

# Election Watch X

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## Mass turnout for registration

The Electoral Commission of Namibia has released final figures for the number of registered voters in Namibia following the General Registration of Voters (GRV) from January 15 to March 2 2014 and the Supplementary Registration of Voters from September 8 to 20 2014.

According to the ECN, a total of 1,241,194 voters registered for the November 28 elections. The figure includes 3,368 voters registered at Namibia's foreign missions.

Among factors highlighted by the ECN was the high level of young people who registered. Some 45 percent of those registered were reported to be between the ages of 18 and 32. Some 74,308 more women than men registered with the highest variances in favour of women being in the northern regions of Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto, and Kavangos East and West.

The ECN was able to remove duplicate registrations using its biometric system which allows for the analysis of fingerprints. The final statistics released on November 7 did not indicate the proportion of people who registered using sworn statements rather than ID documents or passports. The sworn statement system has been criticised in the past as a weakness in the registration process – since it could be abused to allow non-eligible people to register.

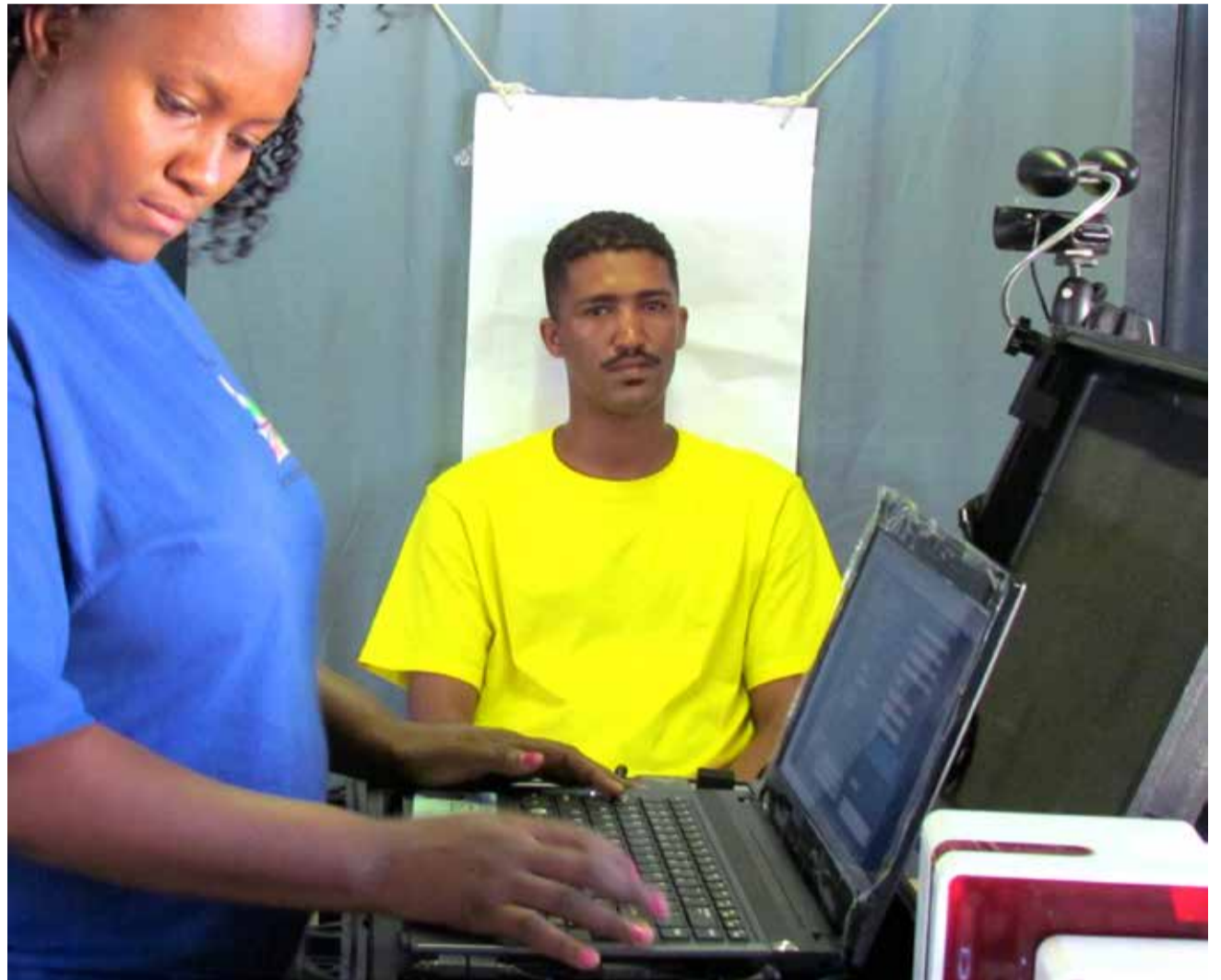
### Voting age population

The number of registered voters in 2009 was 1,181,835, according to the Government Gazette issued before the National Assembly and Presidential elections. The number of registered voters has risen by 59,359 in the intervening five years bringing the current registration figure to 1,241,194.

As a proportion of the Voting Age Population (VAP), as estimated by the Namibia Statistics Agency from the 2011 census, the number of people registered is very high. The VAP can be estimated from the 2011 National Census – although it is not an exact figure as the precise numbers of people who have died or migrated since the census as well as those who have turned 18 are not known.

By estimating the VAP figure, it is possible to gain a clearer picture of participation levels. Major differences between the VAP and the voters register can signal an accuracy problem with the voters' register or the census data. Calculations based on the population structure in the 2011 Population and Housing Census, put the VAP in Namibia at about 1,295,008 people. This would mean that the