC	PERIOD OF REPORT	STATISTICS
1.	Violence cases: it has been noted that during the run up to the elections a number of reports on violence have been recorded.	Third week of June 2016	5-6 violence cases reported on a weekly basis around Zambia.
2.	Media reporting and press freedom	Third week of June	Discussed at least 5 times
3.	Bill of Rights and Referendum: Citizens of Zambia share concerns on the lack of knowledge and clarity on the BOF and Referendum.	Third week of June 2016	Discussed on platform at least 6-7 times

YouTube

NO.	ITEM	DETAILS	STATISTICS
1.	Subscribers	2	0% growth in subscribers over period
2.	Videos	4	Total views 21