



Regional Workshop

STRENGTHENING CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

28th – 29th July 2005
Chobe Marina Lodge
Kasane



CONFERENCE REPORT

Compiled by Grant Masterson

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DAY ONE

SESSION 1

Chair: Mr Dominic Khame

Welcome and Introductions

The conference was opened with a brief prayer of thanks, after which the Chairman welcomed the various dignitaries and guests. During the welcome, it was noted that this was the second such workshop to be held by the ECF in Botswana on Civic and Voter Education.

Official Opening – Mr. Marc Meinardus, FES Country Programme Officer

Mr. Meinardus welcomed the various dignitaries to the conference, and thanked the Botswana IEC and the ECF for their cooperation on this project. He briefly outlined the scope of FES activities in the SADC region and the expected outcomes of the workshop. He expressed the hope that this workshop would mark the beginning of a partnership between FES and the ECF. He noted the presence of representatives from the DRC and Angola, which he noted was a rare occurrence. He further noted the absence of representatives from Madagascar, who were unable to attend given language constraints.

He briefly outlined some of the topics that the workshop would cover:

- The importance of electoral participation in SADC's democratic consolidation
- The challenge of voter apathy to democracy in SADC (and the wider world)
- Voter education as a critical tool in promoting greater voter awareness of the importance of voter participation in elections

In closing he expressed the hope that the workshop would produce both tangible outcomes and strategic interventions for a way forward. He wishes delegates a beneficial and enjoyable workshop.

Vote of Thanks – Dr Victor Tonchi, Chairperson, ECF

Dr. Tonchi, on behalf of the ECF, expressed his thanks to all those responsible for organizing and co-ordinating the workshop. He also expressed his thanks to FES for underwriting the conference as well as their wider engagement in democratic consolidation in the region. He noted that the ECF is engaged in a number of projects and that ECF would continue to seek to engage with FES on many of these projects. Dr. Tonchi also expressed his thanks to the District Commissioner for his assistance and attendance at the workshop. He extended his sincere thanks to the various electoral commissions for releasing their representatives to attend the conference and noted the importance of the solidarity that this goodwill represents. He noted that apart from Swaziland, who

indicated that they would not be able to attend, all other members of the ECF were represented which was extremely encouraging. A special appreciation was mentioned to the IEC Botswana, for its continued logistical support to the ECF.

SESSION 2

Chair: Ms Ilona Tip

Expectations for the Conference

Ms. Tip conducted a brief introductory exercise involving numerical pairings. Pairs were asked to share some brief information with one another such as their organization, country of origin, expectations for the conference, etc. The group then shared their partner's answers with the conference.

The major expectations raised for the conference were:

- Networking;
- Develop civic education management strategies;
- Generation of voter education information;
- Strategies to reduce voter apathy in future elections;
- Share experiences with each other that could be of benefit in future;
- A clearer understanding of the meaning of voter education; and
- Use experiences to improve the service delivery of national organizations.

SESSION 3 – PRESENTATIONS

Chair: Dr Victor Tonchi

Voter Apathy Study – Botswana Case Study Dr Zibani Maundeni

Dr. Maundeni raised the challenge of voter registration in Namibia as an anecdote for one of the challenges in interpreting the statistics available, as well as achieving voter engagement in the process. The Namibian registration process in 1999 was problematic due to multiple registrations.

Botswana's voting patterns since 1989 have been low, below 50% of the total eligible voters. However official figures, based on the number of voters registered have remained between 70-80%. Thus the discrepancy between the two figures is clearly large enough to warrant some concern.

Major challenges facing Botswana include:

- The faith sector do not encourage or take part in the political activities of the country's government;
- More women than men register to vote, yet the predominant representation in Parliament is male;
- Apathy is more prevalent amongst men than it is amongst women;
- Rural/urban divide – more women vote in rural areas, more men vote in urban areas;
- Violence tends to reduce the number of women who voter in an election proportionate to men;
- Youth are not engaging substantially in Botswana's political activities (apathy is highest amongst the youth);
- The African family does not encourage youth participation in political activities;
- The Media does not report political events in a manner that encourages interest.

