

A PROFILE OF CONSTITUENCIES

UNDERSTANDING ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE



ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



FOREWORD

Zimbabwe Election Commission presented the Delimitation Report to President R.G.Mugabe in January, 2008. Constituency delimitation is an important aspect in the conduct of elections. Within constituency boundaries are people. The need to understand the unique characteristics of people, their motivations, fears and aspirations gave impetus to this publication.

This production captures the geography, livelihoods and voting patterns of people in the 210 constituencies. The Delimitation Report as written by the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) is a technical document. The purpose of this publication is to simplify it and describe the places that are found in a constituency. Zimbabwe is divided into 10 provinces, 210 House of Assembly constituencies and 1958 wards. The report seeks to help stakeholders understand Zimbabwe's electoral terrain. The 210 constituencies are described to allow the readers to have a greater understanding and appreciation of these constituencies. The book will enable voters to locate their wards and constituencies, and enable them to exercise their democratic right to vote.

The publication is made necessary, by recent changes that have been introduced by the 18th Constitutional Amendment that increased the number of constituencies from 120 to 210 in the 2008 harmonised election. The book enables the reader to take a tour of the 210 constituencies in Zimbabwe.

It is my hope that you will enjoy reading this work and that it will be enjoyable.

Rindai Chipfunde Vava

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HIV	Human Immune Virus



THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR DELIMITATION OF ELECTORAL

Zimbabwe's electoral territory is sub-divided into various units. There are 210 House of Assembly representations known as constituencies. Local authorities boundaries relate to wards and senatorial constituencies. These boundaries enable voters to exercise their right to select leaders of their choice. The importance of constituencies cannot be underestimated as they determine the allocation of seats, which in turn impacts on political processes including the formation of government. The constituency is a critical area for electoral competition. The importance of constituencies is further augmented by the fact that Zimbabwe uses the First-Past-the-Post Electoral System. This makes the delimitation of constituencies an important process for political parties and the electorate.

Zimbabwe's electoral territory was transformed by the 18th constitutional amendment, which increased the number of House Of Assembly constituencies from 120 to 210. The number of wards increased to 1958 and senatorial seats rose to 86. Delimitation of constituencies in Zimbabwe is currently done by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). Previously, delimitation was done by a Delimitation Commission appointed by the President. Constitutional Amendment Number 18 gave ZEC the mandate to appoint committees that delimit Zimbabwe's electoral territory.

While delimitation practices vary across the world, there are generally agreed principles that are also part Zimbabwe's electoral laws which include:

- Representativeness,
- Serviceability,
- Community of interest,
- Geographic distribution of voters,
- Equality of voting strength,
- Independent, impartial boundary authority,
- Transparency, and
- Non-discrimination.

The SADC Guidelines governing democratic elections to which Zimbabwe is a signatory confirms that delimitation is a technical process that can be used to achieve political goals. Thus SADC proposes that the delimitation process should:

- be managed by an independent and impartial body that is representative of society,
- be conducted on the basis of clearly identified criteria such as population distribution, community of interest, convenience, geographical features and other natural or administrative boundaries,
- be made accessible to the public through a consultation process devoid of manipulation of electoral boundaries to favour particular groups or political interest,
- be conducted by one body,
- include all spheres of government both local and national.

Failure to adhere to the principles outlined leads to gerrymandering with electoral boundaries. There are two principal strategies behind gerrymandering: firstly it maximizes the effective votes of supporters and secondly it minimizes the effective votes of opponents. Gerrymandering with electoral boundaries leads to “packing” and “cracking” as well as the “wasted voter effect”. On one hand “Cracking” involves spreading out voters of a particular type among constituencies in order to reduce their representation thereby denying them a sufficiently large voting bloc in any particular constituency. On the other hand “packing” involves placing as many voters of one type into a single district to reduce their influence in other constituencies.



Consequently, such scenarios lead to the “wasted voter effect”. Packing opposition into constituencies they will already win increases excess votes for winners, and cracking the remainder among other constituencies, moves opposition into a minority, subsequently increasing votes for eventual losers, hence the number of wasted votes among opposition is maximized. In the same vein, with supporters now holding narrow margins in the unpacked constituencies, the number of wasted votes among supporters is minimized.

