

NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY (NCA)

Election Climate Report No.6

Week ending 4 March 2005.

The Election Climate Reports are produced by the NCA in order to provide information on the prevailing climate for citizen participation in the forthcoming Parliamentary Election. The NCA has already communicated its condemnation of the constitutional framework under which the elections are being conducted. The Report is a consolidated statement of the reports sent in by a national network of community monitors.

The community reports sample a number of electoral "atmospherics" (described below), which aim to provide a clear description of the state of affairs prevailing in any one constituency:

- Freedom of Association;
- Freedom of Assembly;
- Freedom of Movement;
- Freedom of Expression;
- Incidence of Political Violence;
- Disputes over electoral procedures and electoral irregularities;
- Occurrence of voter education;
- Use of food as a political weapon.

The reports sample 18 critical indicators and hence provide a simple score for any one constituency, which we have termed the "Electoral Irregularity" [EI] score: the higher the EI score, the worse the electoral climate in a constituency.

Overview

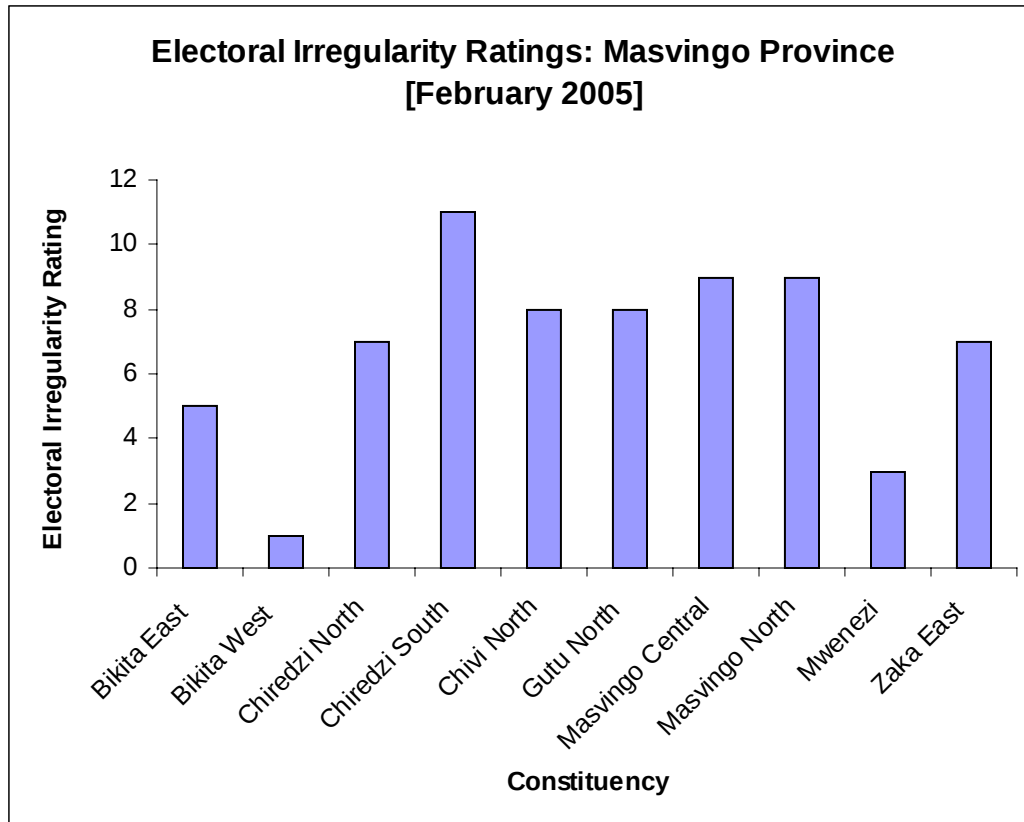
This is the first report from Masvingo Province and covers the last week in February. It indicates that the election climate is little different from the other Provinces reported upon. The highest **EI** ratings were in Masvingo [12] North and Chiredzi South with 12, and the lowest was in Bikita West [1]: this is the lowest rating obtained to date. However, there is marked variance in the constituency ratings, with a mean **EI** rating for the Province of 7.

Most constituencies reported interference with the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression, but the freedom of movement showed less interference, with fully half of the constituencies reporting freedom of movement. Political violence was reported in all constituencies apart from Bikita West, and the political violence reported was mostly hate speech, threats, and intimidation.

Electoral disagreements were reported in 60% of the constituencies, and the political use of food was much less reported: only 3 constituencies reported this. As has been found in other Provinces, very little formal voter education was reported to be taking place, with only 2 constituencies – Bikita East and West – reporting this.

Overall, Masvingo Province presents a profile very similar to Matabeleland South Province, and hence has a rather better election climate than most Provinces sampled to date. However, as the overall mean suggests, the climate cannot be described as satisfactory, and falls considerably short of the climate that would be acceptable under the SADC Principles and Guidelines.

It does seem that there would be some merit in examining the factors operating in Bikita West, and attempting to replicate these in other constituencies in the Province. However, the NCA would nonetheless call upon all political parties and civil society organizations in Masvingo Province to take immediate steps to investigate the allegations described below, and to find ways to alter the current election climate.



