

# **Bridging the Gap of Voter Apathy: A Framework for Inclusive and Enhanced Electoral Participation in Zimbabwe**

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## **Abstract**

At the turn of the new millennium, the African continent witnessed a series of ‘democratised’ elections marking a paradigm shift from the traditional trajectories of violent overhauls and state power usurpation. Observably; this was celebrated globally as the illumination of democracy in the African continent. However, out of elections, a culture of apathy has been born with a serious problem negatively affecting voter turnout across the continent. Reports have indicated that the elections discourse is marred by military subversion of the people’s will, overt violence and intimidation, hijacking of voters roll, blurred voters registration exercises and fraudulent voter procedural adjectival systems. The research traced, distinguished and examined the causative factors and trends of voter apathy in Africa with particular reference to Zimbabwe. The study also aimed to understand the unique socio-political, socio-ethnic and socio-economic circumstances that drive negative determinations, beliefs and attitudes assisting the persistence of voter apathy in Zimbabwe. The first elections held in Zimbabwe marked the nation’s monumental voter turnout of 94%, since then, voter turnout began to drop noticeably in subsequent years. Held (2010) agreed that deep seated social exclusion, political disenfranchisement and politician’s acts of corruption and fanning violence have had a bearing on voter turnout. In spite of loss of confidence in elections as panacea to any meaningful democratic transformation in Zimbabwe, the research impelled conventional wisdom for epic voter turnout and electoral participation by framing a plausible and imperative scheme for comprehensive and enhanced elections, which shall restore a high pulse rate of inclusive political participation of the Zimbabwean electorate. This is supported by Dalton (2007:2) who posits that, “Without public involvement in the electoral process, democracy lacks both its legitimacy and its guiding force.” Despite Dalton’s view, the meaning and quality of election has been a cause for concern as citizens have been disenfranchised by politicians and this has affected the enthusiasm of the electorate in Africa with particular reference to Zimbabwe’s political landscape and the voting process. The research was premised on a qualitative research design approach. The research targeted 3constituencies per province (Midlands, Manicaland and Matebeleland North, Harare, Mashonaland east and Mashonaland) since elections have been held under different conditions and political atmosphere and this require context specific examination. Respondents were selected using a tripartite sampling approach as developed by the researchers and this involved three sampling techniques in their order as follows: stratified sampling, systematic random sampling and purposive sampling. Data was collected using a combination of questionnaires and in-depth interviews and were analysed using two main techniques: critical discourse analysis and trend analysis The research explored various mechanisms to enhance electoral participation in Africa with particular reference to Zimbabwe and boost the electorate confidence to be involved in the voting process.

**Key words:** Elections. Apathy, Democracy, Electoral System, Citizen Participation

## **Introduction**

Elections have been held in Zimbabwe since the dawn of independence. The voting process affords the electorate to choose leaders of their choice and also to influence the public policy making process. In democratic politics, voting is the supreme act of citizen participation. Mass Media Opinion institute (2007) refer to voting as one of the ‘procedural minimum’ of democracy, despite numerous ways and methods of participation which may be there for the citizenry to engage with government, voting is the most visible and in all likelihood, the most effective method of ‘speaking truth to power.’ In Zimbabwe the mantra and motivation liberation movements was “One man, one vote which was premised is seeing voting as an inalienable right. Moyo (1992:6) noted in his *Voting for Democracy: Electoral Politics in Zimbabwe* as quoted by MMOI (2007):

The right to vote has a historical significance in Zimbabwe which dates back to the struggle against colonialism for Independence. How that right is being exercised in postcolonial Zimbabwe is a matter which should not be taken for granted.