current registration figure is around 96 percent of the VAP. This is a very high proportion which indicates that the vast majority of citizens remain committed to participating in Namibia's democracy. It is encouraging that there is no apparent drop off in the registration figures among younger people who are often assumed to have less interest in politics and civic affairs. Estimates indicate that the Zambezi region had the lowest turnout during the registration periods with 79 percent registering. The figures for the Kunene (102.5 percent) and Oshana (100.4 percent) show that more people registered than the estimated voting age population. These figures point to some statistical problems relating to either the voters register or the census. The ECN maintains that its latest figures are accurate as the biometric system has made it more straightforward to remove duplicates.

It may be that the 2011 census contains underestimates of the population – particularly in regions like Kunene where some communities live in remote areas that are hard to reach. These statistical anomalies should be investigated further.



Region	Registered voters 2014	Voting age population (VAP) 2014**	2014 as % of VAP
Erongo	104,297	107,047	97.4
Hardap	45,834	51,691	88.7
Kavango*	120,489	121,408	99.3
//Karas	47,652	52,342	91.0
Khomas	231,516	243,830	95.0
Kunene	50,105	48,863	102.5
Oshana	130,320	129,817	100.4
Omaheke	41,698	42,230	98.7
Omusati	135,693	138,487	98.0
Oshikoto	104,218	112,952	92.3
Otjozondupa	87,655	89,011	98.5
Zambezi	41,710	53,039	78.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,241,194</b>	<b>1,295,008</b>	<b>95.6</b>

\*Kavango East and West combined

\*\* Projections based on 2011 census

### Voter registration in numbers

**1,241,194**  
Number of registered voters

**Khomas (231,516)**  
Region with the most voters

**Omaheke (41,698)**  
Region with least voters

**657,751**  
Number of female voters

**583,443**  
Number of male voters

**264,982**  
Number of born frees registered

### ABOUT ELECTION WATCH

Election Watch is a bulletin containing electoral analysis and voter education that will appear regularly in the run up to the 2014 National Assembly and Presidential Elections. It is produced as a PDF download and as a printed newspaper insert. Election Watch is a project of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). It is produced with the support of the European Union and *The Namibian newspaper*. The content of Election Watch is the sole responsibility of the IPPR.

