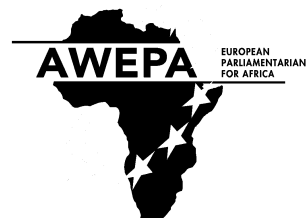


# Mozambique political process bulletin



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# Equipment failures cause major registration problems

Widespread problems with registration are reported by our correspondents throughout the country. By last weekend, registration had still not started in some places. Election officials blame outside contractors, plus their own delayed planning and poor conservation of computer equipment.

Registration is done with a neat system which fits in a briefcase. It has a camera and fingerprint reader, computer for data input (now being called the “móbil ID”), and a printer to produce voters cards with picture, fingerprint, voters number, and other details. The card is then sealed in plastic. But one or another part of the system collapsed in many places – computers, batteries and generators did not work, and the plastic to seal the cards was not delivered.

João Leopoldo da Costa, president of the National Elections Commission (CNE), stresses that the CNE expected to register fewer than 500,000 people, and thus the six week registration period should provide sufficient time, even if registration brigades were unable to work for some periods. But this ignores the reality that where people walked a long distance to reach a registration post, only to find it not operating, they are unlikely to return.

Registration started on 15 June and ends Wednesday 29 July.

## ***CNE & contractors share the blame***

Failures by Mozambican contractors, old equipment, late planning by STAE, and improper storage of computer systems combined to create the registration problems, claim election officials.

The system was used for the registration campaigns in 2007 and 2008, in dusty and hot conditions, which meant some equipment was already in poor condition. Speaking to diplomats, CNE President João Leopoldo admitted that the

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## **Our journalists confirm closed registration posts**

We asked our correspondents to look at registration throughout the country, and they found widespread problems, with many registration posts closed for long periods. They also found evidence to support many of the complaints made by Renamo.

Nampula seems typical. Our correspondent Luis Rodrigues was in Murrupula on 14 and 15 July and

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## **CNE & contractors share the blame**

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equipment had been badly stored, according to *Notícias* (22 July). In an interview with the *Bulletin*, operations manager Mário Ernesto added that because of municipal elections, officials did not have time to think about registration until January, which did not leave enough time.

Escopil Internacional has had the technical assistance contract since 2007, with the support of a South Africa company, Face Technologies. Escopil has its own technicians in the provinces and has trained STAE technicians in the districts, Ernesto said. Escopil and Face are also involved in the Mozambican driving license and motor vehicle registration systems.

Escopil checked and approved some of the equipment, but Ernesto admits that because of the late start, Escopil did not have time to check all of the registration computers in the provinces. But it soon discovered problems with the batteries. This is not surprising. Laptop computer batteries rarely have a guarantee of more than one year, and if the computers are in storage for long periods, as was the case with the registration computers, then the batteries need special treatment, including periodic recharging. This was probably not done, and it seems unrealistic to have expected the batteries to work this year.

Escopil said it would take three months to obtain the batteries, but, Ernesto admits, by that time only two months was available. It was also decided to buy 1000 new generators to charge the batteries of registration teams who were not near an electricity supply. That contract was put out to tender, and won by a Mozambican firm, Hidro-máquinas. But it had only supplied 400 by the time the CNE was forced to cancel the contract.

In addition, there were software problems. Ernesto said that the software had been rewritten this year. Dr Leopoldo told the donors that one new problem was that sometimes if incorrect data was entered, the computer locked, and only Escopil staff had the password to unlock the computer.

Ernesto argues that the worst problems were only in the first two weeks, but as the adjoining article shows, our correspondents found that serious problems are continuing.

### **Further material on the web:**

Our interview with Mário Ernesto:

<http://www.eleicoes2009.cip.org.mz>

*Notícias* article on João Leopoldo da Costa:

<http://www.jornalnoticias.co.mz/pls/notimz2/getxml/pt/contentx/839908>

Face Technologies: <http://www.face.co.za>

Escopil Internacional: <http://www.escopil.co.mz/>

## **Our journalists confirm closed registration posts**

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visited seven registration posts, none of which was operating. Post 454 (Mulhaniua) had never opened because the computer did not work. The other six had functioned for less than a week and run out of plastic covers for the voters cards, and had not operated since (634 Nihessiue, 434 Muchelelene, 450 Naha, 448 Chacalua, 435 Namipissá, 442 Napuco). Correspondent Julio Paulino went to Mogincual, Nampula, on 15 July. He found that in the district there were 17 generators and battery chargers, but only 7 generators actually worked. All five registration posts he visited had not operated for more than two weeks, due to generator and computer problems and lack of plastic for cards (post 270 Chasseleman, 271 Mula, 272 Naminami, 278 Nozica, and 274 Nota). District STAE director Alfredo Macário admitted that computer problems meant that registration posts in Capitão Mora, Novera, Naminane e Naquira had not been working for three weeks. In Nampula city on 17 July, 11 registration posts were functioning only irregularly because of printer problems.