Conclusion:

Voter apathy is a growing trend in Botswana and presents a growing challenge to the Botswana IEC, the political parties and special interest groups. 30%+ are not casting their votes in elections, which seriously undermines the mandate of the ruling government.

A copy of the full text is annexed as Annexure A.

Voter Apathy as a challenge in the SADC Region

Mr Grant Masterson

Mr. Masterson presented a regional survey and comparison of voter turnout patterns between 1990 and 2005. The following points were noteworthy in this presentation:

1. Explaining Voter Apathy as a democratic deficit.

Voter participation is essential to the practice of democratic elections in order to ensure that elections do reflect the will of the majority. Voter apathy undermines this premise and therefore represents a challenge to democratic states. There is a difference between voter apathy, which is as a result of political disillusionment, and non-voting, which is a deliberate political choice to withhold a vote for a deliberate reason. It is extremely difficult to identify which phenomenon is observable without in depth study, which needs to be constantly updated. However this point is worth noting.

There are also two measurements of voter turnout, namely, Voter Registration % (Vote/Reg %) and Voting Age Population (VAP%). Vote/Reg % refers to the percentage of registered voters who cast their ballot in an election. VAP % refers to the percentage of voters who were eligible to vote, whether they registered or not. Both measurements inform the discussion about voter turnout in an election.

2. Regional trends.

Africa has held 221 election since 1956, of which 160 have been held since 1990. SADC has held 50 elections, and three countries (Botswana, Mauritius and Zimbabwe have accounted for nearly half this number). SADC is clearly new to the practice of multiparty democratic elections.

For the four types of elections, the following regional trends were observed:

The Four Types of Elections	Eligible Voting Age Turnout	Level of Non-participation
Presidential	58.5%	42.5%
Parliamentary	61.4%	38.6%
Local Government	36.5%	63.5%
By-elections		

3. Challenges for the SADC Region.

Survey data suggests that the major cause of voter apathy in SADC is a belief that a single vote is insignificant. There appear to be two major causes for this: a belief that elections are somehow rigged to manipulate a result; or that regardless of the winning political party, the voter's personal circumstances will not be affected as a result of the outcome. Trust in opposition political parties

was extremely poor. At the same time many people displayed a high degree of mistrust for the ruling party as well. This appears to demonstrate a clear lack of viable alternatives to the present ruling party should a voter be dissatisfied with the service delivery of that party.

4. The Way Forward.

The following actions need to be taken to address voter apathy:

- A deliberate effort to curb political violence & instability
- Institutionalization of constitutionalism and the rule of law
- Political parties need to develop policies that address the everyday needs of the populace (not be seen as remote)
- Implement policies aimed at addressing the needs of the disenfranchised (women, youth, disabled)
- Deliberate policy measures aimed at redressing the adverse effects of chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDS on citizens participation in the electoral process
- Civic and voter education programs
- Programs to increase public trust in political parties and state institutions

5. Conclusions.

Voter Apathy is increasing across all SADC states in varying degrees. The major factors influencing this are:

- Political instability and conflicts;
- The promulgation of repressive laws which undermine the rule of law and constitutionalism;
- The formulation of insensitive government policies;
- A lack of policy frameworks which target disenfranchised groups e.g women.
- A lack of socio-economic improvement of the daily lives of the citizens despite the sustained existence of democracy and regular elections

Voter apathy is a complex problem which needs a multifaceted solution, from multiple bodies including: government, political parties, electoral commissions, the media and civil society

A full copy of the text is contained in Annexure B.

Voter Apathy in the International Arena

Mr Joram Rukambe

20th/ 21st Century saw the enfranchisement of more voters across geographical, racial and socio-economic divides than ever before. Freedom house rating of democratic states indicated 27% of total in 1970 to 62% of total in 2000. There are now more avenues for political participation than ever before. From 1990 – 2001, 64% of African voters turned out to vote. This was the lowest combined total of all regions polled.

There is a correlation between democratic consolidation and voter turnout. Those countries which were rated as the most free by Freedom House demonstrated the highest voter turnout. There has been a global trend of slow and steady decline in voter turnout since the 1980's, smaller and larger, older and newer. Founding elections also tend to be more popular than subsequent elections.

