Zimbabwe Election Support Network

ELECTION REPORTING GUIDE
ELECTION REPORTING – A PRACTICAL GUIDE

This booklet is to help journalists to report Zimbabwe’s parliamentary and other elections.

The media are an essential part of the election process. They are the main channel for information to the voters on how to vote; what the different parties stand for and what are the main issues in the campaign.

There are three main types of media coverage of elections:

- **News, current affairs, features**: These types of articles and programmes are written by journalists and are under the editorial control of the newspaper or broadcasting station itself. No outsider – such as a politician or government official – should interfere with the content of this coverage.

- **Voter education**: This material may be produced by a number of different bodies – the Electoral Supervisory Commission, the Registrar General, non-governmental organizations – or by the newspaper or broadcaster themselves. Voter education is aimed at explaining to people what they are voting for and how to go about it. It is vital that voter education should be impartial and not try to tell the voter which party to support.

- **Direct access**: This means material that is produced by the political parties or candidates themselves. But it may also be in the form of party election broadcasts, which are allocated on the basis of the strength of the different parties rather than how much they can afford to pay.

This booklet is mainly concerned with the first type of coverage—that which is written and edited by journalists themselves.

We think that the conduct of journalists should be guided by a set of ethical standards. These are drawn from codes of ethics produced by bodies such as the International Federation of Journalists, as well as codes of conduct drawn up for elections in other countries.
DRAFT ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR JOURNALISTS IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

- The first duty of a journalist is to report accurately and without bias.
- A journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which s/he knows the origin. A journalist shall not suppress essential information.
- A journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.
- A journalist shall report in a balanced manner. If a candidate makes an allegation against another candidate, the journalist shall seek comment from both sides wherever possible.
- A journalist shall do the utmost to correct any published information that is found to be prejudicial to a candidate.
- As far as possible, a journalist shall report the views of candidates and political parties directly and in their own words, rather than as they are described by others.
- A journalist shall avoid using language or expressing sentiments that may further discrimination or violence on any grounds, including race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.
- When reporting the opinions of those who do advocate discrimination or violence, a journalist shall do the utmost to put such views in a clear context and to report the opinions of those against whom such sentiments are directed.
- A journalist shall not accept any inducement from a politician or candidate.
- A journalist shall not make any promise to a politician about the content of a news report.
- A journalist shall take care in reporting the findings of opinion polls. Any report should wherever possible include the following information:
  - who commissioned and carried out the poll and when
  - how many people were interviewed, where and how were they interviewed and what is the margin of error
  - what was the exact wording of the questions.
- A journalist shall regard the following as grave professional offences:
  - Plagiarism
  - malicious misrepresentation;
- acceptance of a bribe or favours in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.
- In all media, there shall be a clear separation between fact and comment. News reporting should reflect the facts as honestly perceived by journalists. Comment may reflect the editorial line of the publication. All public-funded media may not take an editorial line in favour of any political party or candidate.

SEPARATING FACT AND COMMENT

The last point on that list is very important and is something to bear in mind from beginning to end of the election campaign. No matter what editorial position your publication or broadcasting station takes, accurate reporting of the facts is the journalist’s priority—even if those facts might prove inconvenient to your editors or the party that they support.

We recommend that the public-funded media should not support any political party. That is because they are funded, wholly or in part, out of the public’s money, paid in licence fees or taxes. Therefore they should not support one viewpoint against others that may also have public support.

PLANNING ELECTION COVERAGE

Planning is essential to effective election coverage. The following is a checklist of issues that editors and senior journalists might consider before the campaign gets started.

- Check with the Registrar General and the Electoral Supervisory Commission all the details of the coming poll: who is eligible to vote, what identification they will need, start and closing day of the campaign period, election day specifics (how the polling will be organized, timetable for election returns, etc).
- Study the Election Act and the regulations: there is nothing in them about the media, but you need to know all the ins and outs of how the election is being run.
- Join with other media, including journalists and publishers associations,
in order to prepare the profession's guidelines and code of conduct and a charter to be submitted to all political parties committing them to respect journalists and protect them against harassment by their supporters.

- **Get in touch with the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe**, who watch all the media on a day-to-day basis to check that they are fair and sticking to professional standards.

- **Explain to your readers** your reporting rules, how you are going to cover the campaign and why.

- **Budget the election reporting**: an election campaign is usually good business for the media but it also costs a lot of money. You may need extra phone lines, faxes, additional cars and drivers, more overtime. Plan carefully and allocate resources wisely.

