

**ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION**

# **ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION ELECTIONS SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN**

For more information contact: The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC)  
Mahachi Quantum Building, Corner Kaguvi & Jason Moyo, P.O. Box 7782, Harare  
Tel: +263-4-774095/759130/779618 Fax: +263-4-781903/770660  
Email: [inquiry@zec.gov.zw](mailto:inquiry@zec.gov.zw) Website: [www.zec.gov.zw](http://www.zec.gov.zw)

# SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

## Pre-election and Election Phases

### 1. PURPOSE

This Social Media Campaign recommends an approach to implementing the use of social media for Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) Voter Education during the Elections phase

### 2. BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Most social media platforms are free to join. Costs to ZEC will be in the form of staff resources required for ZEC to maintain an effective presence, such as posting information and keeping it up to date on the sites and responding to public enquiries in a timely manner. It is proposed that this work will be undertaken by existing staff.

### 3. BACKGROUND

Following the development of a Voter Education Strategy 2017-2020, ZEC developed a voter education campaign for the new Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) system for the registration of eligible voters for the 2018 Harmonised Elections. Currently ZEC is implementing a voter education campaign for the pre-election and election phases. ZEC's main method of communications is via newspapers, radio, television and website. There is need for ZEC to harness the effective use of its online presence on social media platforms to reach a wider audience

#### 3.1 ZEC Online

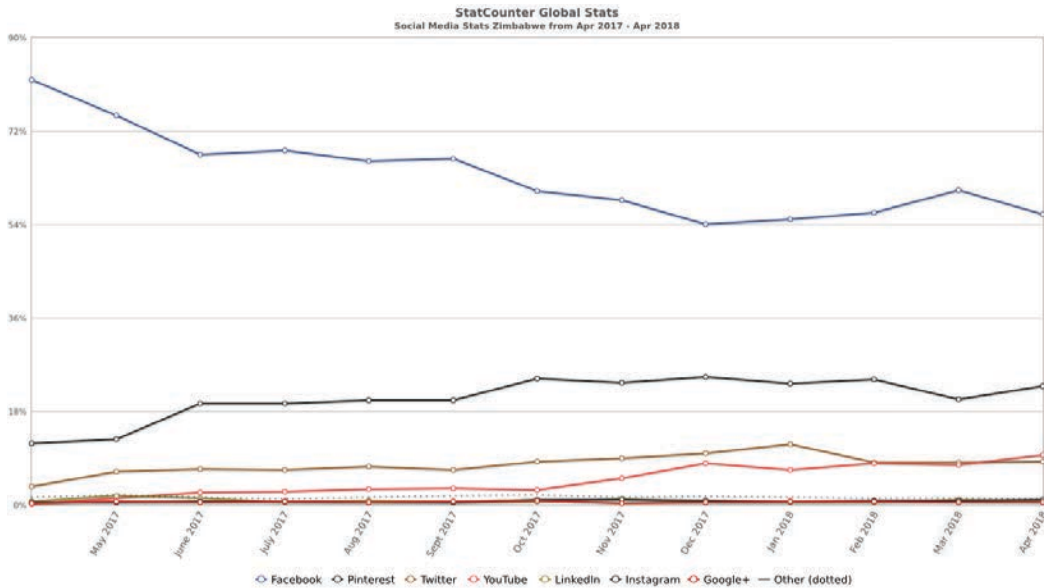
ZEC's online presence currently consists of an official website and Facebook and Twitter page. Although the website can be kept up to date, it is not considered as flexible as social media in responding to specific questions or enquiries from the public, and does not have the less formal tone of social media that can better engage the public. The relevant social media platforms considered for ZEC in this strategy are Facebook and Twitter. Facebook is still the leading social media network and continues to grow. Statistically, Facebook attracts roughly seven times the engagement that Twitter does but it is a great tool to provide links to current news or updates, events and other current information. Overall, social media will allow ZEC to have more control over its brand and will be able to promote not just the elections campaign but also its voter education, publications, videos, forums, website and more.