Voter Apathy is more pronounced amongst:

- Young voters;
- High income voters; and
- Diaspora voters.

Increased access to information and education has reduced the 'gender gap' in voting since 1980.

Factors influencing electoral participation:

- Socio-political factors eg. Bad governance, voter distrust, lack of viable alternatives, social exclusion/political disenfranchisement;
- Systemic factors (PR system yields higher turnout than FPTP, multiparty systems encourage high turnout);
- Mechanical factors eg. Access to voter registration facilities, access to information, public holidays, 'yoked elections' all held on same day;
- EMB competence and autonomy
- Public confidence in political institutions

A full copy of the text is contained in Annexure C.

Comments and Questions on Session 3 – Presentations

The following questions capture the extent of the discussions on the presentations made during session 3.

Questions:

- Have we pinned down the concept of voter apathy? What about the concept of voter alienation?
- What was the basis for the age group and gender statistics in the Botswana presentation?
- In the tabulation of factors that contribute to apathy, what about foreign interference in processes of tabulation and registration?
- Is the increasing democratic wave since the 1970's a positive trend, or is it serving to dampen voter enthusiasm?
- EMB's should ask themselves why there is this increasing voter apathy. Has any consideration been given to the economic situation of apathetic voters?
- Multi-party elections have taken root, but quality leaves much to be desired. What are the standards and have any elections achieved these standards?

Comments:

- The role of the EMB's in countries where there is compulsory registration is different to that of an EMB in a country where that registration is not compulsory.
- Zimbabwe's observation that women do not vote during periods of political violence and unrest.
- The time when an election is held is important in affecting the voter turnout for that election.
- It is possible to hold technically correct elections without achieving a democratic result.
- A critical point raised by the presenters was that the trustworthiness and competence of EMB's is a critical influence on voter turnout.
- It is important to distinguish between voter apathy and the political decision not to vote.
- Voters graduate from school, and at 18 are now eligible to vote, but have never been taught about or analyzed the concept of democracy/elections.

SESSION 4 – COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS

Chair: Dr Victor Tonchi

Civic & voter education as an approach to minimizing voter apathy in SADC

Ms Ilona Tip

Ms Tip opened this session by providing a broad overview of the role of civic and voter education in the context of addressing voter apathy. The following points were highlighted.

Civic & voter education should reflect democratic content and approach. The role of civic voter education includes:

- Citizen Participation;
- How people relate to one another & their environment;
- Co-operation & tolerance;
- Helping citizens to see themselves as agents of change

Methodology and content are important in achieving these objectives. Pictures are an effective tool in communicating different and sometimes complex ideas and concepts.

Methodology should be:

- Interactive;
- Participative;
- Contextual; and
- Easily Understood.

Challenges include:

- Lack of resources;
- Geographical constraints;
- Language;
- Discrimination;
- Varying levels of literacy; and
- Poverty.

Voter education must be carried out in a non-partisan, impartial manner. It is important to utilize available resources and build stakeholder partnerships in order to facilitate effective educational strategies and interventions. There are numerous and varied media which are both cost effective and useful in conveying the desired message.

A copy of the full text is annexed as Annexure H.

Country Presentations

After a brief opportunity for delegates to clarify points of interest, Dr. Tonchi invited presenters to make their country presentations on voter education strategy in their country.

Botswana

Major recommendations:

- Voter education should be intensified before elections;
- Churches and Faith Based Organisations should be encouraged to make announcements about registration etc.;
- Infusing education in school curriculum.

Interventions undertaken by the Botswana IEC include:

- Branding the IEC;
- Advertising companies;
- Workshops;
- Collaboration with stakeholders;
- Composing an election song, which was very popular especially with the youth;
- Voter education stage drama;
- Outdoor Broadcast Van tour;
- Multi-media campaign;
- The IEC also addressed political party candidates and visited schools.

Challenges in Botswana in encouraging voter participation:

- HIV/AIDS
- Increase in by-elections based on HIV/AIDS
- Population distribution (isolation of the rural population).

The way forward:

- School visits
- Political party workshops
- Voter education survey
- Civic and voter education manual
- Networking amongst EMB's.

Civic and voter education is possible where partnerships exist.

