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Balance

Voter registration: 15 days of problems!



All our 200 correspondents, spread across the country, agree that the first 15 days were characterised by various problems. Among these, there stand out constant breakdowns of the Mobile ID computers, and the printers, priority given to government employees in registration, slowness in attendance, mobilisation of people to register in municipal areas, clandestine printing of voter cards, voter cards with serious problems. These problems were found at various registration posts.

In these first two weeks, the Lexton/Artes Gráficas consortium, hired for this business of importing and maintaining the registration equipment, showed a notorious incapacity to place technical staff to solve problems in record time. Hence some brigades continue to spend days without printing cards. Some machines go for an entire day broken down. There are suspicions that some of the equipment was reconditioned, because it suffered breakdowns as from the first day.

But there are provinces where the machines are responding positively. In Sofala, Tete and Gaza, our correspondents have reported few cases of breakdowns. The same cannot be said of the northern zone, and of Maputo City and Province.

When the business of the registration machines was awarded directly, without a tender, the electoral administration bodies justified it and transmitted the idea that the consortium had successful experiences in various countries such as Ghana, and that it uses good quality equipment to register voters. The first 15 days have shown a different reality. That's the price of directly awarding contracts. When there are public tenders, at least there is competition for the best bid, which ends up benefitting the contracting party, in this case the State.

In general, the first 15 days were characterised by:

- Constant breakdown of the mobile ID machines and their respective printers
- Printers that do not recognise the face and fingerprints of elderly people and albinos
- Printing of voter cards by district STAEs without the presence of political party monitors

Voter cards with bad quality of the photograph, with stains, sometimes without writing, and without signatures or fingerprints

Slowness in attending to voters due to lack of skills in handling the machines, which makes some voters abandon the queues

Larger crowds queuing up in the centre and north, resulting in voters waiting since early morning to register, while in the south the size of the crowds is variable (large, medium, or small), depending on the zones

Difficulties experienced by voters, in some areas, in locating the registration posts

Replacement and movement of brigade members by the STAE district directors, without the knowledge of the representatives of the political parties

Prioritising list of groups of public employees

Collecting documents and voter card numbers of citizens and particularly of Frelimo members

Mobilisation of people from other localities, administrative posts and districts to register in the municipal areas

Physical aggression between Frelimo and Renamo monitors and between Renamo monitors and brigade members

Machines with batteries that do not hold their charge

Problems of recurrent power cuts, and lack of Credelec recharges.

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