Comments and feedback should be sent to the IPPR, PO Box 6566, Windhoek, Namibia.

Tel: (061) 240514; fax: (061) 240516; email: info@ippr.org.na. For more on Election Watch check <http://www.electionwatch.org.na>

## The importance of an accurate voters register

The voters register, the list of all eligible voters in a country, is a crucial element in ensuring and maintaining electoral credibility, integrity and legitimacy.

By maintaining a comprehensive, reliable and accurate voters register, the electoral management body recognises citizens who are eligible to vote.

An inaccurate voters register makes it likely that some voters have more than one voters card and could increase the temptation to commit fraud. There is also the possibility that vote rigging could be arranged by ensuring certain people have more than one card and/or that people are given the cards of people who have passed away (ghost voters). If the number of registered voters is artificially inflated, this creates the possibility that results will be altered or manipulated.

Registration processes can also disenfranchise voters by excluding them or making it difficult for certain groups or communities to register to vote. Registration authorities can effectively determine the outcome of an election by ensuring registration efforts are effective in an area that supports the ruling party while hardly bothering to register those living in opposition-supporting parts of the country.

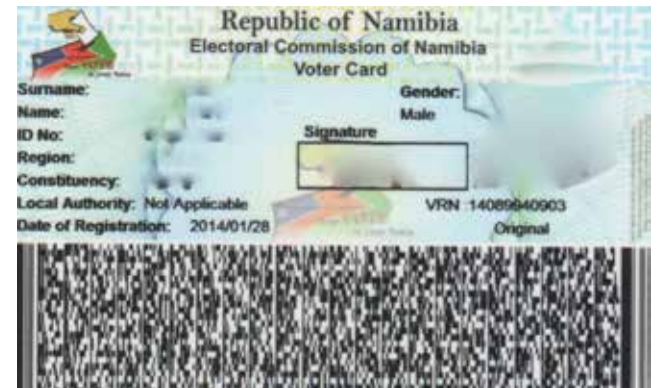
In addition to minimising voter fraud and manipulation, an accurate and comprehensive voters register increases citizens' confidence in the credibility of an electoral process and confers legitimacy on it.

## Factors affecting turnout

- Disenchantment with the political system and/or the ruling party can lead to voters staying away from the polls
- Conversely, contentment with the way the country and/or constituency is being governed may lead to a sense of indifference about the importance of voting
- A predictable result can mean that only core supporters turn out to vote for the dominant party expected to win while supporters of other parties see little point in participating
- Inaccurate and/or outdated voter registration data can lead to voters being turned away
- The perceived importance of an election. For example a local or regional election may not be seen as important as a national one
- Poor voter education and information
- Party boycotts
- Socio-economic factors, such as the poor feeling marginalised from political decision-making
- Practical factors such as residents being outside the constituency at work during voting hours and the accessibility of polling stations
- Violence and intimidation in the run up to an election can scare voters away
- A low-quality campaign, which includes a high level of mudslinging and little discussion of grassroots issues, can also turn voters off parties and candidates

## What can parties, electoral bodies and others do to minimise the possibility of a low turnout?

- Electoral bodies should ensure voters are fully informed in all the relevant languages and through various media about the election
- The electoral body should carry out supplementary registration to ensure residents have the right to vote
- The number, locations and opening hours of polling stations should facilitate as many voters as possible turning out
- Assistance should be available to disabled voters
- Political parties should adhere to official codes of conduct which bar intimidation and should educate their supporters about the need for tolerance
- Political parties should run energetic, positive campaigns and not indulge in negative campaigning. It is important to concentrate on issues that affect residents in the constituency
- Political parties should organise GOTV (Get Out The Vote) activities to ensure their supporters cast their ballots



# Youth dominate among registered voters

Young people between the ages of 18-32 (45.50%) dominate the voters register prepared for the 2014 election. After the supplementary registrations of voters which took place from the 8-20 September 2014, the amount of registered voters stood at 1,277,578 of which 36,384 were removed because they were duplications or had died since being initially registered. This brought the amount of registered voters to 1,241,194.

