Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG)
For Free and Fair Elections

CCMG Preliminary Statement on the Conduct of Voting and Counting for the 2016 General Election

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Introduction

The Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) is an alliance of four faith based organisations formed to help promote credible elections through non-partisan citizen monitoring. The CCMG partner organisations are: Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ); Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ); Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflections (JCTR); and Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB), formerly the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), through Caritas Zambia. CCMG was founded ahead of the 20th January 2015 presidential by-election. CCMG is strictly non-partisan. We support no political party or candidate.

Summary

CCMG deployed 1,674 trained and accredited monitors for the 2016 General Election, including 1,404 Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) Monitors to a representative random sample of 1,001 polling stations located in every province, district and constituency of the country. CCMG also deployed District Supervisors who served as mobile monitors to all 103 districts of the country. PVT Monitors arrived at their assigned polling station and polling stream at 05:30 hours and remained there throughout voting and counting until the official results for the presidential election for the entire polling station were publicly announced and posted. Throughout election day they sent in a total of six monitoring reports on the conduct of the election via coded text messages, using their mobile phones.

CCMG will issue a statement providing independent verification on the accuracy of the presidential results immediately after the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) announces the official results for the presidential election. CCMG’s PVT findings are based on reports of the official results from a representative random sample of 1,404 polling streams at 1,001 polling stations located in all ten
provinces, all 103 districts and all 156 constituencies in the country. CCMG is conducting its PVT to verify the official results of the presidential election so that every Zambian can have confidence that the official results announced by the ECZ accurately reflect the ballots cast at polling streams and polling stations.

At this time, CCMG is sharing its preliminary findings on the conduct of voting and counting on election day for the 2016 General Elections. However, we should all remember that elections are not simply a day but a long and complex process. CCMG has been comprehensively monitoring all electoral processes and the political environment since September 2015, including voter registration, inspection of the provisional voters’ register, candidate nominations, and long-term observation of all 103 districts.

The ECZ generally conducted voter registration, inspection of the provisional voters’ register and candidate nominations in accordance with procedures and with opportunities for voters as well as parties and candidates to participate in these processes. However, concerns have been raised during the pre-election period related to: election violence; inability of candidates to freely and fairly campaign; lack of impartiality by the police; unbalanced coverage by state media, gagging of the independent media as seen in the “closure” of The Post newspaper; tendering of ballot papers; and claims of registration of ineligible voters. Overall, CCMG is extremely concerned about the pre-election environment in advance of the 2016 General Elections. While the pre-election issues did not call into question the credibility of the overall electoral process, the 2016 General Elections represent a step backward for the country. It is incumbent upon the government of the day to create a level playing field for all political parties and not abuse state resources.

As of 09:00 hours today, CCMG has received reports from 85% of its 1,404 PVT Monitors deployed to a representative random sample of polling stations and polling streams in every province, district, and constituency in the country. We continue to receive, process, and analyse reports from our PVT Monitors. While election day did experience logistical challenges related to the organisation of the polling stations and polling streams and late openings in some areas, these issues did not undermine the ability of the vast majority of Zambians to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

Select Findings

90% of polling streams were open by 06h30. In 2015, 96% of polling streams were open by 06h30. In one extreme case, polling streams only opened at 16:00 hours.

At 53% of polling streams FDD had a party agent present at opening. In 2015, FDD had party agents at 37% of polling streams.

At 91% of polling streams PF had a party agent present at opening. In 2015, PF had party agents at 89% of polling streams.

At 93% of polling streams UPND had a party agent present at opening. In 2015, UPND had party agents at 96% of polling streams.
At 98% of polling streams election officials stamped every presidential ballot paper with the official mark/stamp. In 2015, polling officials at 99% of polling stations stamped every presidential ballot paper with the official mark/stamp. However, the quality of the official mark/stamp was insufficient.

At 34% of polling streams at least a few people (1 to 5) were turned away and not permitted to vote even though they had a National Registration Card (NRC) and Voter ID Card because their name was not on the voters’ register. But, at just 1% of polling streams more than 25 people were turned away and not permitted to vote despite having an NRC and Voter ID because their names were not on the voters’ register.

