



## **CCMG Statement on the Voters Register Inspection (VRI) Observation**

**22 July 2024**

### **For Immediate Release**

Following the announcement of the Voter Registration Inspection (VRI) exercise by the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ), the Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) through its 20 Voter Register Inspection Observers (VRIOs) observed the VRI exercise from 25 March to 30 June, 2024 at civic centres in Kabwe and Mkushi in Central Province, Kitwe and Ndola in Copperbelt Province, Chipata and Lundazi in Eastern Province, Mansa and Nchelenge in Luapula Province, Lusaka and Chongwe in Lusaka Province, Chinsali and Nakonde in Muchinga Province, Kabompo and Solwezi in North-Western Province, Kasama and Mbala in Northern Province, Choma and Livingstone in Southern, and Mongu and Sesheke in Western Province. CCMG observed twice per week during the inspection period.

The purpose of monitoring the VRI exercise was to ensure compliance with the Electoral Process (Registration of Voters) Regulations, 2020 which provides for Continuous Registration of Voters, Registration Procedures and Inspection of Register of Voters under Part II, (8), (11) and (18) respectively. The inspection of the register of voter is a critical part of the registration of voter as it serves to provide the voters with following:

- i. The opportunity to verify the voters' details to ensure accuracy in their details, and
- ii. The opportunity to amend their registration details to enhance currency and completeness in the provisional register of voters.

To maintain the integrity of both the register of voters and future electoral outcomes, it is crucial that the resultant register of voters is complete, accurate, and up to date. As such, CCMG encourages citizens to inspect the register in the designated districts and raise any issues with the ECZ officials. During VRI Phase II, CCMG's observers made the following findings:

### **Key Findings**

#### ***Accessibility***

- i. All CCMG's accredited observers were allowed access to the registration centres to observe the VRI exercise.
- ii. In 5 out of 20 registration centres (Mansa Civic Centre, Lusaka Civic Centre, Solwezi Civic Centre, Mbala Civic Centre, and Mongu Civic Centre), the centres were not accessible to persons with disabilities as the participants were expected to go up steps.

#### ***Adherence to Procedures***

- i. CCMG's observers reported that all registration centres had all the required materials, such as registration application forms, Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) kits and laminates. Each registration centre was also equipped with a backup BVR kit. The ECZ official used either hard copy registers or the BVR kit for voters to inspect the register.
- ii. During CCMG's observation, at all centres, all voters who requested to update their voter registration details presented their NRCs and voters cards and were issued with a new voter's card with updated details.
- iii. CCMG's observers reported that ECZ officials knew how to operate the BVR kits, and the kits functioned optimally.

- iv. During CCMG's observation, 68% of the centres opened between 08:00 hrs and 08:30 hrs, except for the registration centre in Mongu Civic Centre which opened after 10:00 hrs.
- v. During CCMG's observation, the inspection process was incident free and proceeded without any interruptions at all centres. Additionally, CCMG's monitors did not report any incidents of objection to any names included in the register, nor any incidents of people being denied access to inspect the register, and no incidents of harassment or intimidation of any voters or ECZ staff.

#### ***Voter Education***

- i. All 20 of CCMG's VRIOs witnessed and heard of the ECZ conducting awareness on the voter register inspection exercise at some point during the observation.
- ii. During the process, only one political party, PF, was reported conducting inspection awareness at one centre only.

#### ***Participation of Political Parties and Civil Society Organisations***

- i. CCMG's observers reported agents representing the Patriotic Front (PF) were present in three (3) centres; agents representing the United Party for National Development (UPND) were present in one centre.
- ii. CCMG's observers did not report any civil society organizations (CSOs) in the registration centres during the inspection period.

#### ***Participation of Women***

- i. CCMG's observer reported only one-woman party agent reported representing Patriotic Front during the inspection
- ii. During CCMG's observation, there were an average of two ECZ officials of whom one was a woman.

CCMG is pleased with the extensive adherence to voter register inspection procedures by ECZ registration officers. However, CCMG notes with concern the low participation in the exercise by the ECZ and all stakeholders to intensify voter education and mobilize citizens to go out and register to vote. CCMG also calls on the ECZ to make efforts to enhance the transparency of the voter register, in line with regional and international best practices.

CCMG further notes that 5 out of 20 voter registrations centres remain inaccessible to persons with disabilities and urges the ECZ to expedite the installation of ramps in all registration centres as a requirement of the *Sela Brotherton v ECZ* case judgment and the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2012.

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