



**REPORT ON THE
INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
ORGANISED FOR THE INDEPENDENT
ELECTORAL COMMISSION (IEC - BOTSWANA)
BY THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL INSTITUTE
[IFE] OF MEXICO, MEXICO CITY**

20TH TO 28TH AUGUST, 2010

Prepared by:

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REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ORGANISED FOR THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION [IEC] – BOTSWANA BY THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL INSTITUTE [IFE] OF MEXICO, MEXICO CITY 20TH TO 28TH AUGUST, 2010

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Botswana held her last elections on the 16th October, 2009. Since it has now become the Independent Electoral Commission's standing practice to assess the adequacy of the Electoral law and processes from time to time, the Commission in collaboration with International IDEA and the British High Commission sponsored a performance audit to ascertain such adequacy and the preparedness of the Commission for the 2009 General Elections. In addition, both International and Local Observer groups were allowed to dispatch Observer Missions during those elections.

After receipt of the Audit and Observer Mission reports on the conduct of the 2009 General Elections the Commission caused Evaluation exercises to be held in order to share the reports with its key stakeholders. The reports had several recommendations which the Evaluation exercises interrogated and choose those that they felt, if adopted, could improve the conduct of elections in Botswana. Workshops participants also came up with a few other recommendations of their own.

The recommendations from the Evaluation exercises highlighted Botswana's experience and challenges which the Commission is giving active attention.

2.0 BOTSWANA EXPERIENCE AND CHALLENGES

2.1 In the general area of improving the voter registration process and data management the major concerns are multiple appearance of voters' names on the election roll. It **must** however be noted that only one entry of the several entries for a voter will be valid to allow him/her to vote while the rest would be rejected. Despite this, it is the Commission's view that each voter must appear only once on the election roll to enhance its integrity.

The current situation is as a result of manual data capture at registration points and lack of registration points' online connection to the Commission's Voters data base. This needs to be addressed.

- 2.2 The second concern is related to the first where a voter might have more than one voter registration cards as a result to multiple applications for registration and lack of online connection to the data base to enable verification to establish if applicant is already registered.
- 2.3 Third is loss of voters' registration cards as a result of their being given very little value outside the election period. The law provides that in the absence of a voters' card the individual automatically foregoes their right to vote. It is worrisome to refuse a voter whose name is on the roll the right to vote because he/she has lost his/her voter's card.
- 2.4 It is worth noting that the voter registration process is anchored on the Civil Registration which issues the national Identity Card which is also a requirement for any registered voter to exercise their right to vote. Consequently any improvement on the voter registration and voters data management must be reconciled with the requirements of the National Registration Act.
- 2.5 The last but not least, under the general concerns pertaining to Voter registration is the current presentation of the voters/election roll. Section 13 (b) provides that **"Every roll shall be compiled in a regular order in relation to such serial numbers;"** It is evident that the current presentation of the roll delays the voting process as poll staff take too long to pick names on the roll as the numbers are not sequential. It also becomes difficult to group voters into streams according to their numbers for the same reason. This problems lead to voters spending more time on the queue than it is desirable.

- 2.6 The Commission has been advised to consider facilitating voting by voters with physical challenges. While the Commission has attempted to cater for the physically challenged there remains room for improvement and it is imperative that such is done before the 2014 General Elections. Calls have been made to make the template for assisting the visually impaired more user friendly and the same done to the polling booth to accommodate voters on wheel chairs.
- 2.7 The Commission has been advised to take advantage of the agility of information technology and use it to improve voter registration and voters data management as well as managing the supplies inventory of the Commission.
- 2.8 Concerns have also been raised about the release and publication of results and advice tendered to the effect that the Commission should equally take advantage of the availability and agility of information technology to ensure accurate and timely release and accessibility of election results to all interested parties.
- 2.9 Last but not least it has always been the Commission's wish to enhance cordial working relations with all its stakeholders, political parties in particular. It is therefore the Commission's resolve to seek ways of keeping all its stakeholders engaged to ensure, enhance and sustain transparency and trust through dialogue.