But even in Murrupula, the picture was mixed; three brigades had successfully finished their tasks in towns and had moved out to rural areas. And there seems no political bias in Nampula; both Murrupula and Mogincual voted for President Armando Guebuza in 2004 and several of the non-functioning registration posts are in overwhelmingly Frelimo zones.

But Renamo has been particularly outspoken in its criticism of registration. Furthermore, Renamo is often criticised for being vague and not giving details or evidence. So our correspondents asked Renamo provincial offices to identify problem areas – which they did.

In Manica, Renamo complained particularly about lack of registration in Goi-Goi in Mussorize district. Renamo had gained 95% of the votes there in 2004 and thus was anxious to maximize registration and turnout. Our correspondent André Catueira visited Goi-Goi and found that registration had only begun on 6 July because of the late delivery of the computer; registration brigade 152 had been sitting there for three weeks, doing nothing. In Docata, also in Mussorize, brigade 151 was working, but with difficulty because it only had one battery which had to be sent 35 km to Espungabera to be recharged. Brigade 270 in Mucheneze opened on schedule but closed after the first day because the battery failed; registration only restarted a month later, on 16 July. But brigade 150 in Mupengo had registered 1500 people despite computer problems. Brigades 150, 151, and 152 are

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Elections 2009 (English):

<http://www.elections2009.cip.org.mz>

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Boletim Sobre o Processo Político (Português):

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Back issues of the Bulletin are also available in English and in Portuguese on:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/mozamb>

supposed to be mobile brigades moving to other villages in this staunchly Renamo zone, but by 16 July, two weeks before the finish of registration, had been unable to do this.

In Tete, Angonia district gave 55% to Dhlakama and 37% to Guebuza, but Ndaula localidade gave 81% to Dhlakama and only 13% to Guebuza. When our correspondent arrived on 18 July, five weeks after the official start of registration, none of the four brigades assigned to Nduala had started work and no one had been registered, because of various computer problems. Indeed, each of the brigades had only two people present, plus a member of the police. In Chiritse two members of the brigade had been arrested for threatening members of the public. In Catondo, a nearby Renamo area, registration had also not started. Pedrito Conselho, head of the observers for the Christian Council, said that only five of 40 brigades in Angonia were functioning.

In Niassa, Renamo had cited Ngauma as a problem area, and our correspondent visited there, finding that all five registration brigades had begun work in the first week, and were continuing to register people. But an odd problem had occurred – voters cards were being issued with the wrong photograph. Staff said they could not correct the problem and issue new cards because of lack of materials. It is unclear if people will be allowed to vote if their card has the wrong picture. In neighbouring Mandimba district, the district director of STAE said five brigades were not able to work.

In Nicoadala district, Zambézia, Renamo president Afonso Dhlakama had a slight majority in 2004, and thus it will be closely contested in provincial elections. Renamo alleged that in some more rural parts of Nicoadala where its majorities in 2004 had been much greater, registration had not started. Our correspondent confirmed that registration in the zones cited by Renamo only began between 12 and 16 July, and STAE district director Magalhães Manuel admitted that there had been problems obtaining parts for the computers. Elsewhere in Nicoadala our correspondent found brigades paralysed because of computer breakdowns, batteries, and lack of materials.

In neighbouring Namacurra district, of 33 brigades, 26 began work during the first week, and others started later, the last on 12 July. But all 33 have reported constant breakdowns.

In Cabo Delgado, both Montepuez and Mocimboa da Praia are divided and fiercely contested. Our correspondent reports that in Montepuez all registration teams are functioning, but forced to close early when the computer battery runs out. But in Mocimboa da Praia one of two mobile brigades has never been able to start registration.

And in Bándua, Buzi district, Sofala, the battery problem has been solved in an unusual way. Brigades 63 and 64 share a battery; each brigade keeps it for three days, then passes it to the other. The is a fiercely Renamo area – Dhlakama won 10 times as many votes as Guebuza in 2004 – and Renamo complains that having brigades sit for three days simply turning people away is putting off its supporters.

## **Comment**

# **Renamo fumbles the ball again, but real problems remain**

Local elections last year highlighted a series of issues that could and should have been resolved by parliament before national elections this year:

- Polling station officials spoiling ballots for Renamo.
  - Ballot papers brought in from outside the polling station.
  - Overly complex complaints procedures which make it impossible to object to a violation if the polling station president refuses to accept the protest.
  - Police too close to polling stations.
  - Senior Frelimo party officials serving as “independent” observers.
- But attempts to solve these real problems have failed due to a mix of political manoeuvres by Frelimo, which has no real interest in change, and incompetence by Renamo, where thinking has not moved on in a decade.