### 4. INTRODUCTION

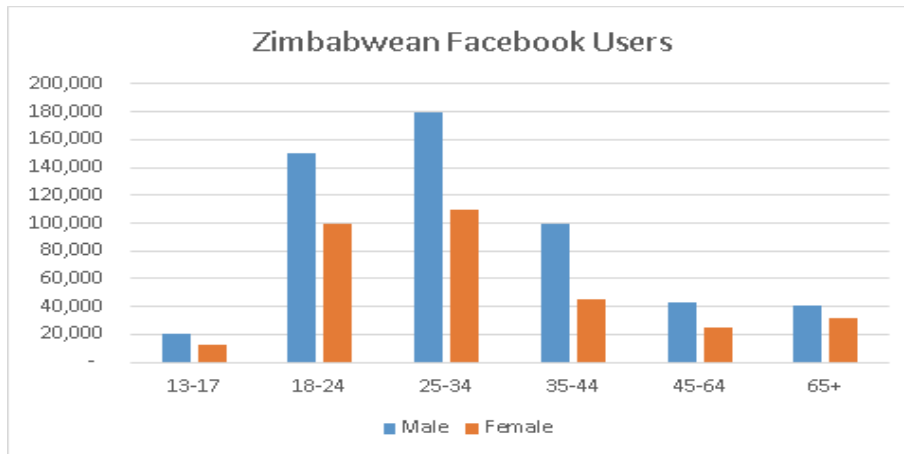
#### 4.1 What is social media?

Social media means web or mobile-based platforms where people may comment, contribute, create, post, upload and share content, including:

- Blogs and micro blogging sites (e.g. Twitter)
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace)
- Instant messaging facilities (WhatsApp, WeChat)
- Video and photo sharing sites (e.g. YouTube)
- Forums and discussion boards.



6.7 million people use the internet in Zimbabwe. 98% of those people in Zimbabwe browse the internet via a smartphone and with every mobile service provider offering Facebook and Twitter bundles, the potential for information dissemination is high. There are currently over 830,000 users on Facebook alone who have set their location to be resident in Zimbabwe. The social network is largely used by 18-34 year olds with the bulk of those being male (62.64%).



Social media plays an increasingly important role in the field of voter information to reach voters and in particular the youth demographic. It is also a cost-effective tool in voter education efforts designed to ensure voters are well informed and can effectively exercise their voting rights.

## 5. Benefits

For ZEC, social media has the potential benefits of:

- Increasing exposure and visibility;
- Increasing transparency and accessibility;
- Expanding sources for credible information;
- Engagement with new audiences;
- Improving search ranking;
- Growing partnerships;
- Reducing marketing expenses; and
- Providing demographic insight

## 6. RISK ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Risks of using social media

Some of the possible risks and barriers to using social media are:

- Potential for negative comments from people
- Losing control of communication message
- Staff divulging confidential information
- Lack of expertise and staff skills in using social media effectively and professionally
- Pressure on resourcing and workloads of staff
- Raising community expectations to a level ZEC cannot meet

### 6.2 Risks of non-participation

Online users are communicating in real time and every brand in the world is being caught up in the conversation whether they are participating or not. The public increasingly expects official bodies and institutions to have an active online presence. Getting some control in the conversation to make sure that a brand is being promoted in a positive and effective way, it is imperative to the success of the Voter Education campaign to embrace and engage the on-going social media conversation. To do that effectively, implementation of a campaign that is based on the best ways to harness the social Web is necessary in order to spread the word about the campaign in the way that best reflects the key messages. By not taking an active role on social media, there are risks of incorrect information spreading and losing credibility:

- Stakeholders will reach the intended audience and without your participation, capture the public's awareness whether the information is correct or not.
- Non-participation is rapidly being seen as meaning you do not care about your audience. Gaining the public trust is critical to sustaining credibility.
- The conversation will happen about you, whether you are involved or not. If you are not involved, you cannot exercise any influence or control over the way you are perceived.