It was in full appreciation of the foregoing challenges and the Commission's commitment to improve service delivery at every election that the Secretary IEC, Director-National and Civil Registration, Chief Systems Analyst-IEC and Senior Elections Officer-Logistics were sent on a benchmarking trip to the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) Mexico.

Mexico was chosen for benchmarking purposes following advise from International IDEA that they were front runners in electoral reforms which seek to enhance the conduct of democratic elections. The trip revealed more similarities than differences.

However, we need to acknowledge that Mexico is ahead in several respects particularly in the use of Information and Technology which permeates most of their processes. A few lessons we therefore learnt.

3.0 LESSONS LEARNT DURING THE BENCHMARKING TRIP

- 3.1 Suffrage in Mexico is universal, free, secret, direct, personal and non transferrable. The voting age is set at 18 years.
- 3.2 The voting process hinges on an electoral roll which contains those citizens who would have attained 18 years of age and above and have requested to be included in the Electoral Roll. Citizens register when they reach the age of 16 years whereupon they are issued with a photo voting ID card (photo voting ID card bears particulars, address, finger prints and photo of the voter). The photo voting ID has over the years evolved into a de facto national identity card. It is the sole voter identification required during voting. Though issued with a photo voting ID card at 16 years of age the applicants remain in the national list until they are 18 years of age. At 18 years they apply to be included in the Electoral Roll for voting purposes. Voter Registration is continuous but general registration may be called following a delimitation exercise.
- 3.3 A voter who has prove that he/she has requested to be included on the voters list and has his/her photo voting card can not be denied the right to vote if his/her name does not appear on the voters list.
- 3.4 Each voter appears only once in the voters roll.
- 3.5 Information Technology (IT) is used extensively to enhance the accuracy, intergrity and transparency of the registration process, the sharing and dissemination of information and the publication of the results.

- 3.6 IFE has established committees that include representatives from Political parties to discuss the processes and operation of the Commission. In addition, political parties representatives are invited to the Commission meetings where they are allowed a voice but not a vote. (Before the Commission can implement any reforms they should be discussed and approved by the committee of commissioners and representatives of political parties. This has proved to harmonise working relationships as it encourages ownership of the issues that have been agreed by both parties)

In the logistics area they are highly advanced and have secure and efficient processes in place that they follow in order to deliver on their mandate.

Below are some of the key initiatives that they have adopted to enhance service delivery :-

- (a) They have developed a template for the visually impaired similar to the one used by IEC but they have gone a step further and included instructions in Braille for voters. They also have a polling booth designed for people on wheel chairs. The booth gives them the dignity to exercise their vote in secrecy.
- (b) IFE is currently developing an electronic voting machine. Although it is a good innovation, buy in by the citizens and politicians is still being sought.
- (c) The use of color coding for their documents makes identification and retrieval of documents simple and fast and ensures that correct forms are always used.
- (d) Their logistics have been computerized. They have a system in place that makes it easy to check stock balances, retrieve stored materials and documents and to track those issued to the polling stations or end users within a very short period of time.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Consequent to that trip the team wishes to conclude that it was a worthwhile experience that boosted our confidence in our electoral processes and opened our eyes to areas that require improvement. We, therefore, wish to recommend that the Commission considers the following with a view to improving our processes to enhance transparency, accuracy and credibility in the manner we conduct elections.

- 4.1 Botswana **must** consider using the national identity card as a voting card while the voters card is used to **only** confirm that indeed a voter has registered.
- 4.2 Consideration **must** be made to arrange the voters roll in alphabetical order.
- 4.3 IEC should consider improving the template for the visually impaired by providing instructions of how the template should be used in Braille.
- 4.4 IEC **must** develop a polling box/booth for use by wheel chair bound voters to ensure the secrecy of their ballot where they cannot use the conventional polling booth.
- 4.5 To avert the confusion that always arises when packaging election forms, the Commission should consider color coding its forms by the elections.
- 4.6 The commission should seek proactive ways of enhancing trust in and transparency of their processes by engaging political parties while not compromising their accountability.
- 4.7 The warehouse must be computerized for effective and efficient control of the inventory.

- 4.8 The Commission should consider introducing the use of computers (IT) during voter registration to facilitate fast and efficient conveyance of registered voters data to Headquarters for record and compilation of voters rolls.

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DATE

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