VOTER EDUCATION KIT

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ROLE PLAY

INTRODUCTION:

Thwala and his family are going about their Sunday evening business. The father is reading the paper and has come to the area of sports coverage. Tina, who is the daughter of working age is preparing her clothes (ironing) for the following day but has out of the corner of her eye spotted the results of soccer, amongst which the soccer club she supports was defeated by her dad's favourite club.

SIMULATION:

TINA

Tina pays compliments to her dad, she says teasingly, "How did the match go between Kaizer Chiefs and Sundowns?" (as if she has not seen the results yet).

THWALA

"Do not ask me an obvious question. Every soccer follower knows that Kaizer Chiefs has no opposition in this world" says the father, proudly.

TINA

"Oh! dad please! Just because your club was lucky to win this time, all of a sudden it has no opposition in this world. What about the long list of defeats it has suffered not so long ago?" asks Tina.

THWALA

"That was before we hired the services of Geoff Hudson as a coach. Since his arrival, we have not lost a single match." says the father.
TINA

"Still, it is too early to believe that your club no longer has opposition. Anyway good luck to you and your boys." Tina says, closing the subject.

After a moment of silence she proceeds to say "....By the way dad, now that we are approaching elections, which party are you going to vote for because with me its Viva Phindamzala Party? " Tina asks.

THWALA

"What?" barks the father lifting his head from behind the paper, "there is only one political party for this family and that is Tshwane People’s Party, T.P.P get this straight. Everybody in this house is going to vote for T.P.P." says the father.

TINA

"That is not fair dad, everyone should vote for the party of their own choice, not of parents’ choice. Just like in soccer, you support your club, I support mine. I even go as far as congratulating you when your club has defeated mine." Tina replies.

THWALA

"That is your problem, you mix soccer with politics. Soccer is a game, just a sport, politics is about life and death. The two do not mix, just like oil and water. Get that straight. Its either Tshwane People’s Party or nothing, I hope everybody gets that clear." Says the father with final authority.

TINA

"Dad, politics need not be a matter of life and death. My understanding is that politics is going to be a matter of four or five years. Besides, I’m told that there will be no losers under proportional representation." replies Tina back.
"Mom!" calls Andrew who has been struggling with his school work for the past hour, whilst half listening to the argument which was going on "...why can’t you do something so that I can get some school work done. I can’t work with so much noise around. Please mom!" pleads Andrew.

MaThwala, the mother, who is busy knitting, looks up to Andrew almost helpless, but turns her attention to her husband and Tina, saying pleadingly:

"Why don’t the two of you stop arguing because you know that you are both wrong?" Says MaThwala, trying to sound neutral.

"Mom!" replies Tina, "...it is not wrong to say I can vote for any party I support, besides, it is my democratic right."

"You have just dug your own grave, my daughter, democracy is only applicable out there in the streets amongst your friends. This is my house. As long as you live here you will do as I say. Democracy has nothing to do with my family, you understand? You did not vote for me to be the head of this family. I did not campaign for anybody here. Now I want all of you to get this clear. From tomorrow onwards, everybody must be in the house at 5pm." says the father raising his voice.

"That’s ridiculous" cries MaThwala impulsively.
TINA

"It's impossible! I am hardly away from work at that time. What about my meetings?" replies Tina.

ANDREW

"What about my studies? My last lecture is at 5.30pm. Tina you are to blame. You started all this." says Andrew. "Besides, you have no business of arguing with adults like that."

TINA

"Oh! shut up I knew you would say that. You take sides with dad just because you are also a man." Replies Tina with anger.

THWALA

"What did you say MaThwala?" Asks the husband, turning his attention to his wife, unbelievably cool, but with anger written all over his face.

MATHWALA

"These children make me angry. Please Tina and Andrew, go to bed now, its late. For you my husband I will make a nice hot chococlate."

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A DIALOGUE ABOUT ELECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

This dialogue takes place between two friends, one of whom has overheard more than one person discussing the coming elections. He asks his friend what the elections are all about. His friend is equally blank, and they seek and obtain relevant information from their priest.

Mbathe. What are these elections everyone is talking about?

Nkosi. How should I know? I am not a teacher.

Mbathe. You don’t have to be a teacher to know about elections. After all, they don’t seem to be elections for teachers only. I have heard people say “one person, one vote”, you know.

Nkosi. What does that mean?

Mbathe. That’s what I want to find out too. Let’s ask our priest (Moruti) – he is over there, tending to his flowers.

