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Chaotic registration data suggests 90,000 people in Zambézia can vote in municipalities illegally

Municipal elections will be swamped by voters from outside the municipality in Zambézia province, which could affect the outcomes in Alto Molocue and Gurue which were subject to serious fraud in the last elections in 2018 and in Mocumba and Maganja da Costa where Frelimo won by just a few hundred votes in 2018.

There are also major discrepancies in registration between STAEs at national and provincial level.

This comes on top of fewer registration brigades were used in Zambezia, in an attempt to reduce opposition registration as well as intentional registration machine breakdowns when opposition voters were trying to register. In many areas there were reports of long queues and people unable to register.

Thousands crossing the boundary

As part of obtaining their job, civil servants are expected to support and vote for the ruling party, Frelimo, and there are verified reports of Frelimo bringing teachers from schools outside the municipality to register inside. In some cases they did not even have to appear, and lists were sent. In Morrumbala 40 teachers resident outside the boundary are being prosecuted for registering illegally inside the municipality. This could add many hundreds of votes for Frelimo in towns where the difference between Frelimo and the opposition was small in the 2018 municipal election. For example, in Mocumba, Frelimo had only 240 more votes than the opposition in 2018.

Only people living in, and registered in, the municipality can vote in the 11 October municipal election. But the registration takes place in the entire district which contains a municipality. The law says a person must register at the post nearest their home, usually a school, but there were verified reports of parties bringing supporters from the district but outside the municipal boundary to register within the municipality.

Registration data shows this is clearly happening in Zambézia. The National Statistics Institute says there are 357,211 voting age adults in the seven municipalities, but 406,716 registered - 114% of the possible number. Where did the extra adults come from? But if we look at those seven entire districts, including the municipalities, turnout was only 88%, which is normal for Mozambican elections. Looking more closely we estimate that a huge number, 90,000 or more, people crossed the boundary - physically or on lists - to register inside the municipality.

The table below shows the registration in the municipality (upper table) and in the entire district including the municipality (lower table), as reported by Zambézia provincial STAE on 14 June. We then assume that the number of voters in the municipality who actually live there is the same percentage who registered in the entire district, and the rest must be from outside. For example, for Gurue we estimate that the real registration inside the municipality is 35,532 and thus 35,980 people from outside are also on the municipal roll - more than half the electorate.

Using this method, we estimate that 90,661 people from outside municipalities registered inside - almost one quarter of the entire municipal electorate.

Zambézia registration 2023						
Total registration inside municipalities						
District	Municipality	Voting age adults	Registration as reported by Zambézia STAE 14 June 2023	% of voting age adults	Registration if district turnout used	Extra voters from outside municipality
Quelemane	Quelemane	141,379	130,691	92%	127,022	3,669
Maganja da Costa	Maganja da Costa	12,063	20,455	170%	15,214	5,241
Mocuba	Mocuba	69,636	86,669	124%	70,851	15,818
Morrumbala	Morrumbala	29,342	23,905	81%	24,008	-103
Milange	Milange	26,228	36,180	138%	18,437	17,743
Alto Molócuè	Alto Molócuè	35,538	37,304	105%	35,755	1,549
Gurue	Gurue	43,025	71,512	166%	35,532	35,980
TOTAL		357,211	406,716	114%	316,055	90,661
Total registration in entire district						
Quelemane	Quelemane	199,238	179,005	90%		
Maganja da Costa	Maganja da Costa	77,783	98,099	126%		
Mocuba	Mocuba	224,182	228,094	102%		
Morrumbala	Morrumbala	196,773	161,001	82%		
Milange	Milange	315,788	221,978	70%		
Alto Molócuè	Alto Molócuè	184,787	185,915	101%		
Gurue	Gurue	231,322	191,037	83%		
Total		1,429,873	1,265,129	88%		

Not all of the extra voters simply come from outside the municipality. In Maganja da Costa more than 20,000 extra voters registered in the entire district, so there are other forms of false registration there.

Some of these extra voters from outside the municipality will submit ballots in person, especially if they live near the municipality. But most will be used for ballot box stuffing - Frelimo keeps lists of numbers and sometimes the actual voters cards. On polling day in the afternoon when no one is watching a Frelimo aligned polling station staff member ticks off anyone on the lists who had not voted, and then adds that many votes for Frelimo - either physically putting ballot papers in the box, or more normally changing the final results sheet (edital) to add that many votes for Frelimo.

Alto Molocue and Gurue were dirty battles in 2018

Two municipalities, Alto Molocué and Gurue, which were subject of very dirty fights in the previous election in 2018, are were also subject to improper actions in this registration.

In Alto Molocué STAE own provisional count in 2018 showed Renamo 51%, MDM 5% and Frelimo 44%, and this was confirmed by an EISA parallel count. But the district election commission held a secret meeting excluding opposition observers and officials, which then gave Frelimo a narrow victory of 48%, Renamo 47% and MDM 5%.

Renamo head Ossufo Momade made a formal complaint about the secret recount. He also said police fired shots into the air, and in the confusion polling stations heads and police at two polling stations stole the results sheets, which were subsequently falsified. One was at Pista Velha primary school. Momade further claimed that when the Renamo-named STAE deputy director protested, he was arrested. Further, Renamo-named STAE technicians were excluded from the intermediate count.