There are a number of risks for the organization that the use of social media may help to address:

Risk factor	Social media may help by:
Negative posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addressing negative comments directly, rather than deleting or hiding them, is the best way for ZEC to remain transparent. (if certain posts are obscene or insulting, or pose a threat to public order, they should be removed as quickly as possible. So too should posts that compromise the neutrality of ZEC or which encourage illegal behaviour, promote commercial interests or violate the privacy of others.)</li> </ul>
Poor customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrating accessibility, listening and responding to questions and what is being said about ZEC</li> </ul>
ZEC appears to be disengaged from the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking and improving current relationships through more frequent and better quality contact</li> <li>Providing a tool for community consultation that doesn't require physical attendance and travel</li> </ul>
Lack of credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing information that is important and desirable to the public</li> <li>Building trust through prompt, open and authentic communications</li> </ul>
Unfavourable media articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immediate correction of misunderstandings or misrepresentation in the media or "grapevine"</li> </ul>
Inability to reach all stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing an instant and interactive alternative for community members who may not use print media or website</li> <li>Potentially reaching a broader audience than traditional post bulletins.</li> </ul>

## 7. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

### 7.1 Objectives

1. Synergising ZECs online presence
2. Increase reach of election campaign content to eligible voters with focus on youth demographic

### 7.2 Key messages

The following key messages will be used for the election campaign:

- Our Zimbabwe, our responsibility
- Our vote, our country
- My vote, my future
- I vote, I care
- I vote, I love Zimbabwe
- My vote, my secret
- Her vote, her choice

### 7.3 Content

ZEC's Facebook and Twitter presence should be used like any other communication channel; to provide useful and relevant information to eligible voters and stakeholders.

Procedures should be developed to provide guidance and consistency on content and in particular, style, amount of detail, and the particular platform either facebook or twitter.

The procedures should also set out when or if an approval process should apply to the content that is added to the Facebook or Twitter page. Approval complexity should be appropriate for the content level (e.g. "one-liners" pointing to a website link may not need approval if the website page is already approved and uploaded, but a statement of ZEC's direction or seeking comment on a matter may need higher approval).

Time-specific content should be posted at the relevant time, such as:

- Day of polling
- Locations of polling stations and times of opening
- TV or radio programs or interviews
- Public notices or announcements

Ad-hoc content will be posted whenever appropriate, and there will be a focus on responding to any comments or posts on the Page. The chance for real and meaningful engagement on a range of topics is one of the biggest benefits and distinctions of social media. Ad-hoc content could include:

- links to positive stories about ZEC and the election phase campaigns in the media
- links to the website when press releases are issued, or when any new documents/forms become available online
- Reminders
- Promotion of events, roadshows or television shows.
- Links to helpful resources

### **7.3.1 Response times**

The social media site should be actively monitored 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday, and all comments should be responded to within 48 hours. ZEC should post on Facebook and Twitter a minimum of 2 - 3 times a week. This will keep information relevant and avoid overwhelming Likers. However, there should be staff available each day during working hours that are able to post material on the site, in case of urgent ad hoc communications needs.

### **7.3.2 How much information**

Generic responses to audience questions can be made on the Facebook site, e.g. polling station hours –with a reference to the website link for details. More specific or complex enquiries should be handled offsite. The administrator should notify the relevant department for action and respond to the enquirer that their question has been forwarded to ZEC staff for a direct response.

### **7.3.3. Content removal**

The staff member responsible for the social media site must monitor the posts and comments posted on the social media sites and remove anything which breaches the **Comment Policy**(Annex 1). If content is removed the following details about the post must be recorded and stored in ZEC's record management system:

- post content
- author's name
- date and time
- name of the social media site
- web address of the social media page
- screen print/screenshot of the comment

## 8. Monitoring

ZEC may also be mentioned on other people's social media sites, and it must decide whether to monitor these occurrences and respond to comments. This will require extra time and resources in addition to maintaining its own site, however, it would provide other avenues for engaging and communicating with the public.

External organisations and other tools (Google Alerts, Social Mention Trackur) can be used to continually monitor third party social media sites, which reduces the time by ZEC staff for this task.

