

# 2013 Local Elections



## Mozambique political process bulletin

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## Gurué polling stations failed to report attempted ballot box stuffing

At the count of the rerun of the Gurué election on 8 February, observers reported that ballot papers were excluded because they did not come from the correct polling station - and thus were clearly an attempt at ballot box stuffing. But these ballot papers were not reported by polling stations staff and not sent to the National Elections Commission, as required by law.

This newsletter has been pursuing the issue for more than a month, and yesterday the CNE released a letter from Zambézia STAE (Secretariado Técnico de Administração Eleitoral) dated 20 February, more than a month ago. STAE says that there were no reports of such ballot papers being excluded, and notes that this would be required by law.

In order to prevent ballot box stuffing by bringing in ballot papers from outside the polling station, the 2013 electoral law introduced a new procedure. Ballots are in books and are numbered sequentially, with the number also on the stub. (Artigo 76, lei 7/2013)

Then during the counting of the votes, the polling station head (presidente da mesa) takes ballots out of the box, one at a time. The first thing the president does is to read out the number on the ballot paper. If it does not correspond to a stub of one of the books in the polling station, it is put aside. Then there are very specific instructions as to what should be done: "Ballot papers with numbers which were not used in that polling station should be marked with two diagonal lines from one corner to the other, put in a sealed plastic bag, and sent to the National Elections Commission, by way of the district or city elections commission, with a note explaining what occurred."

Failing to do this is a clear violation of the election law and could be punished under various parts of the electoral law, is punished by between six months and two years in jail. (Artigos 206 & 215)

As observers reported that in a least two polling stations there were such ballot papers, and since STAE says no report was made, will the CNE further investigate those polling stations?

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