Lesotho

The Lesotho IEC took the step of forming consultative committees during the election period in 2002 composed of people in the media, NGO's, churches etc. The Commissioners also made a specific effort to make themselves visible during the campaign period. Musicians and other entertainers were used to engage the youth. Civic education has not been afforded much importance in Lesotho.

Strategies:

- Work with the education sector to include civic education in school curriculum
- Include civic education messages on voter cards
- Distribute IEC newsletter to a wide audience
- Development of documentation centre on Democracy

Limitations:

- Personnel constraints
- CSO's are weak and do not engage in voter education
- Voter education is limited to the Voting Period
- A lack of understanding of voting patterns is inhibiting further strategy interventions

Malawi

Despite high national election turnouts local government elections attracted only 14% of the electorate. Malawi uses the continuous registration system. This has created difficulties, particularly that it is unclear exactly how accurate the voter's roll is. There has been a sharp decline in voter turnout since the first elections in 1993. Although the reason for this is unclear, one possible reason could be that there is a strong desire for change since the 1993 and 1999 elections.

Malawi's Electoral Commission (MEC) accredits NGO's to conduct civic education and the MEC only conducts voter education during the election period prior to an election. Continuous civic education is left completely to NGO's, assuming that these organizations will conduct the education.

The MEC is heavily limited by resource constraints, and is expected to achieve a large number of objectives with minimal resources. Accusations are leveled at NGO's for adopting partisan approaches. There has been a major divide over the attempt of former President Muluzi to secure a third term, which was narrowly defeated in parliament. This divide also permeates the MEC.

Accredited NGO's are also problematic in that they often fail to report on areas which they are tasked to undertake voter/civic education interventions.

The MEC embarks on diverse multi-media strategies to increase the profile of elections, and voter education. However the MEC's role remains largely limited to monitoring NGO's between elections.

The structures of the MEC remain top-heavy, and have not managed to establish nation-wide offices or representatives.

Parliament feels that the role of the MEC should remain limited to electoral management, and that voter education should be the responsibility of Parliament.

DAY TWO

SESSION 5 – COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS (cont.)

Chair: Mr Joram Rukumbe

Day two was opened by Ms Ilona Tip who asked all delegates to share a positive attribute of the person on either side of themselves with that particular person. The rest of the session continued with the specific electoral commission experiences on voter education strategies and challenges, picking up where these had been left off the previous evening.

Namibia

The Commission consists of 5 part-time members who serve 5-year terms, assisted by a secretariat headed by a Director of Elections who is the CEO of the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN).

Civic/voter education has been part of the ECN programmes since 1992. In 2001 the Democracy Building Unit (DBU) was established. By 2002 the DBU had set up regional units in each of Namibia's 13 regions.

The ECN goals of voter education:

- Greater citizen participation;
- Culture of national reconciliation;
- Political tolerance;
- Unity in diversity;
- Address voter apathy.
- To create awareness;
- Promote nation building;
- To empower citizens to be able to perform checks and balances (i.e. Non-partisan education interventions)
- To provide impartial electoral information

ECN voter content includes concepts on topics such as:

- Elections (types);
- Electoral systems (types);
- Free, fair and transparent elections;
- The rule of law;
- The different arms of the state;
- Democracy and democratic governance;
- Citizens rights and obligations;
- Political party codes of conduct.

Initially election/voter education only took place during the pre-election period but the DBU's have started to roll out more permanent education programs, which represents a positive development.

Voter education strategy during the 2004 elections:

- Use of the media;
- Decentralizing the regional education DBU's;
- Partnerships with NGO's, other technical bodies, legal bodies.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's Electoral Commission (ZEC) is in a state of flux given the recent amendments to the constitution and the electoral administration. The ZEC is responsible for Presidential, Parliamentary, Local Authority elections and referenda. The ZEC is taking over responsibility for these elections from the Electoral Supervisory Commission(ESC).

