



AN ELECTION SITUATION ROOM FOR THE FRESH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

22nd June, 2020

In less than 24 hours, Malawians will go to the polls to elect a President in a court-ordered fresh election. The election comes at a time the world is fighting COVID-19 with emphasis on restrictions of movements of people within countries and across borders.

Consequently, there is little chance of foreign election observer teams observing the election. This highlights the need for enhanced domestic capacity and consolidated synergies through local partnerships for long term and polling day observation of the fresh presidential election.

ELECTION SITUATION ROOM

The ESR that we are launching is a product of a consortium comprising the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) Public Trust, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and a technology and innovation hub, *mHub*.

The Situation Room will track election incidents from all polling centres in real-time and provide intervention support.

The intervention Desk will comprise experts from the Malawi Police Service, the Electoral Commission (MEC), NGO Gender Coordination Network (NGO GCN) and Centre for Multiparty Democracy who will quickly figure out and advise on how to quickly address the issues.

OBSERVATIONS

As we move into the final leg of the election, we have noted the following emerging issues which require the immediate attention of authorities:

1. Security and Logistics

- i. We understand that the Malawi Defense Force (MDF) and Malawi Police officers have been deployed to all centres. However, we have gathered that there are some areas where only Malawi Police officers have been deployed raising concerns on public trust. Noting a need for less allegations of mistrust, we urge a mixed deployment.
- ii. In terms of logistics, we also urge MEC to put in measures that avoid logistical nightmares. We urge the electoral body to avoid congestion in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Lilongwe has 22 constituencies which culminate in 1,291 polling stations. In these areas, we have 6 party officials translating to 7,746 monitors required. This excludes Roving Monitors, Presiding Officers and Constituency Returning Officer.
- iii. Provision of transport for party monitors need to be clarified in advance for fear of excluding Party Monitors in order to ensure transparency during the transportation of the results.

2. Assisted Voters-Voters with different disabilities and the elderly

- i. We also urge MEC officials to put in place functional systems to guarantee that assisted voters are accorded the right to vote in a manner that safeguards their right to privacy. This will ensure inclusion of these vulnerable voters in the electoral process.

3. COVID-19

- i. Since the election is being held in the context of COVID-19, there is great danger of infection among electoral stakeholders – both polling staff and voters. Hence, we urge safety measures for all safety for all. This entails adherence to ministry of health guidelines.

4. Mainstream and Social media

During this period, Malawians need to cautiously consume information and news content. Disinformation, fake news and misinformation about the election are expected to be rampant. We therefore call upon Malawians to rely on credible and verified information from reliable sources and avoid further spread of fake news related to the election.

As we enter the last few hours, we call upon all Malawians to exercise restraint on all matters related to the elections. We urge all stakeholders

to channel their electoral disagreements or disputes to be addressed through established dispute resolution channels. We also reiterate that people should be careful on the reliability and dependability of information they consume on social media or politically biased media.

For more information, contact:

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