At 98% of polling streams no one was permitted to vote without having an NRC and Voter ID Card. In 2015, no one was permitted to vote without having an NRC and Voter ID card at 99% of polling streams.

At 97% of polling streams all polling agents present were permitted to observe the counting of presidential ballot papers. In 2015, all polling agents present were permitted to observe the counting of presidential ballot papers at 98% of polling streams.

At 96% of polling streams there were no unauthorised persons present during the counting of the presidential ballot papers. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.

At 16% of polling streams there was insufficient light for counting of presidential ballot papers. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.

Incidents

CCMG received a total of 131 critical incident reports, of which 52 have been confirmed, from its more than 1,600 accredited monitors. The most serious was an incident in Itezhi-Tezhi that involved the beating of a party supporter who subsequently died. CCMG condemns in strongest terms all electoral violence and bemoans the taking of any life. CCMG calls upon the authorities to bring to justice those responsible for this heinous act. The most common critical incidents received by CCMG were: campaigning on election day; intimidation, harassment or violence against election officials; and ferrying of people to polling stations. However, all of these were isolated incidents and none of them occurred in large numbers.

CCMG also notes that a small number of its accredited monitors had difficulty gaining access to polling stations and polling streams. This is because the decentralization of the accreditation process led to different policies and procedures in each district. Similarly, some CCMG monitors were not allowed to use cell phones even if they stepped outside of their polling station or polling stream. This was because of confusion in understanding the regulation regarding the use of cell phones following contradictory statements by the ECZ.
Conclusion

The 2016 General Election is still underway. The ECZ is still tallying results for the various elections and announcing results. CCMG calls on all candidates, political parties, their supporters and the public at large to give the ECZ the time it requires to tally the results for all five elections.

The 2016 presidential election has been very highly contested. Competition is healthy for our democracy. However, CCMG appeals to all candidates and parties to publicly call for calm and restraint on the part of their supporters as the results are tallied and winners announced. Citizen should refrain from speculating or raising rumours. We appeal to all Zambians, regardless of their affiliation to remain peaceful, to reject violence, and to respect the rights of their fellow citizens. Zambia is not a new democracy and should be a model to the region and beyond.

CCMG commends the efforts of the election officials, in particular, the presiding officers who worked at times in challenging conditions to ensure Zambians could exercise their right to vote. The CCMG Steering Committee thanks the more than 1,600 volunteers from our four organisations that deployed across the country as monitors. Your efforts have helped strengthen our democracy. Finally, commends all Zambians who went to the polls yesterday, many who had to wait a long time to vote.

God Bless Zambia

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Preliminary Findings: CCMG PVT on the Conduct of Election Day

Set Up of Polling Stations

90% of polling streams were open by 06h30. In 2015, 96% of polling streams were open by 06h30. In one extreme cases polling streams only opened at 16:00 hours.

96% of polling streams were set up so that voters could mark their ballot papers in secret. In 2015, 98% of polling streams were set up so that voters could mark their ballot papers in secret.

At 98% of polling streams the presidential ballot box was shown to be empty before it was closed and sealed. In 2015, 99% of ballot boxes were shown to be empty before being closed and sealed.

95% of polling streams had all five ballot boxes. There is no comparative data from 2015 as there was only one ballot box for the presidential by-election.

97% of polling streams had presidential ballot papers. There is no comparative data from 2015 as there was only one ballot paper for the presidential by-election.

99% of polling streams had the official mark/stamp for marking ballot papers. In 2015, 92% of polling streams had the official mark/stamp.

98% of polling streams had a voters’ register. In 2015, 97% of polling streams had a voters’ register.

The average number of polling officials per polling stream was five. In 2015 the average number of polling officials was four. In 2015, the expected number of election officials per polling station was four, but for 2016 the ECZ increased this number to five due to the increased number of ballot papers issued to voters.

52% of election officials at polling streams were women. In 2015, 48% of election officials at polling streams were women.

At 95% of polling streams there were uniformed police or security personnel present. In 2015 at 97% of polling streams there were uniformed police or security personnel present.

At 53% of polling streams FDD had a party agent present at the opening. In 2015, FDD had party agents at 37% of polling streams.