Voter education strategy:

- Recruitment of teachers from all regions of Zimbabwe to the ZEC;
- The Board of Information produces pamphlets etc.;
- The Voter Education Officers make door-to-door visits to distribute these pamphlets;
- Prior to 2002, NGO's were able to conduct voter education unregulated, which led to complaints from several political parties, and as such the ESC was given this additional responsibility;
- 2002 election, the ESC embarked on a nationwide voter education program specifically aimed at encouraging participation amongst the youth;
- This program marked the turning point in the trend of declining interest in elections in Zimbabwe;
- This has been responsible for increasing the participation rate in Zimbabwe to a healthy 75% in Presidential elections;
- The major vehicle for voter education is discussion between programme officers and the electorate in forums, classrooms and rallies.

Conclusion:

Due to the high levels of engagement by the ESC/ZEC, the 2005 Parliamentary elections were virtually 100% peaceful and a resounding success. The aim now is to consolidate the gains made thus far and to continue to improve voter participation in Zimbabwe.

South Africa

The South African IEC uses the following motto in its education initiatives: "Bad representatives are elected by good citizens who do not vote."

Challenges faced by IEC:

- To achieve total voter participation;
- Voting is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. The implications of this are enormous.

According to the IEC's philosophy, when someone votes, they enter into a contract with the person they vote for, but also if you don't vote, they enter into a contract with the person elected by those who do vote. More significantly, this decision affects citizens whether they vote or not.

The IEC's duty is to spread a good understanding of the importance of voter participation. In South Africa there is a noticeable decline in voter participation and a corresponding increase in spoilt ballots. Local government elections attract very little attention. This does not mean that voters are apathetic, however. The major reason for declining voter turnout appears to voter alienation. Alienation here means the positive dislike of political processes.

Three phases of voter education were identified:

- Electoral Democracy Development: To promote and support an environment that is conducive to free and fair elections. The clientele are all persons in South Africa;
- Voter Education: To secure "buy in" for the election management body's systems and processes including education of the nationally legislated electoral system. The clientele is currently approximately 27 million persons;
- Balloting Education: To prepare the electorate, those registered to vote (currently approximately 20 million), for what to expect inside voting station and how not to spoil a ballot.

Tanzania

There are two Electoral Commissions in Tanzania, one which caters for mainland Tanzania and Union elections, whilst the other caters for elections to Zanzibar's House of Representatives. The voter education rationale is to empower and inform the voter of the significance and influence of their ballot.

The recent ID card registration drive was very successful due to the fact that each voter card included a headshot photo, which has become a status symbol prior to the 2005 elections. Political leaders are creating a challenge by not living up to their promises during elections, which are leading to voter cynicism.

The NEC has successfully used various methods to disseminate information including:

- The media;
- Posters;
- Clothing, which is distributed free by the NEC.

Conclusion:

Voter education needs to become a continuous program which engages all elements of society, including the disenfranchised such as women, youth and people with disabilities.

Mauritius

The present electoral system in Mauritius is a constituency based system with each constituency returning three representatives, and then it has a best loser system which nominates the best losers in all constituencies to the parliament, whilst attempting to maintain the proportions of the various parties.

Regular consultations occur between the MEC and political parties in order to create a smooth and satisfactory democratic process in elections. Registration is conducted house to house, on an annual basis. The state owned media is the only electronic broadcaster which covers electoral information, but the majority of the print media is privately owned, and covers electoral issues in depth.

Political parties make use of their political platform to educate voters, and as most political rallies are extremely well attended, this is an extremely effective means of reaching large parts of the population. In 2005, 687 candidates contested for the 60 parliamentary seats available, out of Mauritius' 1,2 million citizens. No provision is made for people who are unable to present themselves at the appropriate polling station.

Mozambique

The CNE (the Electoral Commission) is responsible for conducting the elections. STAE (the electoral administration) is responsible for voter education.

Mozambique's registration process and the accuracy of the voter's roll is problematic, given migration patterns in the population, as well as attrition due to HIV, Malaria etc.

STAE has established stronger contacts with the Department of Education, which has boosted the capacity of STAE in reaching particularly youth, but also allowed for a more coordinated strategy of voter education. Additionally, STAE has cooperated with Faith Based Organisations and the media to reach a wider population. This has proved to be both successful and cost effective.

Angola

Angola has held one democratic election in 1992. During this election there was some consultation with political parties, and efforts were made to translate electoral information into 8 indigenous languages in the country.

