

Facts and Figures on Zimbabwe's Voters' Roll, Registration and Voter Turnout 2

In this edition of the Facts and Figures, we look at the disturbing trend in voter turnout with regards to youths in the Masvingo Province. The total ratio of youths registered as voters (18-30) in the region is a dismal 14.1% of all Masvingo voters; this is disturbing considering the ratio of youths in general to the total populace which lies at above 60%.

According to the controversial results released by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission for the March 2008 presidential election, a total of 323,550 people voted in the presidential election in the province with 48% (156,660) voting for the incumbent President Robert Mugabe and 45% (145,198) preferring the current Prime Minister Morgan R. Tsvangirai and Simba Makoni, others and the spoilt ballots accounting for the remaining 7%. Of the 26 constituencies in the province, P.M Tsvangirai managed to outpoll Mugabe in 18 constituencies and with the President taking the remaining 8 constituencies.

The above analysis reflects a major disparity in that while Tsvangirai outpolled Mugabe in 70% of the constituencies, overallly Mugabe outpolled the Prime Minister in the province. What this means is that Tsvangirai's winning margins in the 18 constituencies add up to less than the President's victorious 8 constituencies, implying the former ruling party's supporters turnout to vote in large numbers while the Prime Minister has support spread across the country. These are some of the reasons why the election (according to ZEC) failed to produce an outright winner with 50% +1 vote.

The March 2008 scenario can repeat itself if we get more than two presidential candidates and if people are not encouraged to participate in the plebiscite by first registering as voters. To avoid such a scenario from recurring, the **Youth Forum** has embarked on a campaign that aims to increase the number of youth voters by at least 1,000,000 (1 million) in the country in general and add at least 100,000 new young voters in Masvingo province alone. The youths of Zimbabwe believe that through their active and meaningful involvement, Zimbabwe will become a democracy and not a state with a negotiated government that is not answerable to the masses as is the case currently.

A good example of the above analysis is Chiredzi East's Ward 22 where at Chionja Primary School Polling station, Morgan Tsvangirai won with a 44% margin over Robert Mugabe after gaining 12 votes while Mugabe got 5. In the same ward, at Benzi Primary School, Tsvangirai lost by almost the same margin (45%) after garnering 77 votes to Mugabe's 268. The results at Benzi clearly and enormously override Tsvangirai's win at Chionja and this is the case for both candidates in many other wards.

In order to drive Zimbabwe into a true democracy, there is a strong need to involve more people in national elections and the focus has to be on the marginalised groups of the society that includes youths, women and the differently abled people. The "Youth Go Register and Vote" Campaign being run by the **Youth Forum** is aimed at realizing this. The campaign involves a lot of activities and media to deliver the registration message to youths in different areas including sport and musical galas, Voters'

Clubs, SMS campaigns, Social media (Facebook and Twitter, and the **Youth Forum** website chat facility) and other means.

To be part of the campaign, e-mail or SMS your name, cell number, address (including district), email address to the provided email address and phone numbers.

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