## 9. Implementation Plan

Content generated from the Election campaign portfolio materials should be shared with users. From there, ZEC can begin a schedule of updates that follow stages that can guide the dissemination of materials for the updates.

This implementation plan is a guide to all necessary actions to achieve the objectives of the communications plan. The plan takes into account the target audience, key messages and most appropriate tools for communications.

### 9.1 Best Practices

The key points for social media engagement are flexibility, transparency and swiftness of response.

For Facebook and Twitter:

- Share a mix of relevant links, engaging content, videos, and polls
- Make sure you promote upcoming events and create them in the events tab
- 1 post 2-3 times a week
- Engage with influencers
- Always include an image or video when possible. Eye-catching visuals are one of the only things that can cause a user to pause while scrolling through their newsfeed.
- Hashtags are not utilized the same way on Facebook as they are on Twitter. If you do choose to use hashtags on Facebook, keep it to one overall, and know that you will likely be the only one using it to keep track of and refer back to your content, unless you are using a hashtag that is currently trending.
- Always include a link in your content that takes users somewhere you want them to go. If a link is taking up too much space, use Google's URLshortener to make it easier to share. You can also use this service to track how many people have clicked on your link.
- Keep your message simple and clear for your audience to know the key messages you are highlighting (e.g. voting is polling station specific; Date of polling; operation hours...)
- Posting/sharing videos; Advertisements (Basic information on the who, what, where, and why's register); Infomercials; demonstrations; Testimonials; and Interviews

### 9.2 Crisis management

It is important to have a crisis management policy in place from the beginning. Bad press spreads fast, but if your organization is active in social media, you can take control, contain it and counter it. By having a clear point person who is actively monitoring the social media sites, you will be able to execute a clear chain of response. The response should be the same from everyone in your organization who is participating.

Each crisis is unique. They can stem from non-social media channels and you should look for opportunity in the crisis. Very often, based on your response, you can turn negative press into opportunities to engage new audiences and also use it to renew your message to prevent future occurrences. Respond quickly and engage your audience as soon as possible, with a well thought out answer.

The posts on social media platforms should seek to portray ZEC in a positive light, but with due regard to the principle of honesty and openness. Often, where being questioned about events that may suggest a failure to live up to the principles and goals, the best approach is to concede that this has occurred and to talk about the determination to meet these goals through improved management of the situation. This is normally the best approach. Prior to engagement with audiences on social media platforms, think about examples of best practice in the area concerned and try and find opportunities to put these across (without appearing to answer questions which are not asked or defending the indefensible).

**Annex 2** contains an example of guidance for when to respond to posts on other sites that relate to ZEC’s Election campaign.

## 10. Matrix of Activities

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>PLATFORM</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIME PERIOD</b>
<b>APPROVE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY</b>		Commission	2 weeks
<b>ADVERTISE THE AVAILABILITY OF THESE PLATFORMS FOR USE</b>	Website, Radio & TV	Voter Education	Throughout campaign period
<b>DISSEMINATE CAMPAIGN MESSAGES ACCORDING TO THE PRE-APPROVED WEEKLY GUIDE</b>	All platforms	Voter Education/IT	Throughout campaign period



## 11. Social Media Platform Weekly Guide

**Day**                      **Status update (example)**

**Week 1 (General)**

**Monday**

The day is approaching for your choice to be counted. DON'T STAY HOME!, go out and vote.

[Link to polling process flyer/poster]



*Our vote,  
our country* Dial \*265#

**Wednesday**

Be part of democracy, go out and vote in the upcoming harmonized elections. Dial \*265# for more details

[Link to polling process flyer/poster]



*Our vote,  
our country* Dial \*265#

**Friday**

Every vote matters! Make sure your vote is counted.