Since Zimbabwe is a signatory to these principles, the delimitation exercise should be assessed vis-a-vis the provisions. The Delimitation Committee placed much emphasis on serviceability and representativeness at the expense of other principles. The opposition (MDC) alleged that ZEC reduced constituencies in opposition strongholds which are urban and added more new constituencies in ruling ZANU-PF strongholds which are rural.

The demarcation shows that provinces that are largely rural such as Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Midlands and Masvingo received more new constituencies, while provinces that are largely urban, such as Bulawayo did not receive a significant number of new constituencies. In addition, opposition has claimed that the voters roll that was used as a basis for delimitation is flawed which inevitably resulted in a flawed delimitation process. A large proportion of the new constituencies have been allocated to rural areas, which are believed to be the bedrock of the incumbent's support. This is evidenced by the fact that of the 210 new constituencies, about 143 are in rural areas and 67 are urban or peri-urban.

In Mutare, the conflict of interest can be seen as northern suburbs of Murambi, Fern Valley and Greenside, which have been mixed with rural areas. Mutare district, the most populous in Manicaland, got only one additional constituency while Makoni, a smaller district, acquired two (2) new constituencies. Provinces such as Masvingo, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Midlands and Manicaland acquired more new constituencies while Bulawayo, Matebeleland South and Matebeleland North had a few new constituencies. Previous elections have demonstrated that the rural populace has voted in favour of ZANU PF, while the urban electorate has voted in favour of MDC.

The emergence of Simba Makoni as an independent presidential candidate brings new dimensions to the political scene. It is too early to judge whether the two parties will be able to maintain their strongholds or these will be changed by the new variable. The table below provides a comparative

Province	Number of registered voters	Number of Constituencies			Polling Stations 2008	Dominant Party
		2000	2005	2008		
Matebeleland North	345,264	7	7	13	545	Opposition
Bulawayo	313,459	8	7	12	528	Opposition
Matebeleland South	342,280	8	7	13	207	Opposition
Mashonaland West	582,589	12	13	22	1100	ZANU PF
Midlands	739,510	16	16	28	1289	ZANU PF
Manicaland	709,664	14	15	26	1150	ZANU PF
Mashonaland Central	488,477	10	10	18	774	ZANU PF
Mashonaland East	624,630	12	13	23	1038	ZANU PF
Masvingo	699,199	14	14	26	1202	ZANU PF
Harare	766,478	18	18	29	379	Opposition

From the statistics indicated on the table, it is clear that the Delimitation exercise of 2008 fewer constituencies were created in urban areas, despite increases in population resulting from rural to urban migration as young people search for better living conditions. Urban areas such as Gweru Urban and Bulawayo Province and Mutare Urban received fewer additional constituencies.

The rationale for the addition of ninety (90) new constituencies has been questioned by many Zimbabweans. Most Zimbabweans have argued that the country can barely support this burden given the economic crisis in the country since the beginning of the new millennium. The rationale to increase constituencies defies logic and economic rationality. Many political analysts have argued that the rationale for increasing constituencies to 210 was borne out of the need of the ruling party ZANU-PF to have a greater majority in the House of Assembly. Such arguments can be supported by the manner in which constituency boundaries were demarcated.

The table below shows the numbers of rural - urban distribution of voters.

Table 2

Rural urban distribution of constituencies

Province	Registered Voters	Percent of Registered Voters
Urban	1,602,376	28.6 %
Rural	4,000,574	71.4 %
Total	5,611,950	100.0 %

Table 3
Polling stations and Registered Voters

Province	Registered Voters	Number of Wards	Average Voters per Ward	Polling Stations	Percent Registered Voters
Bulawayo	313,459	29	10808	207	5.6 %
Harare	766,478	78	9826	391	13.7%
Manicaland	709,664	260	2838	1150	12.6%
Mashonaland Central	488,477	285	1713	794	8.7%
Mashonaland East	624,630	229	2727	1012	11.1%
Mashonaland West	582,589	229	2524	1100	10.4%
Masvingo	699,199	242	2889	1202	12.5%
Matebeleland North	345,264	193	1788	545	6.2%
Matebeleland South	342,280	168	2037	603	6.1%
Midlands	739,510	296	2498	1289	13.2 %
Total	5,611,950	2009		8293	100.1%

In the 2002 and 2005 elections, the issue of polling stations was controversial and a research study conducted by Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI) established that urban voters felt that fewer polling stations were allocated to towns and cities which made voting a nightmare for the urban electorate. The allocation of polling stations in the 2008 March poll is likely to raise similar concerns as the table below reveals disparities in the number of polling stations allocated to Harare and Midlands, notwithstanding insignificant differences in the number of registered voters.