There are numerous electoral systems in our global community. The voting process is done different, some systems require adult citizens to register (as in the USA) while other Nation-states in many European countries, citizens do not have to register, where needed, they do so in a simple, convenient, almost automatic way. Zimbabwe’s case presents a different scenario, a report carried out by MMOI (2007) indicates that 80% of respondents in their sample from 4 provinces complained that requirements and procedures for voter registration were ponderous and hence presented serious obstacles to the prospective voter in Zimbabwe thus being a fertile ground for voter apathy. MMOI (2007) reports that voter registration forms the most crucial of components and qualifier for participation in elections with the registration being entirely voluntary. Research conducted on understanding voter apathy have noted that while a majority of Zimbabweans express much enthusiasm and desire to vote, fewer take the necessary and required step towards voting thus perpetuating the culture of apathy. Makumbe (2010) is of the view that at the turn of the millennium, elections in Zimbabwe have proved to be a highly contestable political activity and their outcomes equally controversial leading to political conflict and tension in society while the government elected via these elections suffers from legitimacy questions. A worrying trend is that apart from the founding elections in 1980, elections in the country have become legendary for low voter turnout. ZESN Report on Zimbabwe 29 March Harmonized Election and 27 June 2008 Presidential Run-Off and IFES Election Guide Database captures the trend, starting from 1980 elections which had a voter turnout of 94%, 84% in 1985 and 47 % in 1990, 52% in the 2000 plebiscite with a formidable opposition party amplifying rivalry on the electoral turf, 42.7% were recorded in the 2008 harmonized elections percent which subsequently improved to 53% in the national elections in 2013.

## **Context**

Zimbabwe will be holding harmonized elections in August 2018, the research shows that considerable attention has been on electoral reforms and issues to do with survival and structuring of political parties. Oblivious to the impending outrageous consequences of voter apathy, the involved stakeholders of electoral process in Zimbabwe have put less if no

commitment to yield an improved voter turnout. This is contrary to the factors amounting to parochial political culture and political satisfaction which assisted voter apathy between post 1980 elections and the 2000 referendum.

The causes of voter apathy in the electoral contestations from the year 2000 are characterized by mixed reactions of ignorance and intellectual justifications. Matyzsak (2014) notes that after the victory of the post-independence liberal's famous 'No' Vote campaign which was steered by the opposition political parties, the political landscape turned hostile and indications of democracy eventually disappeared ushering a new political order in the country, from then, the government's bureaucracy and new modus operandi curtailed the electoral system through various mechanisms. Opitz, Field and Höglund (2013) claim that the Zimbabwe electoral commission (ZEC) is widely alleged to have lost its independence, and began to operate as an extension of the Executive, Matyzsak (2014) shares the same sentiments and worries that the presidential appointment of individuals who are largely seen as 'political darlings' as ZEC commissioners through a constitutional amendment became a background handbrake towards creating a democratic electoral system.

Background research on elections reveals that in the contentious elections of March 2008 ZANUPF led government embarked on the routine style of African incumbent governments and revolutionary regimes of subverting people's will. Subsequently this forced a political deadlock which rendered the electorate's voting anxiety futile and the opposition's failure to rubberstamp victory and inability to acquire state power exasperated its fan base as voting proved useless. According to various media, the political ramifications of this were quite devastating to the voter turnout of the 2013 harmonized elections. The endemic political violence that preceded the 27 June 2008 presidential run-off poll remains a thorny issue to the victims while to the victors ensured continuity, the effects of this was an absconded participation in the 2013 elections. In this regard, it can be debated that political incompetence, silly lust for power and outright insincerity from political leadership is one of the root causes of voter apathy. With cogent evidence of the 2008 27 June violence, ZESN Report (2008) condensed that:

Election reviews by SADC Election Observer Mission [SEOM], the Pan-African Parliament Observer Mission, the African Union Observer Mission, and the Botswana Observer Team strongly suggest an election that was grossly flawed in both process and outcome. It was described as an election marred by politically motivated violence, overwhelming lack of access to the public media by the opposition, restrictions on accreditation of local observers, politicization of security forces, and gross lack of respect for the electoral process, among other vices. The Pan African Parliament Observer Mission concluded that the atmosphere prevailing in the country did not give rise to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections and exhorted that conditions should be put in place for the holding of free, fair and credible elections in line with the African Union Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections.

The foregoing contexts thoroughly established the why question, nonetheless the how question of cracking the problem of voter apathy. Apathy remains held in obscurity with many African countries in the eleventh hour towards national elections, very little is on the ground concerning voter education and the demystification of general myths and galvanized uncertainties around the procurement and use of the Bio Metric Voter Registration technology and processes. ZESN

Report (2008) appreciates the role of ZEC which is duty bound to do mass voter registration using this new BVR system, but courtesy of its requirements to ensure a credible registration process using the 'basic' requirements which includes national identity particulars and residential addresses, which brackets out the homeless, aliens, Zimbabweans in diaspora. ZESN Report (2008) realises that these stringent requirements discourage and disable people from registering as voters and therefore should be done away with and in this regard both registration and voter apathy is likely to be witnessed as both unintended and manufactured effect.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Democracy**

Oladoyin (2004) avers that most African countries 'political system with particular reference for Zimbabwe are anchored on an authoritarian, dictatorial and monocratic governance system that hails from Hobbes theory of the state basing on the supreme authority to govern rests in the Leviathan. In other words, monocratic governance implies a political system that is highly centralized in terms of powers at the centre (one centre of power in ZANUPF or one dominant Party as Angola, Uganda and Rwanda). In this governance model or political system, the principle of moonlighting takes pre-eminence as sub-units within the system only serve as administrative coordinate that function primarily to strengthen the centre.

