

# WHAT IS ELECTORAL CORRUPTION?

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Truly democratic elections play a critical role in development. Voters, due to their general distaste for corruption, are expected to sanction politicians who use corruption to win votes. Elections should be used as a way to screen bad leaders from good ones. The electorate should ensure that all corrupt individuals are sidelined. All those previously implicated in corruption should not contest in elections, and if they happen to pass through primary elections, they should not be voted. Zimbabweans have had experiences because of corrupt leaders whom they elected into positions of power. However, it is worrisome when candidates corrupt voters to win the same elections that should be used to get rid of corruption. This Brochure has been made to raise awareness against common forms of vote buying and other irregularities in Zimbabwe.

## 2. FORMS OF MANIPULATION OF VOTERS

It should be highlighted from the outset that electoral corruption aids political parties to secure illegitimate power. **Electoral corruption by its nature is the manipulation of votes, voters, electoral laws and policies, and electoral outcomes for personal political gain.** Aspiring candidates should win elections because of their leadership qualities **and not on how much goodies and money they dish out to people during election campaigns.**

In Zimbabwe voters have consistently been manipulated and deceived by politicians.

- Politicians make several false or empty promises, which will never be fulfilled.
- The only surface during election campaigns and immediately disappear after being elected;
- After being elected, they become unapproachable and meeting them becomes very difficult;
- At times they even change their residential areas.

Several strategies have been used to deceive the electorate, such as media bias, deceptive political communication, provision of particularistic incentives mainly vote buying or sanctions, intimidation, coercion and various forms of undue influence.

### ↔ Recording Serial Numbers of voter registration Certificates

In the run-up to the 2018 general elections, there were several reports of political party actors recording serial numbers of voter registration certificates under the pretext that they will be able to determine how a voter has cast his or her vote. **This is false, they will not know who you have voted for. This is an attempt to deceive you.**

### ↔ Property Invasions

Towards elections, some illegal activities are allowed. For instance, vendors were allowed to sell in areas where they were removed before. Early March 2018 Gaika Mine situated in Kwekwe was grabbed and handed over to the youth, under the guise of its youth empowerment. After elections, they will all be removed. The intention of politicians is to deceive the electorate. The timing speaks volumes about the intention to lure the electorate, which is a way of buying votes.

### ↔ Giving Plots of land to the Youth

The youths constitute more than 60% of the voting population, and as such politicians have always tried to make

sure that the youth vote for them through giving them plots of land. Below are some of the reported cases.

- In Manicaland and in 2017, 4000 youth were allocated stand numbers in some parts of the Province.
- In 2017, and the former Local Government minister Saviour Kasukuwere pledged to dole out 1,500 hectares of land for various youth programmes throughout the country, in a move perceived as a vote-buying gimmick ahead of the 2018 elections.

### ↔ Distribution of Free Food and Other Commodities

Politicians have the habit of dishing out free food and other goodies ahead of elections. Some politicians are defending themselves under the pretext that they love the electorate. But the question is the timing of the distribution, which is only done during election campaigns.



There have been cases of the electorate getting free medical care, boreholes being drilled for them, rentals being paid for, given free groceries and getting free money for projects. This is vote buying not love regardless of any justification.

## 3. OTHER ELECTORAL MAL-PRACTICES

### ↔ State Capture

State capture is the worst form of political corruption and there is suspicion that some state institutions have been captured to advance interests of certain politicians in Zimbabwe. **State capture** is a type of systemic political corruption in which political interests of certain political parties significantly influence a **state's** decision-making processes to their own political personal advantage.



### ↔ Abuse of Traditional Leaders

In several Zimbabwean elections traditional leaders have been consistently abused by politicians for political gain, which is unlawful and unconstitutional. On 28 October 2017 at the official opening of the 2017 National Conference of Chiefs in Bulawayo, Chief Fortune Charumbira, who is the President of the Chief's Council, made unfortunate remarks when he called upon chiefs to campaign for President Robert Mugabe in the 2018 national elections. The utterances besides being unconstitutional, demonstrates the fact that traditional leaders have been captured for political gain.

The remarks by Chief Charumbira have received condemnation and litigation in a case filed by the Election Resource Centre - Vs- Chief Fortune Charumbira and National Council of Chiefs and Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing Case HH 270-18 / HC 1718/18 which was not opposed.

It is also not proper for politicians to offer gifts to chiefs and traditional leaders to procure their support in the elections.

#### ↔ Abuse of state resources in elections

There are increasing numbers of cases of the abuse of state resources, including human resources, for political campaign activities. Political activities must not be funded through tax payers'. The abuse of civil servants to organise party campaigns at their official working hours and using government resources such as vehicles, and stationery among others is not proper.

Some of the key resources that featured during election campaigns included access to land as witnessed in the 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2018 elections. Other shining examples include access to food in 2002 and 2018 elections, to jobs and livelihood opportunities in the 2008 election, to business opportunities and informal economy as well as credit lines and housing stands in the 2013 election. During the 2008 election campaign farm implements were distributed two weeks before the election.



#### ↔ Abuse of State Owned Enterprises funds in elections

Zimbabwean parastatals or state-owned enterprises gained infamy for donating to political parties at the expense of the people whom are they founded to serve. There have been many such incidents in Zimbabwe.

#### ↔ Improper Political Contributions

It should be noted that not all donations to political parties are clean since some of them are made in anticipation for future personal gain. Thus donations made with the intention or an expectation that the party will, once in office favour the interests of the donor over the interests of the public amounts to corruption.

#### 4. WHAT THE VOTER SHOULD DO

There are several strategies that the electorate should do:

- As soon as a politician starts dishing out food and other goodies, it should ring in your mind that the politician is corrupt, and do not deserve your vote;
- Document all promises made during campaigns and use the same to measure the performance of the politician;
- All politicians who only surface during election campaigns and disappear soon after being elected do not deserve your vote

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