An analysis of the ward allocation per municipal authority raises interesting issues about the criteria used to divide local authority boundaries into wards. It is worth noting that Harare with the highest number of registered voters of 766 478, has the second lowest number of wards of 79 while Matebeleland south with 342 280 registered voters has 168 wards. The ward becomes an important variable in this election as it is the basis that has been used by ZEC to allocate polling stations in the constituencies. The discrepancy between Harare and Midlands in terms of ward allocation cannot be explained. Midlands with 739 510 registered voters has 296 wards, while Harare whose registered voters are pegged at 766 478 has 78 wards. This has resulted in wide disparities between polling stations in Harare province and those in Midlands province.



The table also reveals that the number of voters per ward is higher in urban provinces than provinces that are largely rural. This is evidenced by the fact that the average number voters for Harare and Bulawayo is 9826 and 10808 respectively. The average number of voters per ward for provinces that are largely rural is less than 3000. For example, Mashonaland central has 285 wards and the average number of voters per ward is 1713. Masvingo has 242 wards and the average number of voters per ward is 2889. This has implications for the number of voters that will be able to cast their votes in the March 29 harmonized elections. The electorate in Bulawayo and Harare provinces will experience pressure during polls as a large number of voters have been crowded in a few wards.

In the 2002 presidential election, some urban voters who wished to cast their votes were not able to do as there were long queues and these discouraged voters from casting their votes. Apparently, the same problem could occur in the March 29 polls if the issue of polling stations is not addressed. Such a scenario creates voter apathy in urban areas.

Inconsistencies in the delimitation report

A number of errors and inconsistencies have been identified in the Delimitation Report. The ZEC report provided information on all the 1958 wards in the country, in which province, senate constituency, assembly constituency and local government authority ward is located. The total number of voters calculated by local government authority is 514 less than the total figure published for the number of voters for the country.

Furthermore, wards in Zimbabwe vary considerably in terms of the number of voters. Ward 20 of Matobo District Council has no voters and Ward 20 in Mhondoro-Ngezi has only one voter. At the other extreme, Ward 30 in Harare Municipality has 25914 voters.

Impact of delimitation on elections

The manipulation of election boundaries creates elections that are less competitive, especially in packed constituencies. Electoral margins of victory become greater and politicians have safe seats. This increases voter apathy, as the electorate feels that their chances of influencing electoral results by voting are limited. Gerrymandering increases the importance of nomination rather than ultimate approval of the general electorate. This is evidenced by highly contested primary elections as political aspirants seek nomination in safe constituencies. A general win once nominated becomes more or less guaranteed in a gerrymandered constituency.

Manipulating constituency boundaries has deleterious effects on the principle of democratic accountability. Candidates no longer fear removal from office with their re-nominations and electoral success due to uncompetitive elections. Moreover, the incumbent politicians have a greatly reduced incentive to govern based on the interests of their constituencies.

Gerrymandering also impacts on the costs of campaigning. As constituencies become increasingly concave and oddly elongated, the difficulty of finding transportation and moving around a constituency increases significantly, resulting in higher costs to run for office. This is especially true for Zimbabwe given the high costs of fuel and other supplies. Incumbents have an added advantage as they have access to resource and can therefore freely campaign without resource constraints.

Manipulation of constituency boundaries assures a party of victory before the election. The meticulous mapping of constituencies to lock in one-party super majorities guarantees election results long before voters go to the polls thus making a mockery of the whole election process. Consequently, voter apathy results as the electorate feels that their vote is unnecessary and will not bring any difference, especially in constituencies where they are in the minority.

Descriptions of constituencies and maps are provided in this production.