The communication strategy adopted needed to be quite basic, given the considerable constraints such as the inability of election officials to move around freely, as well as resource constraints. As a result, the communication strategy identified a central message, which was disaggregated in several sub-points for further elaboration.

The DRC

The DRC has not yet conducted multi-party democratic elections in the post-colonial era. The conditions under which these elections are to be conducted were established during the Inter-Congolese Dialogue held at Sun City in 1999.

The IEC's responsibilities are to conduct voter registration at this stage and the elections.

The cost of the upcoming elections is expected to reach \$430 million, of which presently 270 million has been raised. The majority of the workshops on voter registration have been held in Kinshasa, however there have been some

workshops held in the provinces. The majority of political activity continues to revolve around Kinshasa. These workshops have included:

- Non-State actors
- 221 political parties
- Women's organizations
- Youth organizations
- Media

The National Civic Voter Education program was launched on 18 June, 2005. The role of the church will be very important in this campaign as 80% of the DRC population is Christian. The IEC has 11 Provincial offices and 64 connecting offices to assist in the electoral management of the elections and voter education.

A major constraint is linguistic differences. There are 350 tribal languages in the DRC, which makes the translation into local languages extremely problematic. As a result, documents have been translated into 5 main regional languages, and for the remainder, pictorial depictions have been used to convey meaning.

Logistical challenges:

- The geographical size and the layout of the land presents a major difficulty to IEC officials. Planes are the only option and they are costly. The IEC is negotiating with the UN regarding this matter.
- Security, particularly in East DRC is incredibly problematic. There are a number of militias in the east which are antagonistic to the electoral process. Kidnappings and violence are a threat.

International organizations are playing an important role in assisting in this incredibly complex and difficult process. However, the work is progressing well and there is a strong sense of optimism that the elections will be conducted on time.

Zambia

Zambia has established a National Voter Education Committee (NVEC), whose role is to:

- To carry out non-partisan voter education programs
- To sensitize the electorate
- To produce a voter education syllabus

Composition of the NVEC:

- 11 NGO's
- A secretariat
- District Committees (72)
- The committee is assisted by Zambia Information Services

The NVEC's Voter Education Activities are:

- Dramas, usually in schools and public arenas;

- Distribution of flyers and posters etc.
- Country-wide tours which make use of public address systems to address impromptu gatherings during the NVEC's education drive.

The NVEC takes an active interest in promoting the engagement of women in elections. In Zambia, political parties, schools and the NVEC both conduct voter education interventions. Voter education is conducted in both English and local languages. Voter education has played a key role in Zambia's successful conduct of elections, and is seen as a cornerstone of its future outcomes. It is essential for national voter education programs to be implemented in all countries which are committed to democratic elections.

SESSION 6

Chair: Ms Ilona Tip

Group Discussions on areas of commonality and identifying viable strategies for voter education

Delegates were divided into groups and tasked with engaging in a strategic discussion over four distinct but related points regarding voter education and training interventions.

Table 1- Group Discussion on Areas of Commonality/Identification of Possible Strategies to Strengthen Voter Education

Points to consider in your group
<p>Discussion Point 1 What is the role of an EMB vis-à-vis public education? Is it to provide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">voter educationvoter informationcivic educationdemocracy <p>In a sentence or two how should we define these? What should they aim to do?</p>
<p>Discussion Point 2 What, if any, is the role of an EMB between elections? What should this seek to achieve? Why?</p>
<p>Discussion Point 3 Consider the relationship with other stakeholders such as NGOs, CBOs and FBOs, other government departments/ministries, political parties etc. in relation to public education. Should the EMB write materials? Should Civil Society Organizations use ONLY the EMB's material? Should providers of (electoral) public education be accredited? If yes, what should this accreditation imply? Should ONLY accredited entities be authorized to conduct (electoral) public education? Give reasons for your opinion.</p>
<p>Discussion Point 4 What strategic direction should the ECF provide to EMBS with regard (electoral) public education? Identify two (2) immediate activities or interventions on which the ECF should embark vis-à-vis (electoral) public education? (This may include all or some components). Suggest two (2) long term activities.</p>

Based on these group discussions, group presentations were made in a general plenary session where the following points summarize the extent of the discussion.

