

2014 National Elections



Mozambique political process bulletin



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New Electoral Observatory head

A mediator/observer to the Renamo-government talks took over Monday as the interim executive director of the Electoral Observatory. He is the Methodist minister Anastácio Chembeze, and it will take all his mediating skills if there is to be adequate observation of the 15 October elections.

The Observatory is a coalition of religious and civil society groups which has observed elections since 2003, and has built up a broad base of observers and experience rooted in local civil society. It observed the November 2013 municipal elections and had 742 observers for registration this year. (see below) It also has done much of the work to run parallel counts (PVTs) which have proven an important check on misconduct, including forcing a re-run of the Gurué municipal election last year.

But a telenovela (soap opera) of conflicts within the Observatory, and particularly within the donor community, brought funding and work largely to a halt at the end of last year. USAID, DfID, and Sweden/Diakonia have backed different people within the observatory and civil society widening the splits - as different donors, now including Canada and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, try to plant their flags, push their pet projects, and back their clients. Some of the conflicts are intensely personal and have overshadowed any concern about observation. Some donors do not want to continue with previous successful PVT and observation systems and despite the short time before elections want to create entirely new systems.

Some donors are now waiting for a long delayed audit, but it is also not clear if they will accept Chembeze as head of the Observatory.

Training and organisation of observers should have started last month, and time is now very short. The Observatory feels it can run an observation if it can start within three weeks. But can Chembeze use his mediating skill to get enough donors to agree? If there is no observation or no PVT, or only rushed ad hoc ones, the only winners will be those who want to steal votes and stuff ballot boxes.

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Praise for registration

The Electoral Observatory generally praised the registration process. Its observers found that "registration posts opened and closed at the correct times" and that "brigades always had the correct number of people". Observers also noted that if people arrived at the end of the day when the registration post was due to close, the brigades also registered anyone who was waiting.

There had been equipment problems early in the registration process, but by the time that the EO began observation, STAE had organised maintenance teams and was able to solve problems in "a reasonable time".

In general, it took each voter 7 to 8 minutes to register. There were usually MDM and Frelimo party delegates. There was a very varied interpretation of the rules on police. In some places, armed police stayed 300 metres away, but unarmed police came much closer and even entered polling stations.

For the period 14 April to 14 May 2014, the EO had 742 observers in the field, distributed in 106 of the 149 districts and municipalities.

This was half the number that had been planned and covered only the final part of the registration period, which had started 15 February. This was because of lack of donor funding, and involved some people working without pay.

A detailed report on the 2009 elections is available, in two parts, on
<http://bit.ly/MozElec2009-1a> and <http://bit.ly/MozElec2009-2>

The Portuguese edition of the Bulletin is more detailed, and can be read on
<http://www.cip.org.mz/election2013/> Some English bulletins cover two Portuguese bulletins and have a double number.

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