At 91% of polling streams PF had a party agent present at the opening. In 2015, PF had party agents at 89% of polling streams.

At 93% of polling streams UPND had a party agent present at the opening. In 2015, UPND had party agents at 96% of polling streams.

[Note: Data on the set up of polling streams was previously released by CCMG in its Election Day Situational Statement. The figures may have changed since then because additional reports have been received from areas that had not yet reported due to network challenges.]
Voting

At 98% of polling streams the election officials marked a thumb or finger of every successful voter with permanent/indelible ink. In 2015, polling officials at 99% of polling streams marked a thumb or finger of every successful voter with permanent/indelible ink.

At 92% of polling streams the election officials marked an “X” by the name of every successful voter in the voters’ register. In 2015, polling officials at 97% of polling streams crossed out the names of voters from the voters’ register.

At 98% of polling streams election officials stamped every presidential ballot paper with the official mark/stamp. In 2015, polling officials at 99% of polling stations stamped every presidential ballot paper with the official mark/stamp. However, the quality of the official mark/stamp was insufficient.

At 34% of polling streams at least a few people (1 to 5) were turned away and not permitted to vote even though they had a National Registration Card (NRC) and Voter ID Card because their name was not on the voters’ register. But, at just 1% of polling streams more than 25 people were turned away and not permitted to vote despite having an NRC and Voter ID because their names were not on the voters’ register.

At 98% of polling streams no one was permitted to vote without having an NRC and Voter ID Card. In 2015, no one was permitted to vote without having an NRC and Voter ID card at 99% of polling streams.

At 95% of polling streams no one or only a few people (1 to 5) was permitted to vote whose name was not on the voters’ register. This is similar to 2015 when no one or only a few people were permitted to vote whose names were not on the voters’ register at 99% of polling streams.

At 98% of polling streams no one was permitted to vote who had indelible ink on his/her thumb/fingers. In 2015, polling officials permitted no one to vote who had indelible ink on his/her thumb/fingers at 99% of polling streams.

At 16% of polling streams more than 25 people requested assistance voting. In 2015, at 4% of polling streams more than 25 people requested assistance to vote.

At 4% of polling streams there was campaigning for a candidate. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.

At 4% of polling streams election officials made it more difficult for women to vote. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.

At 91% of polling streams pregnant women and nursing mothers were permitted to go to the front of the queue. In 2015, pregnant women and nursing mothers were permitted to go to the front of the queue at 94% of polling streams.

12% of polling streams were not in locations easily assessable to persons with disabilities. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.
At 93% of polling streams persons with disabilities were permitted to go to the front of the queue. In 2015, persons with disabilities were permitted to go to the front of the queue at 95% of polling streams.

At 3% of polling streams there were incidents of intimidation, harassment or violence against voters. In 2015, there were incidents of intimidation, harassment or violence against voters at 1% of polling streams.

At 3% of polling streams there were incidents of intimidation, harassment or violence against election officials. In 2015, there were incidents of intimidation, harassment or violence against election officials at 1% of polling streams.

Counting

At 92% of polling streams all polling agents present were permitted to observe the counting of presidential ballot papers. In 2015, all polling agents present were permitted to observe the counting of presidential ballot papers at 98% of polling streams.

At 96% of polling streams there were no unauthorised persons present during the counting of the presidential ballot papers. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.

At 16% of polling streams there was insufficient light for counting of presidential ballot papers. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.

At 98% of polling stations a party agent representing Hakainde Hichilema signed a copy of the official results form for the presidential election. In 2015, a party agent representing Hakainde Hichilema signed a copy of the official results form for the presidential election in 99% of polling stations.

At 97% of polling stations a party agent representing Edgar Lungu signed a copy of the official results form for the presidential election. In 2015, a party agent representing Edgar Lungu signed a copy of the official results form for the presidential election in 99% of polling stations.

At 54% of polling stations a party agent representing Edith Nawakwi signed a copy of the official results form for the presidential election. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.

At 97% of polling stations all party agents present were given a copy of the official results for the presidential election. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.

At 99% of polling stations the official results for the presidential election were publicly posted. Comparative data was not captured in 2015 on this issue.