[Link to polling process flyer/poster]



*I vote,  
I love Zimbabwe*

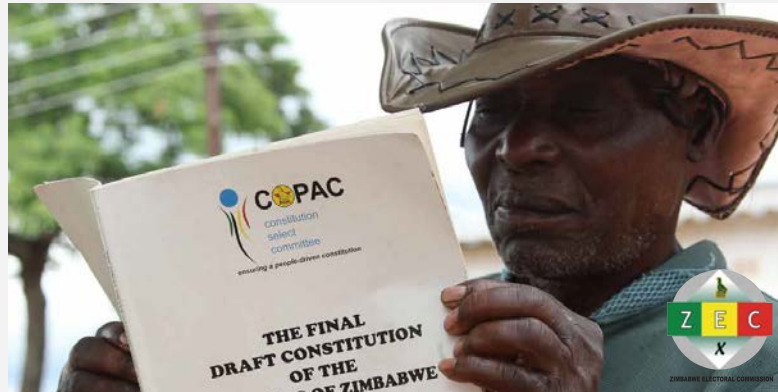
**Dial \*265#**

## Week 2 (elderly)

**Monday**

We should all play our part. Vote in the upcoming harmonized elections.

[Link to polling process flyer/poster]



*I vote,  
I care*

**Dial \*265#**

**Wednesday**

If you require assistance when voting, you may bring someone 18+ years to help you. Find out more –

[Link to assisted voting flyer]



*I vote,  
I love Zimbabwe*

**Dial \*265#**

**Friday**

Let us help with the polling process, priority will be given to the elderly at polling stations. Dial \*265# for more details

[link to polling process]



*My vote,  
my secret* Dial \*265#

## Week 3 (PWDs)

### Monday

When at the polling station, if you require assistance, ZEC officers are there to help. Priority is given to people with disabilities at polling stations.

[Link to brochure]



*I vote,  
I care*

**Dial \*265#**

### Wednesday

Priority is given to people with disabilities and the elderly in the queue.

[Link to polling process]



*I vote,  
I care*

**Dial \*265#**

**Friday**

We are all represented in a democracy, vote and have your choice counted.

[link to brochure]



*Our vote,  
our right,  
our country*

**Dial \*265#**

## Week 4 (Women)

**Monday**

Priority is given to pregnant women and nursing mothers at polling stations. Let nothing stop you from going to the polling station. SMS \*265# for more details

[link to polling process]



*Her vote,  
her choice,  
her secret* Dial \*265#

**Wednesday**

Only you decide who you want to vote for. Show up on polling day and make your choice.

[link to the polling process]



*Her vote,  
her choice,  
her secret* Dial \*265#

**Friday**

Only you will know who you have voted for. Your vote is your secret.

[link to brochure]



*My vote,  
my secret*

**Dial \*265#**



## Week 5 (Youth)

**Monday**

Don't be left out! Vote in the 2018 harmonised elections and make your mark.

[link to advert video]



*Our vote,  
our country*

**Dial \*265#**

**Wednesday**

Every vote counts. Be counted during the 2018 harmonized elections and be part of democracy.

[link to advert video]



*I vote,  
I care*

**Dial \*265#**

**Friday**

Voting starts in [#of days] Make sure you make your mark.  
Dial \*265# for more details  
[link to flyer/poster]



*My vote,  
my future*

**Dial \*265#**

## Week 6 (Polling days)

**Monday**

Are you ready to vote? Have your valid national ID and be ready to go to your polling station on 30 July

[link to list of polling stations]



**Dial \*265#**



**Tuesday**

OUR ZIMBABWE, OUR RESPONSIBILITY. Let us go and vote on 30 July  
Dial \*265# for more details



**Dial \*265#**



Wednesday

Casting your vote is a simple process. If you need any help or have questions at the polling station, a Polling Officer is happy to help.

[link to steps poster/flyer]



- 1 Upon arrival at the Polling Station join the queue.
- 2 Present your valid national identification documents. Your fingers will be checked for indelible ink.
- 3 Your name will be checked on the voters roll to confirm that you are a registered voter. Your name will be crossed out to indicate that you have come for voting.
- 4 You will receive three coloured ballots for the President, National Assembly and Councillor.
- 5 Your small left finger will be marked with indelible ink. In case of any disability the next finger in order will be marked.
- 6 In the booth, secretly mark your ballot paper for your preferred candidate with an X.
- 7 Fold your ballot papers and place them in the corresponding coloured ballot boxes. You may leave the Polling Station.