Khomas region, containing the capital city Windhoek, has the highest number of registered voters, with a total of 231,516 (19% of total). This is no surprise, with the region having the highest population in the country. The Samora Machel constituency in Windhoek registered the highest number of voters with a total of 40,268, followed by the Moses //Garob constituency with 36,444. Overall, the remaining constituencies in the region registered more than 10 thousand voters each, with 10,889 registered voters in Windhoek Rural being the lowest. The Omusati region registered the second highest number of voters with 135,693. The Outapi and Etayi constituencies registered the highest number of voters with a total of 21,459 and 15,460 respectively. The Otamanzi constituency registered the lowest, with a total of 6,901 voters.

The sparsely populated regions of Zambezi and Omaheke registered the lowest number of voters. The highest number of registered voters in Zambezi region being 12,262 in the Katima Mulilo Urban constituency, while in the Omaheke region the highest number of registered voters was recorded to be 12,991 in the Gobabis constituency. The regions further

recorded some of the lowest voters registration outcomes with 3,466 voters registered in the Kabbe constituency of the Zambezi region and 3,534 registered in the Epukiro constituency of the Omaheke region.

From the registered voters for this year's Presidential and National Assembly elections, 21.34% or 264,982 of registered voters are 'born-frees' (born after 21, March 1990). The rest of the total registered voters is comprised of those born before 1929, 0.67%, the so-called 'Silent Generation' (born 1925-1944) 5.26%, 'Baby Boomers' (1945-1964) 16.14%, 'Generation X' (1965-1981) 32.44%, and 'Generation Y' (1982-Present) 45.50%.

Statistically, the Namibian population comprises of more women than men. Women in Namibia make up about 51 percent of the population, while men make up 49 percent. As a result the number of registered female (657,751) voters for the Presidential and National Assembly elections is more the number of registered male voters (583,443). The Northern regions such as Kavango East, Kavango West, Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto and Zambezi registered more female voters than their male counterparts. All the other remaining regions registered more male voters than the female registered voters. The Omusati region with the total of 135,693 registered voters had a total of 82,541 female registered voters and only 53,152 registered male voters. However, male registered voters are ahead in the Khomas region, where from a total of 231,519 registered voters, 117,232 men were registered as compared to 114,284 female voters.

## Presidential debates are key to US elections

While the first general presidential debate was not held until 1960, several other debates are considered predecessors to the presidential debates.

The series of debates held in 1858 between Abraham Lincoln and Senator Stephen A Douglas were face-to-face debates with no moderator; the candidates took it in turns to open each debate with a one-hour speech, then the other candidate had an hour-and-a-half to rebut, and finally the first candidate closed the debate with a half-hour response. Lincoln and Douglas were both nominated for president in 1860 and their earlier debates helped define their respective positions in that election, but they did not meet during the Presidential campaign.

Some of the debates can feature the candidates standing behind their podiums or at conference tables with the moderator on the other side. Depending on the agreed

format, either the moderator or an audience member can be the one to ask questions. Typically there are no opening statements, just closing statements.

A coin toss determines who gets to answer the first question and each candidate will get alternate turns. Once a question is asked, the candidate has 2 minutes to answer the question. After this, the opposing candidate has around 1 minute to respond and rebut her/his arguments. At the moderator's discretion, the discussion of the question may be extended by 30 seconds per candidate.

In recent debates, coloured lights resembling traffic lights have been installed to aide the candidate as to the time left with green indicating 30 seconds, yellow indicating 15 seconds and red indicating only 5 seconds are left. If necessary, a buzzer may be used or a flag.