Tracing democracy awakens one to realise it in ancient Greece, specifically in the city-state of Athens around fifth century B.C. Democracy derives from Greek words 'demos' meaning people and 'Kratos' meaning power or rule. Directly translated, democracy therefore means 'rule by the people', although originally the Greeks used it to mean the poor or the masses. Okiror (2011) worries that democracy has been problematized due to its very popularity, a popularity that has threatened the term's undoing as a meaningful political concept. He further argued that in being almost universally regarded as a 'good thing', democracy has come to be used as a little more than a 'hurray! Word' implying approval of a particular set of ideas or system or rule, Crick (1993) in Okiror 2011 notes that 'democracy is perhaps the most promiscuous word in the world of public affairs'. A term that can mean anything to anyone is in danger of meaning nothing at all. For Crick, a democracy will summarily be captured as follows:

A democratic society has a government in which the people rule themselves directly and continuously without the need for professional politicians or public officials basing on equal opportunities and individual merit rather than hierarchy or privilege. Democracy therefore will place welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities basing on a system of majority rules decision-making process that protects the rights and interests of minorities by placing checks upon the power of the majority. Occupants of public offices in a democracy will be chosen through a competitive struggle for the popular vote hence serving the interests of the people regardless of their participation in political office'

For the purposes of this study democracy was defined as 'a form of government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens, directly or indirectly through their freely elected representatives. A democratic system should therefore be characterized by principles such as citizen participation, equality, political tolerance, accountability,

transparency, regular, free and fair elections, economic freedom, control of the abuse of power, bill of rights , a culture of accepting the results of elections , human rights, multi-party system, neutrality of state institutions ,rule of law and these lead to an inclusive and participatory political paradigm. According to Okoror (2011), political pluralism, democratic competition( social, economic and political spheres),representation, elections, rule of law, human rights and individual freedoms, good governance and accountability, strong and active civil society and administrative accountability are the major elements of a democratic system and these lead to an enhanced inclusive political system.

## **Elections**

Anglin (1998) notes that the pillars of any political system, whether considered fragile or established remain undoubtedly dependant on elections which are simply taken as the most critical and visible means through which all citizens can peacefully choose or remove their leaders, and which are evidently costly affairs. In other words elections are the principal instruments that “compel or encourage the policy-makers to pay attention to citizens” as observed by Powell (2000). Elections are one of the major ingredient by which citizens can influence policy and governance issues in a polity. It is through elections that citizens can define and determine their political and economic environment or system by choosing their leaders, Makinda (1996:557) supports this notion as he posits that generally, stability in a polity can be seen “as a way of government firmly rooted in the belief that people in any society should be free to determine their own political and economic affairs, therefore elections form the foundation of a democratic society, through which citizens choose political leaders at institutional level to manage state affairs.

The conduct of elections has of late been problematic in Africa especially in Mali, Burundi, DRC and Kenya as in Zimbabwe. Most observers have regarded that these elections fall below the acceptable international standards or even principles and guidelines set by regional bodies that were set to manage the conduct of democratic election in Africa for example the SADC Guidelines of 2004. Elections in Africa with particular reference Zimbabwe have been fraught with glaring irregularities such as rigging, uneven campaign environments, media blackouts on opposition parties, unwarranted arrests of opposition supporters and politicians. Adejumobi (2000:66) claims that African elections are, in simple terms, window-dressing rituals with no real political meaning other than the stuffing of the ballot boxes behind closed doors. Elections in this view are just administrative formalities which have become standard signs of good conduct adopted by African governments to Western states and international institutions on which they are financially and politically dependent. Young (2014) is of the view that doubts have even sprung up whether multiparty systems are altogether appropriate to the highly divided societies of Africa and cynicism has won the day with contentions that in Africa a flawed election may be preferable to no election at all (Anglin 1998:474). African countries such Angola , Libya, and Swaziland as in Zimbabwe have been holding elections just for formality sake since incumbent parties are defeated and they don't accept results but cling to power through other means such as violence, rigging and voting buying by giving voters food. Chabal (2001:3) states that multiparty competition has not improved accountability in Africa with the exception of Botswana and most notably the island states of Cape Verde and Mauritius, and that it has not led to more sustained economic development.