Priority will be given to people with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women and nursing mothers at polling stations.

Your Vote is Your Secret



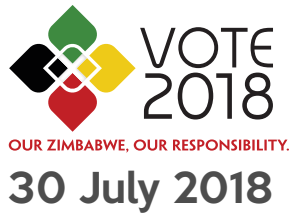
For more information contact:  
**The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC)**  
Tel: +263-4-774095/759130/779618  
Email: [inquiry@zec.org.zw](mailto:inquiry@zec.org.zw)  
Website: [www.zec.org.zw](http://www.zec.org.zw)

**Dial \*265#**  
**Toll Free Call Centre:**  
Econet: **08080265**  
NetOne: **08010265**  
Telecel: **265**

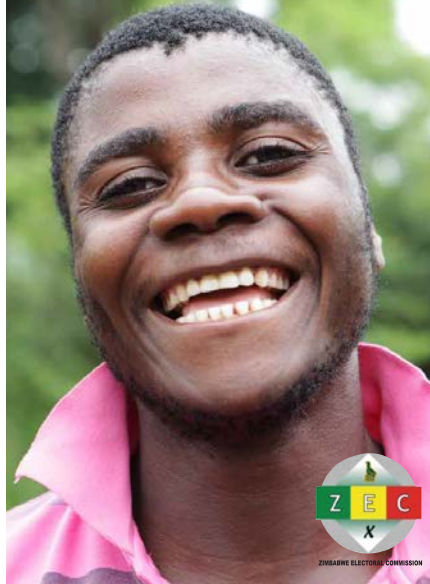
**Thursday**

Voting is an expression of FREEDOM. Go and vote on [polling days] Dial \*265# for more details

[link to polling stations]



**Dial \*265#**



**Friday**

Elections are for everyone! Vote on 30 July  
Dial \*265# for more details

[link to polling process]



**Dial \*265#**



## Week 7(Polling days)

**Monday**

Make sure you National ID is valid! That is all you will need to exercise your right to vote.

[link to advert video]



**Dial \*265#**



**Tuesday**

See you at your polling station. Make sure you know where you are voting by confirming your polling station

[link to polling stations]



**Dial \*265#**



**Wednesday**

Be in the line before 7pm and you are guaranteed to vote on 30 July.

[link to advert video]

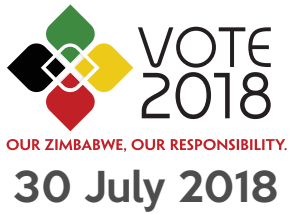


An infographic with a dashed border containing three main sections. The top section is a yellow rounded rectangle with a calendar icon and the text "The 2018 Harmonised Elections will take place on: 30 July 2018". The middle section is a red rounded rectangle with a clock icon and the text "7am - 7pm on the day of polling". The bottom section is a green rounded rectangle with a document icon and the text "Bring any of the following: a metal or synthetic ID, a Waiting Pass with an original photograph or a Valid Zimbabwe Passport". At the bottom right of the infographic, the text "Dial \*265#" is written in red.

**Thursday**

FIRST TIME VOTERS! See you at the polling stations, just bring your valid national ID THAT'S IT!

[link to advert video]



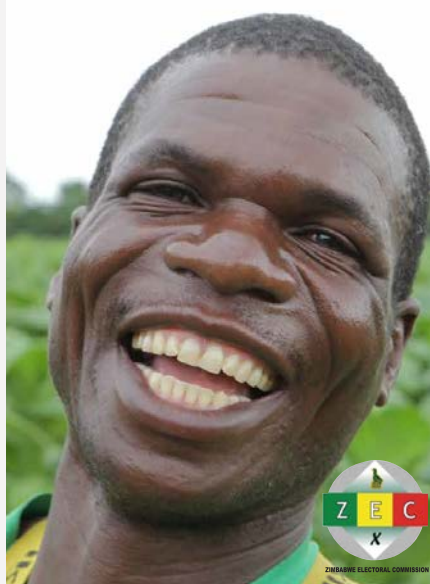
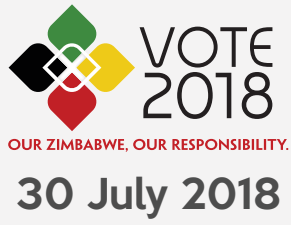
**Dial \*265#**