Debates have become the norm: Barack Obama and Mitt Romney face off in 2012

# Kenya and Malawi show the way

In the past couple of years two sub-Saharan African countries have held televised debates between presidential candidates.

In Kenya in February 2013 millions of viewers were glued to their television to watch the first-ever presidential debates. Seven male candidates and one female candidate were each given two minutes to state why they wanted to become the fourth president of Kenya in the March 4 election. An audience of about 200 voters was then given a chance to ask them questions.

The first debate attracted as many as 15 million viewers, according to TV monitoring agencies – an impressive feat for a country of 14.3 million registered voters.

The dawn of TV debates in Kenya attracted great support from voters, with 93 percent of those polled by IPSOS Synovate saying they were “beneficial to Kenya”. The same poll revealed that 24 percent of respondents would consider changing their vote based on how candidates performed in the debate.

In a country where voting has traditionally been based on kinship and tribal loyalties, these debates are the first time that voters are making their decisions based on candidates’ policies, according to political analyst Dismas Makua.

“I think that these debates are not so important this time,” he told Al Jazeera. “By now, everyone has made up their mind who they are going to vote for... But in the future, in 2018, these debates are going to change everything.”

Kenya Debt Relief Network political analyst Kiama Kaara explained: “The debates are bringing a sense of scrutiny to our political discourse, that people will get answers from people who are standing for office. For the future, this sets the precedent



In Kenya in early 2013 presidential candidate debates helped place the focus on policy debate rather than mud-slinging and personal attacks

that those taking the podium will be held accountable. This is important for our civic discourse as well as our political discourse.”

In Malawi earlier this year the introduction of televised presidential debates opened

a new chapter in the country’s democracy. Three presidential debates were organised by the Malawi Chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa ahead of the May 20 ballot. Eleven candidates took part in the

debates, although incumbent Joyce Banda declined to join in claiming she was “too busy”. She ultimately lost the election. The debates were broadcast live on two television stations and five radio stations.

## The value of presidential debates

Despite being a democracy for 24 years, Namibia has not yet managed to organise a debate among presidential candidates ahead of national elections. A presidential debate seems unlikely to take place in 2014 despite some optimism that several candidates and the national broadcaster were willing to get involved. Namibian politicians rarely debate each other in public forums outside parliament – and this election campaign has been especially lacking in interactive discussions between candidates and the electorate. Most politicians prefer the safety of the soapbox rather than environments where their views and policies could be questioned and challenged.

The holding of presidential candidate debates is gradually becoming a norm in many democracies. Despite diverse politics and cultures, countries across the globe have begun to make debates among candidates for president, prime minister, parliament and local government centrepieces of their elections. Behind this global trend is the belief that debates benefit emerging democracies in many ways, including:

- helping voters make an informed choice at the ballot box
- reducing the potential for violence in countries coming out of periods of conflict
- encouraging candidates to focus on public policy issues rather than personality, and
- holding elected officials accountable to their campaign promises after elections.

As Joseph Korto of the Liberia Equal Right Party commented, “The greatest thing about this debate is to see Liberian presidential candidates sitting here and talking to

each other and trying to convince voters rather than being in the bush and shooting at each other.”

However, organising successful candidate debates is not easy. Debates require overcoming daunting political, organisational and technical hurdles, including: forming a debates sponsoring organisation, encouraging often reluctant candidates to take part, negotiating with media outlets to broadcast debates, choosing engaging and informative debate formats, raising funds, ensuring event security and producing live national television and radio broadcasts.

The exact formats for presidential candidate debates vary, but normally the debate will begin with each leader making a short opening statement. Then a panel of well-known journalists or political commentators will ask sets of prepared questions, which are to be answered either by all of the leaders or by one specific leader. Sometimes an audience composed

of a cross-section of the electorate asks questions of the candidates. After candidates answer each question, the other candidates may get a chance to make a brief response, after which there may be some time allocated for an often heated “free for all” debate.