Since in a democracy the ideal is seeking the consent and mandate of the citizens for any leader to be accepted as legitimate, citizen participation in the choice of their leaders is

important. Heywood (1997) views elections as the means of filling public offices by competitive struggle for the people's vote. Elections have become one of the yardsticks for measuring how democratic a country is, as such participation in the decision-making process and the conduct of free and fair elections are some of the major principles of democracy.

Democracies thrive on openness and accountability, with one very important exception: the act of voting itself. To minimize the opportunity for intimidation, voters in a democracy must be permitted to cast their ballots in secret. At the same time, the protection of the ballot box and the tallying of the votes must be conducted as openly as possible, so that the citizens are confident that the results are accurate and that the government does, indeed, rest upon their consent. One of the difficult concepts for some to accept, especially in Zimbabwe, where the transition of power has historically not taken place peacefully, is that of the 'loyal opposition'. It means that all sides in a democracy share a common commitment to its basic values. Political competitors do not necessarily have to like one another, but they must tolerate one another and acknowledge that each has a legitimate and important role to play. According to Plato, the ground rules of the society must encourage tolerance and civility in public debate. After the election, the losers accept the judgment of the voters. If the incumbent party loses, it must turn over power peacefully. No matter who wins, both sides must agree to cooperate in solving the common problems of the society and this can arouse voter enthusiasm.

### **Electoral processes and Systems in Zimbabwe**

O'Neal (2010) views electoral systems as mechanisms by which the preferences of citizens are translated into seats in representative institutions. It encompasses administrative, procedural and institutional mechanisms that govern election processes, procedures, rules and regulations governing election are commonly defined by both national constitutions and electoral laws. The administrative obligations and management of election are the responsibility of specific public institutions tasked for that either as government departments (as in Zimbabwe) or as independent electoral commissions (as in South Africa). There are many electoral systems throughout the entire world and there is little consensus as to which is best for democratic governance and political stability.

Each country adopts an electoral system that best suits its own political traditions, culture, history and party systems. Jackson and Jackson (1997) aptly observe that each political system offers certain benefits and disadvantages in terms of the representation of different groups in society, as such their impact is hinged on a whole range of elements that make up the political character of a society. The behaviour of political parties and candidates for elected office will, for example, in large measure be conditioned by the shape of an electoral system. Moreover, the way in which an electoral system translates votes into seats in elected assemblies may influence the degree of public support for the democratic system itself. If, for example, citizens do not perceive that their preferences are adequately reflected in the legislature following an election, their support for the system in general is likely to decline. Turnout during elections will drop off, respect for politicians and elected representatives will fall, and laws enacted by government will not be seen as fully legitimate. In Zimbabwe the elections have never been delayed meaning that on the quantitative there is no problem but there is a major concern on qualitative and contextual meaning of elections since the incumbent ZANUPF government has abrogated on a number of democratic and elections principles.

### **Challenge of the election results as provided for in the law of the land**

All elections disputes in Zimbabwe in accordance with the electoral act should be handled by the Electoral Court. The cause for concern from respondents has been the independence of the court and its impartiality on delivering objective judgments.

Section 161 (1) of the Electoral Act established an Electoral Court ‘for the purpose of hearing and determining election petitions and other matters in terms of this Act.’ According to Section 161 (2) of the Electoral Act, the court has no jurisdiction in criminal cases. Judges of the Electoral Court are in fact High Court judges appointed by the Chief Justice ‘...after consultation with the Judicial Service Commission and the Judge President of the High Court’ (Section 1161 (1) of the Electoral Act; emphasis added). In the past the Electoral Act did not involve the Judicial Service Commission in the appointment process. This gave rise to concern that the appointment process was unconstitutional since it was not consistent with section 92 (1) of the Constitution. That provision says:

The power to appoint persons to preside over a special court shall vest in the President, after consultation with Judicial Service Commission: provided that Parliament may provide that the Chief Justice may, after consulting the Judicial Service Commission, appoint a person holding the office of Judge of the High Court to preside over a special court for such a period as he may specify.