- **Select your task force**: election coverage is the political desk's golden hour but it should not be its exclusive preserve. All departments can be asked to perform duties according to their skills. Specialised writers will be commissioned to analyse issues in their beat (economics, health, foreign affairs, economics, labour, education), to compare competing political programmes, to scrutinise speeches and position papers, to track inconsistencies and expose propaganda.

The foreign desk for instance might be assigned to stories related to international observer teams, foreign press coverage, role of international organisations in the campaign, etc.

Some media choose to set up a special election desk for the last weeks of the campaign. This option should be studied carefully especially in small newspapers. The election campaign should not mean that the rest of the news is ignored.

- **Appoint an editorial panel**: it will be charged with reviewing delicate questions that may arise as the campaign develops. It should include the editor-in-chief, the relevant department head, and a few distinguished commentators or reporters.

- **Plan technical and operational arrangements**: pin down the advertising department (some pages should be considered ad-free during the campaign, precise guidelines should be given to acceptance and placement of political advertising), the production manager (he must provide for later deadlines on election day and for additional pages), and the distribution manager.

- **Recruit additional personnel**: young journalists to handle the information flow on election day, phone and fax operators, secretaries, drivers, etc.

- **Contact resource persons**: they will be of much help to give expert advice during the election campaign and as soon as the results are public. Election pundits, political scientists, public opinion analysts, should be on standby and attached to your particular media. Appointments should be arranged in advance with political party leaders for election-night commentaries on results. But do not overwhelm your readers with excessive punditry. Ordinary citizens should have their say too.

- **Check your photo files**: you should have as many pictures of candidates as possible stored in your photo library.

- **Plan for emergencies**: what do you do if something breaks down on your side (your computer falls dead, your local journalist cannot contact you, one of your reporters is arrested or wounded, etc) and on the side of the government (failure in the collation of results, charges of irregularities, etc)?

- **Civic education**: media must carefully and repeatedly explain the principles and techniques of voting and what the election will lead to.

Media should introduce an open line to readers so they might ask questions on specific points of the campaign and air their views.

- **Start well ahead of election day**: prepare profiles of major candidates, close-ups on most electoral districts (economic base, population profile, major problems, party dominance).

- **Cover the issues**: Pile up documentation on campaign issues (official fig-
ures, the state of the debate, major players and lobbies, etc.). Cover those issues independently from party positions, report on issues that are neglected by political parties. Too often issues are presented as just a conflict between opposing sides and not as objects of serious debate.

Always ask: What’s missing in the news today? Read everything, remember what the candidates said (and did) over a period of years not just days. Do not confuse lobbying by interest groups or media-generated excitement with a grass-roots political movement.

Do not be afraid of repeating explanatory studies of difficult issues. The “We’ve already done it” or “It does not interest anybody” cynicism should never be welcome in a newsroom. At election time is should be banned.

- **Improve your sub-editors’ team:** make stories and issues accessible to readers, de-code all political jargon, track down and annihilate all long words that render already difficult concepts totally incomprehensible.

- **Beware of “pack” journalism:** shy away from the tendency to follow candidates like a pack of wolves which leads to concentrate on the same events and interpret them in the same way. This happens particularly when a candidate is seen as rising in the polls: when a candidate’s support increases sharply the coverage of his candidacy becomes more favourable.

- **Use all forms of journalism:** long reportage, analytical pieces, graphs, satire, sketches and cartoons, investigative journalism (who is behind a particular candidate, the role of special interests, etc.), photojournalism, profiles, interviews, contradictory debates.

- **Open Space:** Give politicians from different parties the possibility to write columns for your paper on a fair and rotating basis. But stop this process at least two weeks before election day so as not to give undue advantage to one of the candidates and not to overwhelm your readers with party propaganda. Broadcasters can run special debates between candidates, allowing balance between the main parties - as well as in the selection of interviewers.

- **Get acquainted with campaign tricks:** Beware of stunts and cooked up events designed just to grab headlines.

- **Press releases:** Do not just publish political parties’ press releases: check them, use them as a source for a more balanced story. Do not run for “photo-opportunities”. Do not overtype controversy: a contrived rumour campaign can lead you far away from voters’ real interests.