Renamo remains genuinely convinced about two key strategies. The first is the power of the veto – if it refuses to permit discussion or action, it can force key concessions. This was highly effective in the post-war period, when it was essential to keep Renamo on board. But it now leads to Renamo being bypassed and gaining nothing. Renamo prevented an ad hoc parliamentary committee from discussing election law changes in 2005, but instead of gaining the concessions it wanted on the CNE, the process was abandoned, and new laws pushed through by the Frelimo majority in parliament.

The second strategy is based on the belief that the best way to catch Frelimo tricks is to have more Renamo people watching, and acting specifically in the interests of their party. This led to the politicisation of the electoral institutions for the 2003 and 2004 elections, which proved unsuccessful and was widely criticised by observers. Elections are now run by more non-partisan structures.

Renamo's proposals this year called for a new ad hoc parliamentary commission to consider election laws and a return to the politicised election structures of the past. Both had already been shown to be failures, and Renamo's proposals won no support from civil society, election experts, or more open people within Frelimo. This made it easy for Frelimo in parliament to marginalise the proposals and delay discussion until it was too late – supported by Renamo which showed no interest in pushing the few changes from which might really have benefitted.

This was emphasized by Renamo pushing hard, right up to the final votes, a proposal to allow six Renamo party delegates and alternates into each polling station for elections this year. Renamo already has trouble finding a pair of qualified people for each polling station, and would surely have difficulties finding six. A much more realistic view was taken at the Renamo Congress in Nampula earlier this week (20-21 July), which stressed the need to improve the training of the delegates to avoid fraud.

Renamo's election and registration monitoring has improved considerably. In 2004 and 2008 elections, many of its reports of misconduct were clear, detailed and accurate. As our main article shows, it has also correctly identified areas where registration is not being carried out. And it has highlighted a series of genuine problems around polling stations, which need discussion and resolution. But it then threw away any chance to resolve these problems by wrapping its proposals in bombast and pressing for vetos and politicisation of the electoral system which are not acceptable to anyone. Yet again, Renamo has failed to act in its own best interest. But the concrete problems remain; perhaps after this year's election, civil society should look more closely at ways to improve the electoral law, and then lobby parliament for useful changes.

*Joseph Hanlon*

## Local parties reject big Frelimo names

Frelimo's list of candidates for parliament (Assembleia da República) has some surprises. Provincial parties have chosen their own people, and notable figures, including some supported by President Armando Guebuza, have not gained places.

Each of the 10 provinces plus Maputo city are electoral constituencies, and in each the local party chooses the list of candidates, with the Frelimo Political Commission only selecting those who head the lists. There is a quota system – 40% of candidates must be new, and of that 40% half must be distributed as 20% youth, 20% from the women's organisation OMM, and 10% veterans.

All electoral lists must have as many candidates as there are seats in that province, plus an extra 50% as possible substitutes (*suplentes*). If a member of parliament dies, resigns, or temporarily leaves to take a post such as minister, then the next person on the list takes the place, and when the list is exhausted, replacements come from the list of substitutes. Except in Maputo and Gaza, where Frelimo wins nearly all seats, it is highly unusual for a substitute to actually occupy a seat in parliament.

Among the surprises, in the city of Maputo three prominent figures are only on the list as substitutes: António Hama Thai, liberation war veteran, former defence minister, and former first secretary of Frelimo in Maputo; Maria Virgília Videira, a member of the AR since 1994 and head of the parliamentary plan and budget commission; Esperança Bias, Minister of Minerals and Energy; and Edgar Cossa, Frelimo party spokesman in parliament 1999-2004. António Frangoulis did not win a place on the list.

In Tete, the director general of the Zambeze Valley Office, Sérgio Vieira, and the provincial governor, Idelfonso Muanatata, did not win places, even as substitutes.

In Cabo Delgado, governor Eliseu Machava and first secretary Virgílio Mateus withdrew and were not voted on by the party. Vice-Minister of Agriculture Catarina Pajune only obtained 3 votes from 59 party electors at the session and is not on the list. The present spokesman of the Frelimo parliamentary bench, Feliciano Mata, is only a substitute.

In Gaza, Francisco Brás Mulhanga, who headed the list in the 2004 election and is now a member of the parliament's Permanent Commission, did not gain enough votes to even stand as a substitute. In Inhambane, Raquel Damião, previous national secretary of the teachers organisation, did not win a place on the list. In Niassa, Governor Arnaldo Vicente Ferrão Bimbe is only on the list as a substitute.

The results of the internal elections suggest that party members at the base have rejected some people apparently supported by the President and

party leadership, such as the governors of Niassa and Tete and the Minerals Minister. Votes also suggest playing a good role in parliament is not enough to win the confidence of the grass roots, as seems to have been the case with Virgília Videira who has been an important and effective parliamentarian.

*Adriano Nuvunga*

### ***Ghost voters***

Each presidential candidate must submit at least 10,000 authenticated signatures of voters. But the *Bulletin* has a blank signature sheet for Armando Guebuza, already authenticated by a notary in Atlo-Molócue. Secret voters, or names to be added later?