**Friday**

TIME TO VOTE! See you at your polling stations and remember if you have any questions or require assistance a Polling Officer is there to help. SMS \*265# for more details

[link to advert video]



**Dial \*265#**

**Profile picture**





## 12. Additional Outreach Messaging – Bulk SMS

SMSs can also be sent to all registered voters as reminders and incentive to go out and vote on the polling day. Possible text messages that can be sent to the electorate are:

1. Your vote matters. On 30 July 2018 vote at your polling station. Dial \*265# for details
2. The time to vote is here! 30 July 2018. Be a part of Zimbabwe's democracy. Dial \*265# for details
3. Our Zimbabwe, our responsibility - Dial \*265# for details to vote on 30 July 2018.
4. Your vote, vote choice! Take your National ID or valid Zimbabwe passport on 30 July 2018 to your polling station. Dial \*265# for details.
5. 2018 Harmonised Elections - 30 July 2018 at your polling station. Dial \*265# for details. Let's vote in peace.
6. Cast your vote between 7am to 7pm on 30 July 2018 by bringing your valid ID to your polling station. Dial \*265# for details.
7. Your vote, your secret 🤫 Vote on 30 July 2018. Dial \*265# for details
8. Be a proud Zimbabwean - vote in peace on 30 July 2018 between 7am-7pm at your polling station. Dial \*265# for details.
9. Voting is your right as Zimbabwean. Vote on 30 July 2018 from 7am to 7pm at your polling station. Dial \*265# for details. Our Zimbabwe, our responsibility!

## Annex 1. Comment policy

Comments must be addressed as soon as possible, including thanking the user for participating and any additional content that may be needed.

If the comment is inappropriate or irrelevant, Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) would respond in a polite fashion, linking information or redirecting the user to other websites which may provide an adequate response, if necessary. A standard template response would be prepared to respond to users making inappropriate comments. All posts and comments by ZEC should link back to its website, where relevant, for accurate and more detailed information.

A disclaimer and acceptable use statement must be clearly stated on the social media site, such as:

### Disclaimer

The official Zimbabwe Electoral Commission page for Voter Education is operated and managed by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. The contents of the reply posts do not represent ZEC's official views and no liability is accepted for the content. For clarification on any content please email [inquiry@zec.gov.zw](mailto:inquiry@zec.gov.zw)

### Acceptable Use Statement

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission reserves the right to remove content that violates our Social Media Policy or any associated policy. Materials authored or posted are subject to public disclosure. Please read our Social Media Acceptable Use statement.

When committing your views to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission social media site please ensure that you:

- post material which relates to the topic of the site or discussion
- post material which is not deliberately misleading
- present your own views and do not impersonate or falsely represent any other person
- protect your personal and others privacy by not disclosing personal information such as names, email addresses, phone numbers or private addresses
- are not abusive, discriminatory, harassing or threatening to others
- do not use obscene, offensive, provocative or defamatory language or concepts
- do not violate any copyright laws. Copyrighted materials can only be used if you have written permission from the owner
- obtain written permission from any person identifiable in any imagery prior to posting it
- do not use your post to promote any commercial business or corporation
- do not post comments which promote or encourage illegal activity.

### Content removal

ZEC reserves the right to remove inappropriate content, and block the user from the social media site.

The following content is not permitted and will be removed from ZEC social media sites:

- profane language or content
- sexual content or links to sexual content excluding material relating to sexual health
- content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation
- commercial solicitations or transactions – this does not apply to the business-to-business activities of ZEC
- copyright or ownership protected materials
- content not relating to the subject matter of the social media site
- material designed to encourage or conduct illegal activities
- material which could compromise the safety of ZEC, its employees or its technical systems
- spam (the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages)

ZEC reserves the right to remove any content which violates this Acceptable Use Statement.