- **Be credible:** Never forget that your long-term credibility is always at stake. Follow closely each candidate’s advertising campaign. Some media have columns which scrutinise campaign promises and advertising techniques. Expose falsification and distortion wherever you find it. Clearly identify and attribute any information coming from sources other than obtained from independent reporting.

A View from Kenya

Wangari Mwangi, the managing editor of Nation newspapers wrote for the International Federation of Journalists Election Reporting Handbook on how they planned their coverage for the 1992 election.

The pursuit of the truth is a great democratic cause. If a journalist fails there, he or she fails in the struggle for democracy. The struggle for democracy must be a call to every journalist.

Honesty, integrity, objectivity, brevity and truth are grandiose and noble ideas, but a journalist should not be embarrassed or reluctant about setting them as standards of their work.

In the run-up phase, we thought it was our duty to inform Nation readers of where the various parties stood on vital issues. This was easier said than done. Kenyan politics is personalised, and defined by tribal interests, to a very great degree and the campaigning, sadly, was dominated by mud-slinging and name calling, with very little of substance being said.
We wrote to every party leader requesting an interview in which they could state their party's case; we offered to provide a list of questions for them to study. Not one replied.

One feels little sympathy for political leaders when they complain of misrepresentation if they will not permit themselves to be questioned on the basics of party policy.

In the event, we were forced to collect the parties' official manifestos (something they should have been handing out at street corners, but which proved like asking for gold) and from these we ran a series of articles setting out the different attitudes to the economy, regional administration, corruption, health, education, welfare, jobs - in fact, all of the bread-and-butter things that affect people in their everyday lives.

We also introduced a regular feature entitled "Election Platform", in which non-politicians, ordinary Kenyans, were invited to share their views with readers, either on a general basis, or more likely, on a specific area in which they were expert: human rights, treatment of land, constitutional issues, problems of the farmer, neglected areas.

The standard of these contributions was remarkably high, and in fact we retained the idea when the election ended, retitling it "Weekend Platform" which offered literate Kenyans a chance to express themselves at length on any important topic of their choice. The elections were fraught with many dangers: violence in several places tended to obscure the real objectives, and political thuggery introduced a whole new element of corruption in media.

REPORTING THE CAMPAIGN

As a journalist reporting an election campaign you have a number of duties:

- to report what the candidates say
- to dig beneath the surface and uncover hidden campaign issues.

What the candidates say:

Your responsibility as a journalist is to report what the candidates themselves say - not what their opponents say that they say. Give equal prominence to all major candidates - that means attending similar numbers of meetings of the different party campaigns.

If you are given a written text, check it against the speech as it is delivered. Often the most interesting (and revealing) statements are spontaneous. And compare what a speaker says in English and in Shona or Ndebele. The difference can sometimes be striking (and again, often revealing).

Report what you see and hear without exaggeration. Practice a method for counting crowds at meetings or rallies. (The best method is usually to isolate a sector of the crowd, make a rough count, and then multiply it by the number of similar sized sectors.) But there is no foolproof method. Make your own estimate and then check it with the organizers and the police. Their estimates will differ from yours - of that you can be certain.

And report the crowd's reaction to the speaker. Were they enthusiastic, hostile, lukewarm? Were there hecklers - they often provide good copy?

There is danger of violence throughout this campaign. Politicians may inflame this through violent language. It is not your job to censor what they say - it should be reported accurately. But when you are reporting inflammatory language it is especially important to balance it by reporting the view of those who are being attacked. Anyway, that is just good journalistic practice - if someone makes an accusation, try to get the other point of view to balance the story.

Do not accept any inducement from any candidate or other politician. If possi-
Opinion polls

If they are used properly, opinion polls can be an important way of measuring what voters think about particular issues, parties and candidates. Newspapers and broadcasters may even want to commission their own polls to give them information about voters’ intentions.

An opinion poll need not just be about who the electorate are going to vote for. It can also be a way of finding out what voters think about a particular issue—or what they think the important issues are. These might not be the same as the issues that seem important to politicians.

But journalists must exercise great care in how they report opinion polls. Poll findings may influence how people vote, so they are open to manipulation by unscrupulous pollsters or politicians. That is why opinion polls are banned in some countries.

There is nothing to stop the media from reporting opinion poll results in Zimbabwe—but they must do so ethically. There are a number of questions that journalists must ask about every opinion poll—and they must tell their readers the answers.

• Who conducted the poll? Are they reputable and independent?

If the organization that carried out the poll is not independent of all political parties, then its findings may be biased. It is important to know who commissioned the poll—was it a political party, a media organization or some other body?