Who gets invited to participate in a leaders debate is often a sensitive issue. Some jurisdictions may have dozens of fringe political parties which few broadcast networks would care to have participating in their debates. Although there is often pressure to include more candidates, this can reduce the quality of the debate.

- Adapted from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Wikipedia



The first televised debate in the US took place in 1960 between John F Kennedy and Richard Nixon

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### WHAT IS THE IPPR?

The Institute for Public Policy Research was established in 2001 as a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to deliver, independent, analytical, critical yet constructive research on social, political and economic issues which affect development Namibia. The IPPR was established in the belief that development is best promoted through free and critical debate informed by quality research. The IPPR is independent of government, political parties, business, trade unions and other interest groups and is governed by a board of directors consisting of Monica Koep (chairperson), Bill Lindeke, Graham Hopwood, Ndiitah Nghipondoka-Robiati, Daniel Motinga, Justin Ellis and Michael Humavindu. Anyone can receive the IPPR’s research free of charge by contacting the organisation at 70-72 Frans Indongo Street, Windhoek; PO Box 6566, Windhoek; tel: (061) 240514; fax (061) 240516; email: [info@ippr.org.na](mailto:info@ippr.org.na). All IPPR research is available at <http://www.ippr.org.na>. Material related to Election Watch is available at <http://www.electionwatch.org.na>

# Election observers or electoral tourists?

Election observation is widely seen as an important way of ensuring the integrity of elections, particularly in societies which have recently become democracies.

International organisations such as the African Union, Southern African Development Community, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union, and the Council of Europe regularly deploy election observation teams.

When election observation works it acts as a deterrent to any attempts to subvert election outcomes and gives confidence to voters that the process is free and fair.

However, international observer missions have at times been criticized for being poorly organized and not taking their role seriously enough. Often they are geared almost totally around polling day. However, the real problems during an election might occur during the campaign when violence and intimidation can take place and afterwards when the result and the integrity of the process are brought into question. Often election observation missions almost immediately proclaim an election as free and fair just because the polling days were peaceful while ignoring problems in the run up to the election and having left the country before disputes over the results develop. The SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections say that SADC observer teams should be deployed at least two weeks prior to polling taking place, but do not specify what should happen after the vote.

Sometimes the legitimacy of an



observation team is questioned, particularly if the observer mission is from a former colonial power or has members who are perceived as coming from a hostile country. This can be the case in Africa where European or American observers have sometimes been barred from witnessing elections.

However, the African Union accepts the principle that the involvement of local and international observers improves the integrity of electoral processes.

Observation teams are usually required to have a formal invitation from the government or electoral management body. In Namibia

both local and international observers will have to be formally accredited for the upcoming elections. Observers usually have to follow a code of conduct normally imposed by their sponsoring agency. This outlines matters such as how observers should behave, the importance of impartiality and what they must do if they suspect irregularities.

Even before it sends an observation mission, the sending agency should deploy a team to evaluate whether:

- The constitution and legal framework guarantee fundamental freedoms and

human rights

- The electoral management body is independent and impartial
- The rights of observers are guaranteed
- The level of political violence
- There are fair rules for the funding of political parties
- Voter education is non-partisan and co-ordinated throughout the country
- There is equitable use or access to public resources for election campaigning
- The registration of voters is done without discrimination
- There is equitable access to the public media for all contesting parties and candidates

An assessment on these grounds should be made in order to establish whether basic standards have been met for the holding of free and fair elections.

The mandate and scope of a mission should also be clear. For instance there is a difference between monitoring and observing. Observation involves gathering information and making an informed judgement. Monitoring involves having the authority to intervene in an electoral process if relevant laws or standard procedures are being violated or ignored.

To avoid accusations of “electoral tourism”, there should be an adequate time period for observers to do their work; observers should be properly qualified and trained; and observers should have a national as well as a regional focus i.e. not just focusing on local problems.