## Annex 2. Example Response Decision Tree

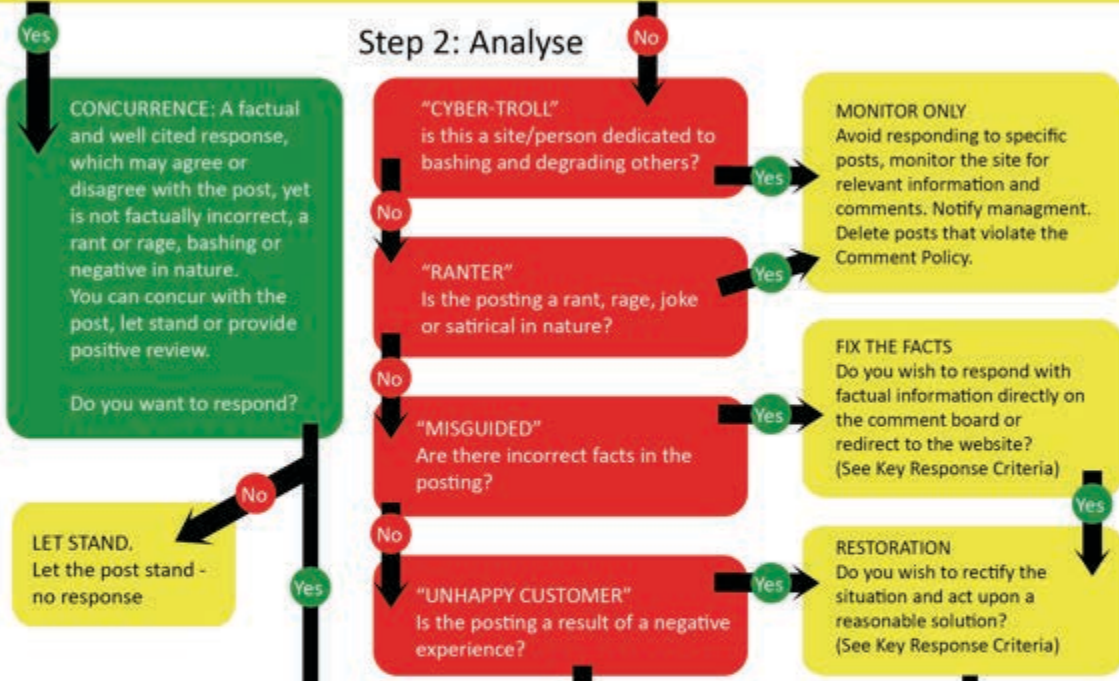
# Social Media Response Guide

A guide to responding to online comments and opinions\*

### Step 1: Listen

(constantly monitor online conversation)

A staff member finds a web posting or comment on the commission or voter education material.  
Is the post appropriate and relevant?



### Step 3: Respond

**SHARE SUCCESS**  
Do you wish to proactively share your story and the commissions' point of view  
(See Key Response Criteria)

**FINAL ASSESSMENT**  
Write a response for exceptional circumstances.  
Will you respond?

### KEY RESPONSE CRITERIA

<p><b>TIMELINESS</b> Report web posting early and analyse immediately. Take time to create a good response. Clear with appropriate departments.</p>	<p><b>TRANSPARENCY</b> Use appropriate staff to respond in the name of the commission (if using personalised accounts)</p>	<p><b>CONSISTENCY</b> Your response should be consistent with the key messages of the campaign, values of the commission, its brand and overall mission.</p>	<p><b>SOURCING</b> Cite your sources by including hyperlinks, video, images or other references.</p>	<p><b>FOCUS</b> Focus on posting that are most likely to influence your stakeholders (voters, partners etc)</p>
---	--	--	--	---

Adapted from Symphony 3 Social Media Response Guide initially adopted from US Airforce Response Policy