• How many people were interviewed?

The size of the sample is obviously important. If it is too small then the result is less likely to be accurate. But if the sample is well selected, a relatively small number may still yield important results.

• How were they chosen?

A reputable pollster will publish the sampling method. It should go without saying, but who you choose is going to determine the result. If the poll is conducted by telephone it only reflects the views of telephone users. If it is conducted on a street corner in Harare, it will only reflect the views of that city’s residents. A proper sample will reflect the variety of geographical or population groups in the country.

• Are the published results based upon the answers of all those interviewed?

An easy way of fiddling poll results is to leave out the answers that you do not like. That is unprofessional, for both a pollster and a journalist.

• When was the poll conducted?

People’s views change, especially during an election campaign. A poll that is a month old may not be a reliable guide to how people will vote tomorrow.

• What is the sampling error?

This means simply, how far out are the poll results likely to be? No poll can predict the result with total accuracy, but a professional one should get within a few percentage points.

• What questions were asked—and how were they worded? In what order were they asked?

Your article or broadcast should reflect exactly what the questions were, to avoid the danger of “interpreting” the results in the most politically convenient
way. It is important to know what all the questions were, because answers may have been contradictory. For example, respondents may say that they feel that Candidate X has been doing a good job - but then express a view that is in disagreement with his major campaign platform. Most importantly of all, the public must know that the questions were asked in a balanced way, not leading respondents to give a particular expected answer. An example of a leading question might be something like this:

"Most people think that Politician Y has been doing an excellent job. Do you agree?"

Amazingly, opinion polls are still published that include that sort of biased question.

- How do the results of this poll compare with other findings?

If there are several polls carried out by reputable organizations, then averaging out the findings might help to reduce the overall margin of error. Alternatively, if the results of one poll are way out of line with others, a "rogue" poll, it would be interesting to know why. Is it just a badly conducted poll? Or does it show some important change in public opinion?

Opinion polls do not have a long history in Zimbabwe. They have not been significant at previous elections, but there have been several carried out in recent months, mainly around the constitutional referendum. A serious opinion poll, properly reported, can make a good story and help the public to make an informed choice.

Digging beneath the surface

Politicians of all parties want to use the media to get their message across to the voters. Sometimes they will say things that are untrue - and very often they will leave out facts that are inconvenient to their case. It is not the duty of the media to debate with candidates as though journalists were politicians themselves. But it is good journalism to look behind the politicians' words to see what they are likely to do if elected.

One way of doing this is to look at how consistent politicians are. This is easier with incumbent MPs than with challengers. But it is reasonable to ask whether their fine words match up to their record in practice. How have MPs voted on important issues? Have they stood up for their constituents? What private business interests do they have that may affect how they will behave in office? Who is funding the campaign of a particular party or politician - and what might they expect in return?

Politicians - especially government politicians - will try to manipulate media coverage. Government Ministers have a built-in advantage because they are already in the public eye through their official functions. There is nothing wrong with that. But if a Minister uses an official function to promote his party campaign, then that is corruption. If, for example, the Minister of Information uses his office not to explain government policy but to attack an opposition party, then that is an abuse of office. Journalists have a professional obligation not to collude in that, and to expose it wherever possible.

In some cases, governments may use official resources - money, transport, equipment, offices - for their election campaign. That is also corrupt. The media have a duty to expose it. In one southern African country recently, an incumbent government used official resources to run a disinformation campaign. It organized biased opinion polls and quoted non-existent reputable sounding organizations in support of its campaign to get re-elected. It even invented statements by the foreign media. Exposing dirty tricks like that is excellent journalism and an important public service.

Staying out of trouble

No story is worth a journalist's life - editors should remember that, but so should the eager young reporter out to make a name. Unfortunately a necessary skill for journalists is how to stay alive, in one piece and out of jail.
In the early stages of this election campaign, a news team has been held hostage, journalists have been beaten, a newspaper's offices bombed and a photographer jailed for three days. And the media have received repeated threats.

So staying out of trouble - and still getting the story - is an important skill.

The Government, the police and all political parties should state publicly that the media are a vital part of the democratic process and are free to go about their lawful business without threats or violence.

But even without such a declaration, there are steps that journalists can take to protect their own safety.

Never carry a gun or other weapon. Get basic first aid training. This does not mean you have to provide medical care to every victim you see, but it may assist an injured colleague.