Summary of discussions:

Regarding the definitions of voter education/civic education/public education, Groups 1,2 and 3 had fairly similar definitions of these terms. Group 4 didn't articulate their definition in the same way.

These Presentations are attached as Annexure D, E,F and G.

Regarding the role of the EMB in voter education, there was some disagreement as to whether this is desirable or not.

Regarding the development of democracy education materials, there was also no clear uniformity. Some felt that it would be desirable for EMBs to develop this material; others argued that this should be developed by other organizations in consultation with the EMB.

There was a general sense amongst the groups that there is a place for ongoing and sustained democratic education strategies and interventions in between elections.

Conclusion:

As a result of these discussions, the group moved straight into the final item on the conference agenda, namely a discussion on areas of commonality in voter education strategies between electoral commissions in SADC. This final session also aimed to identify possible strategies to strengthen voter education in the region to address voter apathy in future elections.

SESSION 7

Chair: Ms Ilona Tip

Plenary on areas of commonality/identification of possible strategies to strengthen voter education

The final session surrounded the major recommendations of the conference, discussing these recommendations in two groups: short-term and long-term recommendations.

Short-Term Recommendations

- The ECF should help the region share best practice with regard to public education ranging from the appointment of the Commission, management of political parties etc.
- Regional EMB's should share job descriptions across the region;
- Regional EMB's should share strategic plans;
- Staff exchange programmes between EMBs;
- EMB's should identify common features in public education (this activity to be undertaken at a national level);
- The ECF should facilitate sharing of this expertise;
- The ECF to facilitate training of EMB staff to develop training materials;
- The ECF to assist countries to come up with common syllabus in public education;
- The ECF to compile various reference materials;
- To develop national databases of expertise (human/material).

The two major recommendations that were picked up were:

1. The introduction of a staff exchange program between EMB's.
2. The commissioning of a workshop to develop generic democratic education materials that can be adopted in national democratic education programs.

Long-term Recommendations

- The ECF should serve as an advisory body in election matters e.g appointment of commissioners;
- The ECF should engage in increasing its profile internationally;
- The ECF must work toward increasing its budget by increasing membership contributions, fund raising and other activities;
- Incumbents of national public education wings must have proper training in core electoral operations and in the legal framework (Induction program);
- The harmonization of the ECF programs and SADC Parliamentary Forum programs with SADC Principles and Guidelines for Electoral Management and Observation;
- The ECF must make sure that all member countries are on the same level as far as public education is concerned;
- The ECF should facilitate regional research studies on voter apathy;
- To serve as an advisory body in standardizing the appointment of commissioners;
- Facilitating the attendance of EMB staff at regional and global workshops.

The meeting agreed to two specific short term recommendations and recognized that the long term recommendations were more general in content.

The two short term recommendations were:

1. Compilation of information by the ECF Secretariat
The ECF Secretariat should commence in sourcing and indexing relevant information on: sharing best practice in education ranging from the appointment of the Commission, management of political parties etc; job descriptions; strategic plans; sourcing materials developing a national database of expertise both human and material
2. Facilitate training of EMB staff to develop training materials
It was noted that EISA offers such a programme and also has an extensive library on relevant voter, civic education, human rights and democracy education material.

Closing Remarks

Dr Victor Tonchi

Dr. Tonchi thanked the delegates for the outcomes of the conference, and the manner in which they had conducted themselves. He noted that in one way or another, there had been good cooperation between the countries of the region for over 40 year, and that this conference was just the latest step in that proud history of cooperation. He also noted that in 40 years, voter education had made enormous strides in the region.

He thanked the following for their contribution to the success of the workshop, namely:

- The Frederich Erbert Foundation (FES), for underwriting the conference costs, especially Dr Marc Meinardus
- The Botswana IEC for organizing the workshop
- Ms. Hilda Modisane from the ECF Secretariat for arrangements to ensure the smooth running of the workshop
- The various presenters, facilitators and assisting organizations, including Ms. Ilona Tip and Mr Grant Masterson for their assistance on behalf of EISA
- The staff of the Chobe Marina Resort for its hospitality, and expressed the hope that the delegates would be able to soon meet together again.

With this Dr. Tonchi closed the workshop and wished the delegates a safe return journey.