## Observers lost the plot in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwean general elections on July 31 2013 were an acid test for the observer teams of the African Union and Southern African Development Community which many commentators felt they failed.

Zimbabwean author Petina Gappah said it best: “The bar has been set so low for African elections that they may as well not have any standards at all.”

Gappah was commenting on the failure of the AU and SADC observation teams to make a proper, considered assessment of the electoral process. Both observer missions avoided making any meaningful comments based on the various charters, principles and standards that set out the benchmarks for free, fair and credible polls. In particular, both missions effectively ignored the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections and the AU’s Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance when pronouncing the elections “free and peaceful”.

Both missions withheld the word “fair” when issuing their statements but then declined to mention why they had done this. By referring to free and peaceful elections the observers were essentially saying the polls were not overtly affected by violence or intimidation. But an absence of violence does not mean that an election process has been fair. The fact that the voters register was only published a couple of days before the polls was already a major contravention not only of the AU Charter and the SADC Principles but also Zimbabwe’s own electoral law.

The registration process had been rushed and heavily biased towards capturing voters mainly living in rural, Zanu-PF strongholds. Not surprisingly there were widespread accounts of thousands of voters being turned away on polling day because their names did not appear on the register. In addition, the early voting for security personnel was chaotic and flawed

and the state media remained a Zanu-PF mouthpiece throughout.

The SADC observers appeared to have amnesia about the block’s previous position on the Zimbabwean poll. Just weeks before SADC representatives were calling for the postponement of the polls so that conditions for free and fair elections could be created.

This was not the first time that AU and SADC observers have turned a blind eye to blatant irregularities. Precedents were set in Angola in 2012 when the AU said parliamentary polls were “free, fair, transparent and credible” despite a host of irregularities, the lack of an accurate and available voters roll, and heavy state media bias. The SADC mission came to a similar conclusion.

SADC and the AU similarly blessed the presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in late 2011 despite widespread reports from other observers that irregularities had undermined the integrity of the vote and flouted the SADC Principles. President Joseph Kabila won that election

with 49 percent of the vote against Etienne Tshisekedi’s 32 percent. Both men declared themselves president and Tshisekedi has been under house arrest since then.

In a paper written after the 2011 DRC elections, analyst Helidah Ogude argued that election monitoring can be little more than a charade as observer missions have their own interests and tend to project these even if they are to the detriment of the democratic development of the country holding the election. Indeed, observer teams may be stocked with undemocratic members who are worried about their own countries becoming targets of effective electoral monitoring. As a result, they will do their best to bury reports of irregularities. Ogude argues that placing a stamp of legitimacy on elections that have been deeply flawed does not help in addressing the long-term political issues facing a country. She concludes: “If observer missions do not prioritise providing frank and objective electoral assessments, the democratisation process in Africa will be founded on falsehoods.”



## Citizen observers

As a Namibian voter you can also play a role in observing the elections. You can submit your comments on your experience of voting to the Election Watch Namibia Facebook page or email them directly to [info@ippr.org.na](mailto:info@ippr.org.na). Make sure to mention your name, contact details and at which polling station you voted. Where appropriate we will pass on concerns to the ECN.

- Were you clearly informed in good time of the voting procedures and where you could vote?
- Were you required to show your voters registration card and was its validity checked?
- Was the voters register available and was your name marked off or taken down by polling officers?
- Were there adequate measures to ensure the secrecy of the ballot?
- Were voter education materials available at the polling station?
- Was there any material that could be classified as party propaganda (such as party colours) within or in the area of the polling station?
- Was the polling booth set up properly and in a way that ensured the secrecy of the ballot?
- Was your hand checked for indelible ink marks using ultra-violet light? Was your thumb marked with indelible ink and was the strength of the ink adequate?
- Did the ballot unit of the EVM work as you expected?
- Were there any party agents or election observers present at the polling station?
- Did the voting go smoothly or were any problems experienced?