Know your rights. It is useful to have an understanding of the laws that might be used to try to restrict your activities - notably the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act. This knowledge will allow you to challenge with confidence any member of the security forces who tells you that you may not take photographs, or who orders you to leave an area when you have a right to stay. Remember than an irresponsible or uninformed act may not only put you in danger, but could also have repercussions for colleagues.

Know your destination. Be as prepared as possible before leaving the office. Know what political, racial or other conflict exists within an area. Information can keep you out of trouble. Talk to other journalists. If you have experienced problems in a particular area, warn other journalists to be careful.

Make contacts. Get to know the media offices of all the major organisations in the area. Look out for press marshals at rallies and marches. If you have any difficulty, ask a marshal for help. If you are covering a major protest march or political rally, survey the route/venue beforehand. Carry a cellphone, or look for telephones that can be used, vantage points from which you can survey the event without being too close in case of trouble. Be familiar with the roads and where they lead to in case you have to leave suddenly. Learn and observe local community protocol. This could include who you speak to first when you go into a community, and how you address leaders.

Dress appropriately. Always dress in comfortable clothing that does not limit your freedom of movement. Especially no heels or narrow skirts. Clothing that attracts attention to you is out of place in a trouble zone. Dress to be inconspicuous. Be aware of the colours of the political parties and avoid wearing them in the same combinations.

Some journalists prefer to dress formally, but many believe that it is better not to be too well-dressed for fear of being mistaken for police officers. Avoid T-shirts with political slogans.

There is a debate whether it is better always to be instantly identifiable as a journalist or not. Some journalists think it is a good idea to wear a T-shirt which announces “press” or “media”; others point out that journalists are sometimes targeted precisely because they are from the media. There is no easy or safe answer.

It is clear that there will be times when it is better to be identifiable and others when it is not. Use your judgement.

Before leaving home. The most basic rule of covering conflict is never to travel alone. If there is no-one else from your news organisation available, telephone around to find a colleague to take along. It is worth the time and trouble. And while we might be in competition, we are still colleagues. Watch out for one another. Always tell your editor, colleagues and family where you are going and what time you expect to be back.

Make sure someone at home knows what to do and who to contact if you don’t arrive.

In the field. Listen to the locals. Pay attention to advice from people living in a region or an area. They know best. It is essential to carry a press card. Keep it handy. If there are other journalists about, stick close to them. If you are caught in the middle of a disturbance, move away — but don’t run. If you run, you could be seen as a target. Do not attempt to cross directly from one side of a confrontation to the other.
Above all, remember to keep someone – your office, your home, your union – informed about where you are at all times.

**POLLING DAY**

On polling day itself, the role of the reporter becomes especially sensitive. *It is important that you carry clear identification showing that you are a journalist – with your name, organization and photograph.* In the referendum campaign, the Ministry of Information issued special press cards, which allowed reporters into the polling area.

When you visit a polling station you should introduce yourself to the presiding officer. With his or her permission, you may then take photographs or conduct interviews, as well as generally observing the proceedings.

**YOU MAY NOT**

- undermine the secrecy of the vote
- try to persuade anyone to vote for any particular candidate
- pretend to be a representative or candidate of a political party
- break the seal or open a ballot box.

All these are criminal offences, as well as undermining the credibility and authority of the media. You are only allowed into the polling station (except as a voter) on the discretion of the presiding officer. If you behave improperly then the effect may be that all media are excluded.

The media have an important role in exposing electoral malpractice. A US organisation, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, gives the following advice to its election observation teams. It may serve as a useful checklist for journalists covering an election:

*Try to observe, research and record the severity, frequency and pattern of any of the following issues and the number of voters influenced.*

- Unfair attempts to influence voters or election officials through bribes, employment promises, threats, intimidation, systematic disruption of the election process, unbalanced media access;
Disenfranchisement of voters through: unreasonably restricting the registration process, unreasonably restricting candidate eligibility, failing to properly list registered voters, failing to distribute voter identification cards, requiring unreasonable supplemental voter identification, systematic complication of the election process, incomplete distribution of election materials;

Fraud, such as stealing ballots, stuffing ballots, destroying ballots, misreading, miscounting, providing misleading reports to the media, voting twice, trying to remove indelible ink;

Logistical problems, including insufficient number of ballots, ballots missing for certain parties, insufficient number of envelopes, ink that washes off, inadequate secrecy of the vote, missing officials, missing voter registry, no artificial lights; and

Civic education: voters do not seem to have a reasonable understanding of their right to freely choose a candidate or how to express their choice, and administrators do not have a reasonable understanding of their duties and how to execute them.