Pista Velha school has been a centre of problems this year as well, and for two weeks supposed opposition voters were not allowed to register because priority was given to the public employees, members of party cells and their friends. (See Bulletins 67, 77)

In rejecting Renamo's Alto Molocué complaint, the Constitutional Council on 2 November 2018 confirmed that the Frelimo majority on a district elections commission can illegally exclude opposition-nominated members of the commission and opposition party agents, because they have no way to complain, because the complaint must be made at the meeting from which they are excluded.

Even in the strange recount, Frelimo had 802 fewer votes than the opposition, but in reality it had more than 1800 fewer than the opposition. But our calculation suggests Frelimo has recruited more than 6000 extra voters, registered inside the municipality but living outside. That should be enough to swing the election.

In Gurué the problems are old. In 2013 misconduct was so serious that the Gurué election had to be rerun. This year secret printing of voters cards was found, and a party monitor who revealed the misconduct was detained for five days. This year's election is looking just a fraudulent, with 41,163 extra voters in Gurué, more than half of the voters roll.

In the 2018 election the Bulletin did a special report on all Gurué polling stations, and we found possible misconduct in 41 of 67 polling stations. This election was between Frelimo and MDM and both were involved in fraud and misconduct, including ballot box stuffing and falsely declaring votes for the other side as invalid. The official 2018 result gave Frelimo 626 more votes than the opposition, but there is no way of knowing the real result. <https://bit.ly/Gurue-2018>.

But the battles did not end with the announcement of Frelimo and its candidate as winners. In 2019, on the eve of the second attempt to approve the municipality's activity plan and budget, unknown individuals violently assaulted the MDM political delegate and vice-president of the Alto Molócué Municipal Assembly, André Txetxema, leading him to be hospitalised for many months in Nampula. Txetxema, who had been decisive in the session that rejected the activity plan and budget of the Frelimo-run municipality, [ended up suspending his mandate](#) because of the fractures in his upper and lower limbs. If the activity plan and budget had been defeated a second time, the Alto Molocue municipal assembly would have been dissolved, forcing mid-term elections, which Frelimo wanted to avoid.

In other municipalities, the race is likely to be close, as the results of 2018 show

2018 municipal elections										
	2018 Assembly seats				2018 Votes					
	Fr	MDM	R	Control	Fr	MDM	R	Others	Total	Frelimo - opposition
Quelemane	15	1	24	R	27,504	3,100	45,093	513	76,210	-21,202
Maganja da Costa	7	0	6	F	5,732	609	4,541		10,882	582
Mocuba	20	1	18	F	16,419	859	14,964	356	32,598	240
Morrumbala	<i>new municipality</i>									
Milange	10	0	7	F	8,721	394	6,219		15,334	2,108
Alto Molócuè	10	1	10	F-mayor	8,599	915	8,486		18,000	-802
Guruè	16	14	1	F	13,521	11,604	1,291		26,416	626


Provincial and national numbers far apart

National STAE issued its registration figures on 4 June, the day after registration closed. Zambézia STAE issued its figures on 14 June, with many differences. It is possible that more data came in from remote registration posts, causing some changes, and accounts for the very large increase in district voters of 67,012.

But the big differences in municipalities seems surprising as there should have been no late reporting. Zambezia reports 4272 more voters in Quelimane than does national STAE; 8,131 fewer in Morrumbala, eliminating one quarter of the entire voters roll; and 7756 extra in Gurué.

The table shows the differences.

Zambézia - Total registration 2023						
	Voting age adults	Registration reported by National STAE 4 June 2023		Registration reported by Zambézia STAE 14 June 2023		Difference
Municipality						
Quelemane	141,379	126,419	89%	130,691	92%	4,272
Maganja da Costa	12,063	20,762	172%	20,455	170%	-307
Mocuba	69,636	82,939	119%	86,669	124%	3,730
Morrumbala	29,342	32,036	109%	23,905	81%	-8,131
Milange	26,228	35,720	136%	36,180	138%	460
Alto Molócuè	35,538	35,208	99%	37,304	105%	2,096
Gurué	43,025	63,756	148%	71,512	166%	7,756
TOTAL	357,211	396,840	111%	406,716	114%	9,876
District						
Quelemane	199,238	169,823	85%	179,005	90%	9,182
Maganja da Costa	77,783	85,720	110%	98,099	126%	12,379
Mocuba	224,182	212,274	95%	228,094	102%	15,820
Morrumbala	196,773	166,456	85%	161,001	82%	-5,455
Milange	315,788	222,971	71%	221,978	70%	-993
Alto Molócuè	184,787	177,704	96%	185,915	101%	8,211
Gurué	231,322	163,169	71%	191,037	83%	27,868
Total	1,429,873	1,198,117	84%	1,265,129	88%	67,012

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	<p>Editor: Lázaro Mabunda</p> <p>Advisor: Joseph Hanlon</p> <p>Director: Edson Cortez</p> <p>Translator: Paul Fauvet</p> <p>Sub-editor: Samuel Monjane</p> <p>Layout: Liliana Mangove</p>	<p>Centro de Integridade Pública</p> <p>Bairro da Sommerschild, Rua Fernão Melo e Castro nr. o 124, Maputo</p> <p>English To subscribe: https://cipleicoes.org/eng/</p> <p>Web: https://cipleicoes.org/eng/ Portuguese Web: https://www.cipeleicoes.org/ Facebook: @cipeleicoes Instagram: @cip_eleicoes Tiktok: @cipmoz Telegram: +258 843890584</p>

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