The main task of the Electoral Court is to deal with election petitions which ‘... shall be presented within fourteen days after the end of the period to which the election relates’ (section 168 (2)). Only candidates may present election petitions (section 167) which must be determined within six months of being presented (section 182).

### **Electoral Fraud: Cases and Evidence**

Elections have been held in Africa regularly but the quality and meaning has been blurred by election fraud and rigging. Masunungure (2013), used the term “menu of manipulation” to refer to methods of vote fraud. He further argued that the menu of manipulation suggests that a cunning method that somehow hypnotizes both the adversary and the electorate without the manipulator dispensing “hard power”. This is supported by the Election Resource Centre report (2018), election fraud involves shrewd caressing and the deployment of smart or soft power such that even if the victory is instinctively questionable, there is lack of “hard evidence that can be presented to diminish the legitimacy of the outcome.

Chigora and Chilunjika (2016) defines Electoral fraud or vote rigging as “an illegal interference with the process of an election. Acts of fraud affect vote counts to bring about an election result, whether by increasing the vote share of the favoured candidate, depressing the vote share of the rival candidates, or both.” In addition electoral fraud includes artificial attempts to bloat registries, infractions with respect to electoral laws, classic “stuffing and burning” of ballots, vote buying or undue influence over electoral commissions. To this effect, it makes it difficult to translate people’s preferences into outcomes. In highlighting the adverse effects of electoral fraud Long (2010) argues that, fraud can be costly because it produces unintended and violent domestic outcomes such as protest and violence from angry citizens who view the race as illegitimate that one or both parties may want to avoid. In addition, fraud vitiates the delegation relationship between citizens and elected leaders and may unfairly result in the re-election of leaders who voters otherwise want to toss out of

office due to performance. In rectifying electoral anomalies Kuhne (2010) as quoted in Chigora and Chilunjika (2016) asserts that choosing the appropriate Electoral System as well as establishing a functioning Election Commission and Complaints Mechanism is indispensable for ensuring sufficiently free and fair elections. In order to address the anomalies political actors in Zimbabwe revised the Electoral Act as a way of trying to resolve concerns that had been raised by academics, commentators and concerned institutions.

To this effect, the following manifestations of electoral fraud have been identified and exposed as they show the multifacetedness of electoral fraud as practised in different localities across Zimbabwe. Among them include: vote buying, control of institutions by the incumbent, violence as a tool of control and win over votes, gerrymandering, legislative framework ( Public order and Security Act, Broadcasting Act giving sole authority of public information to ZBC, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), individuals conducting the elections (elections agents assisting disabled and the elderly), bribery of the elections agents, voters themselves- attempting to voting twice, individuals seeking office intimidation and coercion and supporters- local and international agents (Chigora and Chilunjika, 2016).

In this vein, deliberate disfranchisement of voters may also occur because of other kinds of official misconduct which encompass malpractices such as turning away voters already in line when polls close; intimidating or misinforming voters when they arrive at the polls; producing misleading or poorly designed ballots; failing to provide bilingual voting materials as required by law, failing to upgrade or repair voting systems in specific election districts and by other means. In addition, there is overall disfranchisement of voters through antiquated voting systems, errors mismanagement of registration, intimidation and harassment is a far bigger problem today than traditional forms of election fraud (Chigora and Chilunjika:2016). These electoral initiatives relentlessly seek to satisfy the need for a particular party or candidate to outpace, outwit and outshine their electoral opponents. It should be noted that without being able to sort out the above mentioned issues elections in Zimbabwe will always be dogged by ceaseless contestations and serious flaws.

### **Cases of election fraud**

The voters roll need to be inspected and given to the contesting political parties 3 months before election, as for the 2013 harmonized elections, the roll was available two days before voting "rather late for meaningful inspection and verification by voters, parties and candidates to take place". On the voters' roll, the MDC says it found 838,000 entries with the same name, address and date of birth but different ID number, 350,000 people who are more than 85 years old and 109,000 aged over 100 - including a 135-year-old army officer. The BBC has seen a copy of a constituency roll for Mount Pleasant in the capital, Harare, with several duplicate names listed. As well as image caption of a scanned copy of a section of the voters' roll showing duplicate names. Full surnames and exact dates of birth have been blurred Zimbabwe has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world, with the average person not living beyond 51 years of age.