Some organizations — including the media — may conduct “exit polls” — that is, snap interviews to try to determine what the vote was and thus predict the result. In Zimbabwe it is not illegal to publish the result of such a poll while voting is still going on but it is deeply unethical, since it may influence people in how they vote. Save the predictions for reports that are published after polling has closed.

Reporting the results sounds like a simple process — and so it should be — but for the referendum results in February every single news organization in Zimbabwe got it wrong.

News organizations may have their own reporters at the count in crucial constituencies, but the official results are those announced by the Registrar General’s office. The reason for much of the confusion in February was the difficulty in getting accurate figures from the Registrar General. But that just underlines the need for extra care.
GUIDELINES FOR MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE 2000 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS – RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION

The following is a set of guidelines drawn up by the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe on the basis of best practice internationally for media coverage of elections – especially by media that receive public funds. These are not the regulations that are actually in force for Zimbabwe’s elections, but they represent a code of good practice:

1. All public-owned media, as media that receive public funds, have a duty to be balanced and impartial in their election reporting and not to discriminate against any party in granting access to print or airtime.

1.1 News, interviews, information or current affairs programmes or articles must not be biased in favour of or against any party or candidate.

2. There must be no government censorship of any election programme or coverage.

3. It is recommended that the media be exempted from legal liability for unlawful statements made by candidates or party representatives and broadcast or published during the course of the election campaign, other than those that constitute clear and direct incitement to violence. The parties and speakers should be held solely responsible for any unlawful statements they make.

4. Any candidate or party that makes a reasonable claim of having been defamed or otherwise injured by a broadcast or publication should either be granted the opportunity to reply or be entitled to a correction or retraction by the broadcaster or publisher or by the person who made the allegedly defamatory statement. The reply or correction should be broadcast or published as soon as possible.

5. All public-owned media, as recipients of public funds, should not express an editorial opinion in favour of or against any party or candidate.

5.1. News coverage of press conferences and public statements concerning matters of political controversy (as opposed to functions of state) called by the head of government, government ministers, or members of parliament should be subject to a right of reply or equal time rules. This obligation acquires even greater force when the person making the statement is also standing for office.

6. Publicly-funded media must grant political parties or candidates airtime for direct access programmes on a fair and non-discriminatory basis.

6.1. It is recommended that allocation of direct access broadcasting time should be determined by the Electoral Supervisory Commission, according to a formula that balances past electoral support and the number of candidates being fielded in the current election. All parties should be entitled to a minimum allocation of direct access time.

6.2. Paid political advertising should not be allowed on ZBC.

6.3. The ESC should also supervise the time slots allocated to direct access programmes, which must give all parties a chance of reaching the widest possible audience.

7. ZBC should broadcast programmes that provide an effective opportunity for journalists, current affairs experts and/or the general public to put questions to party leaders and other candidates, and for candidates to debate with each other.

7.1. Journalists, experts and other questioners should be selected so as to ensure balance among the questions.

8. ZIMPAPERS and ZBC are obliged to publish or broadcast voter education material.
8.1. This material must be accurate and impartial and must effectively inform voters about the voting process, including how, when and where to vote, to register to vote and to verify proper registration; the secrecy of the ballot (and thus safety from retaliation); the importance of voting; the functions of the offices that are under contention; and similar matters.

8.2 The government media are obliged to produce material that will reach the greatest number of voters feasible. Broadcasts should include programmes in minority languages and programmes targeted for groups that traditionally may have been excluded from the political process, such as women and people with disabilities.

9. If a publication or broadcaster publishes the result of an opinion poll or election projection, it should strive to report the results fairly and, in particular, to publish all readily available information that would assist the listeners in understanding the poll’s significance.

9.1. A publication or broadcaster that publishes the results of an opinion poll should identify the organization that conducted the poll, the organization or party that commissioned and paid for the poll, the methodology employed, the sample size, the margin of error, and the fieldwork dates.

10. Implementation of these guidelines should be monitored by the ESC, in consultation with the media organizations themselves. The ESC should consider complaints from the public, political parties and from media organizations as a matter of urgency. Media organizations are urged to comply with rulings from the ESC on all matters relating to election coverage.

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