Masvingo

As indicated above, there is marked variation in the election climate in Masvingo Province. Mwenezi [3] and Bikita West [1] approximate the kinds of conditions that would be expected under the SADC Principles and Guidelines, but the remaining constituencies are far from this.

As regards interference with basic freedoms, the majority of the constituencies show interference with the freedoms of association, assembly, movement, and expression. Only Bikita West shows no interference with freedom of association, whilst 80% of the constituencies show interference with the freedom of assembly, 70% show interference with the freedom of expression, and 50% show interference with the freedom of movement.

For the reports received, the MDC are generally not allowed to wear their party insignia and are unable to put up posters, but, in Chiredzi North, ZanuPF has been prevented from putting up their posters. Freedom to assembly has also been interfered with, as there are several reports of ZanuPF members forcing people to go to meetings. Unusually, there are reports that, in Bikita West, another unspecified group, neither ZanuPF nor MDC, is forcing people to meetings. It is reported that both political parties are able to hold meetings, but it is reported that ZanuPF still holds more meetings than the MDC. In Chiredzi South and Zaka East, ZanuPF did not hold any meetings, and this is the first province where this has been reported.

Residents in Masvingo appear generally not to have too much trouble with moving within the constituency, but there were five reports where residents had their freedom of movement interfered with by Zanu PF supporters, the police and the militia. This was reported in Bikita East, Chiredzi South, Mashonaland Central and North, and Zaka East. The only report of new residents

moving in was in Gutu North, and they were identified as being part of Josiah Tungamirai's campaign team.

It was reported that people do not feel free to express themselves openly in Masvingo as they are afraid of the consequences: they are not free to read the newspapers of their choice as it is only the state controlled paper that is allowed wide circulation. There are reports of people being forced to chant Zanu PF slogans, and they are told that MDC slogans incite violence.

There seems to be low tolerance for physical violence, as there were only 3 reports: from Gutu North, Masvingo Central, and Chivi North. These reports showed that the violence was in the form of assaults, with people beaten up by ZanuPF supporters. In Bikita East, Chiredzi North and South, there were reports of gender-based violence in the form of forced attendance at a party base, and the victims were ZanuPF members.

Reports of election disagreements were cited and these are mainly between the two main political parties. There are reports of some formal voter education taking place, but the ESC is only mentioned in Chivi North and Gutu North. In the other constituencies the parties are doing their own voter education, sometimes joined by ZESN. Politically aligned distribution of food is said to be rife in Chivi North, Mwenezi, Chiredzi South, Masvingo North, Masvingo Central (Zanu supporters getting maize meal at Rujeko shops), Gutu North, and Zaka East. It is made clear that non-ZanuPF supporters will not get food as party cards are insisted upon.

Recommendations

Most constituencies reported interference with the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression, but the freedom of movement showed interference, with fully half of the constituencies reporting freedom of movement. Political violence was reported in all constituencies apart from Bikita West, and the political violence reported was mostly hate speech, threats, and intimidation.

Electoral disagreements were reported in 60% of the constituencies, and the political use of food was much less reported: only 3 constituencies reported this. As has been found in other Provinces, very little formal voter education was reported to be taking place, with only 2 constituencies – Bikita East and West – reporting this.

Overall, Masvingo Province presents a profile very similar to Matabeleland South Province, and hence has a rather better election climate than most Provinces sampled to date. However, as the overall mean suggests, the climate cannot be describe as satisfactory, and falls considerably short of the climate that would be acceptable under the SADC Principles and Guidelines.

There is a pressing need to build a climate of peace and tolerance, and the NCA calls upon all organizations concerned with peace building to investigate these allegations, and to take immediate steps to rectify all problems identified.

The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) is a network of civic organizations and activists as a grouping of individual Zimbabwean citizens and civic organisations including, labour movements, student and youth groups, womens groups, churches, business groups and human rights organisations. It also includes political parties formed in 1997. These individuals and groups formed the NCA to campaign for constitutional reform after realising that the political, social and economic problems affecting Zimbabwe are mainly a result of the defective Lancaster House Constitution and can only be resolved through a new and democratic constitution.

A democratic Constitution is the basis of good governance and leads to social and economic development. Thus a democratic constitution leads to:

- *Free and fair elections*
- *Observance of and respect for fundamental human rights*
- *Respect of human rights*
- *Respect for rule of law and an accountable and responsive government.*

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Masvingo Province [February 2005]

Constituency	Interference with Freedom of Association	Interference of Freedom of Assembly	Interference with Freedom of Movement	Interference with Freedom of Expression	Political Violence	Electoral Disagreements	Voter Education	Political use of food	Electoral Irregularity Rating
Bikita East	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	5
Bikita West	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	1
Chiredzi North	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	7
Chiredzi South	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	11
Chivi North	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	8
Gutu North	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	8
Masvingo Central	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	9
Masvingo North	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	9
Mwenezi	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	3
Zaka East	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	7