### **Assisted voting**

Assisted voting is intended to help the illiterate or the infirm cast their ballots. According to the UN, Zimbabwe is the most literate country in Africa with a literacy rate of more than 90%, but the AU observers noted a worryingly "high number of assisted voters in many polling stations



nationwide. ZESN (2013) observed in rural areas, 49% of polling stations had more than 25 people who were assisted to vote as opposed to 5% of urban polling stations. The AU mission gave the example of Muzarabani district in Mashonaland Central, where it observed 97 voters being assisted out of 370 assisted at one station, 77 out of 374 at a second station and 85 out of 374 at a third station. The MDC alleges that in Muzarabani North, more than half of the 17,400 voters were assisted. Party secretary-general Tendai Biti said literate people were told to claim they were illiterate so that they could be "assisted by ZANU-PF people". ZANU-PF has denied such allegations, saying the MDC was a bad loser.

### **Rejected voters**

The AU alerted that it had observed with great concern high incidence of voters who were turned away at polling stations. One resident from the Harare constituency of Mabvuku-Tafara opined that

I was turned away from four schools... they directed me to community hall where many others with the same problem. They took some of our IDs, checked them on the computer, and said some of us were on the roll, and some were not. They said they were too tired (at 11.30 am) to do anything about it. People got angry, but they threatened police beatings and then they shut the doors (My Zimbabwe Vote, 2018).

ZESN remarked on the contrast between rural and urban areas - with 82% of urban polling stations turning away potential voters for reasons which include names not appearing on the voters' roll and turning up at the wrong ward for voting whereas in rural polling stations only 38% of polling stations rejected voters

### **Extra ballot papers**

The number of ballot papers printed was 8.7 million, 35% more than the number of registered voters - 6.4 million. The AU said this was "significantly higher than international best practices which are between 5% and 10% and this raises concerns of accountability of unused ballots.

### **Village intimidation**

There have been numerous reports, not noted by the AU and SADC observers, of traditional leaders lining up villagers, making a note of their ID numbers and sending them to specific polling stations to vote. Zimelections2013 received a verified report from Chipinge South that voters have also been arranged in groups by headman. Another verified report to the site reflected that Headman Chinyamukwakwa was threatening villagers that they will be evicted from the area if they vote MDC. The MDC also alleges that hundreds of thousands of people were resettled in "strategic areas" in preparation for the poll.

## **Recommendations for Free, Fair and Credible Elections in Zimbabwe**

### **Ideological restricting of the political environment**

To stimulate electoral enthusiasm in Zimbabwe, the government needs to provide a conducive environment that provides an inclusive and accommodative political environment that arouses citizen activism and participation. Voter apathy can be tamed if the government introduces electoral and voting systems and processes that promote and strengthen an ingrained culture of

political tolerance and of accepting results of elections which will dilute and eliminate the culture of violence and parochial culture which is intolerant towards competition.

### **Legal frameworks (Playing by the rules)**

Setting provisions for election laws, constitutionality and procedures for election management will create a convenient environment for all the stakeholders involved. Lobbying the neutrality of state institution for example the police, Army and CIO

### **Administrative capacity (Establishment of an Independent Election Commission)**

Setting in place an administrative framework that will birth an Independent Election Commission of Zimbabwe will bolster the legitimacy of the work of the commission and limit electoral manipulation through enhanced accountability and transparency systems. Giving administrative capacity to the independent body will inculcate true independency, non-partisanship, transparency, accountability, credibility and efficiency in this new election management body.

### **Inclusiveness**

Appointees of the Independent Election body should be appointed in an open and inclusive process, this will involve all stakeholders involved hence increasing the sense of credibility and responsibility on the appointed. In the same line Election Grievance Handling Frameworks can be also constructed from the basis of inclusivity in a bid to forge the process of mediation amongst aggrieved parties before, during and after elections in order to minimize irregularities and bad blood (demonization, political violence).

### **Conclusion**

Not discrediting the new dispensation which has announced its arrival with democratic rhetoric and emphasis of free , fair and credible elections in the 2018 harmonized elections , more need to be done on electoral reforms so as to arouse the enthusiasm of the voter. Unless and until all those participating in elections in Zimbabwe are properly afforded the protection of law, the prospects for genuinely democratic elections will remain slim. Linington (2011) also notes that the requirement of legality and the rule of law cannot be satisfied merely by setting out fine words on a piece of paper. It is essential that those concepts are upheld by those administering the election concerned. Sadly, there is little sign of that happening in Zimbabwe at the moment.

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