PAUSE

Mbathe. Good afternoon, Moruti Riba. Forgive us for just pitching up without an appointment.

Moruti. There is no need to apologize. You are most welcome. I am here to serve you.

Mbathe. We just wanted more information on the coming elections.

Moruti. What do you want to know about the elections?

Mbathe. Nobody has told us anything about the elections. I’ve merely overheard a lot of people talking about them. When I asked my friend here, he knew as little as I did. I suggested we come and talk to you since we were in the neighbourhood.

We want to know the following:
1. What is the election about?
2. Whom are we voting for?
3. How does this election differ from previous elections for local councillors, the tricameral parliament and elections in the homelands?

Nkosi. We also want to know
a. what is meant by one-person-one-vote.
b. who will be allowed to vote.
c. what is the significance of our vote.

Mbathe. Something else that worries us is this talk about the votes being secret and yet people are discussing the subject all the time.

We also want to know about the voting procedure on election day and where we can get information on what we have to do.

Moruti. Gentlemen, you require quite a lot of information. Let’s go into the house and discuss the matter further.

PAUSE
Let us take your questions one by one. If at the end I have left some questions unanswered, please remind me about them.

Let me start by saying that the coming election, as far as I understand it, is the most important election South Africa has ever had. It is about a change of government. Never before have all South Africans taken part in the same parliamentary election. It is different from all other elections we have had including the tricameral elections, elections for councillors, homeland elections, etc. I repeat, we have never had such an election before.

Why is this election different from all others, Moruti?

Because we are scrapping past laws. This election, among other things, is meant to make everyone equal before the law. This has never happened before.

As things stand at the moment, all people 18 years and older will be allowed to vote.

All adults in South Africa will choose the people who will rule the country. You and I will have the opportunity for the first time to elect the political party whose ideas we agree with. The party with most votes will lead the next government. Note that I said "lead".

What will I get in return after I have voted for a political party?

There is no guarantee that the political party you voted for will win the majority of seats. What is important is that according to this new system of voting, parties that get a certain percentage of the votes will form part of the governing group that will pass new laws. Even if your party gets little support, it will still have a chance of being part of the government.

This new system of voting is called proportional representation. An important difference of this system is that everyone will be voting for a political party rather than an individual. The party that gets most of the votes, will lead the next government. Please note that I did not say will form the government alone. It will form a government with other parties, but will lead that government.

How are we going to get information about the different political parties?

Very soon, you are going to see a lot of politicians on TV. You will also hear them over the radio. They will invite you to meetings and sometimes these meetings will be held in rooms, in halls, etc. They will come to your homes; they will talk to you on buses, trains, taxis, etc. They might even ask to come and talk to you in your church. They will have their posters all over the place. They will sell their badges, their T-shirts, their flags, and many other items. This is called campaigning, and it is allowed under the law. They might ask you to ask others to vote for them. If either of you already belong to any of the parties, you might be requested to help them with their campaigning.

This sounds like a very big event. Moruti, are you saying that there will be many meetings addressed by different parties?

Most of the time, yes.

How are we going to know which meeting to attend, when, whom to listen to?
Moruti. You need not attend all these meetings, but the more you attend the better informed you will be. You can go to the offices of the parties to ask specific questions. It is important to listen to the promises of the different parties. I always ask people who promise me something, how they are going to make sure I get what they promised. You can do the same if you want. What is important to remember, is that nobody is allowed to force you to attend a meeting. Nobody is allowed to force you to vote for or support their party. This includes your priest, friends, relatives, colleagues, fellow church-goers, neighbours, the police, your employer. The choice is yours and you must be free to make that choice without fear. If anyone tries to influence your choice by a threat, there are certain people you should inform. They are usually called election monitors. Remember: You do not have to join a political party in order to vote for it.

We as husbands and fathers are also not allowed to instruct our wives and children over 18 years whom to vote for.

Mbatha. That can’t work, Moruti. I will take care of my family.

Nkosi. What he means, Moruti, is that he will instruct his wife and children which party to vote for. That can’t be wrong, Moruti. After all, they are his wife and his children. I will also do the same.

Moruti. Gentlemen, I do not want to be seen to be interfering in the affairs of your families. However, we are not permitted to force our wives, sons and daughters to vote for the party of our choice. I know it sounds strange, but that is the position.

Mbatha. Moruti, it’s going to be difficult, but I understand and I hope Nkosi also understands. Another question, why do they say this whole process is secret?

Moruti. It is not the whole process that is secret. Only your vote is secret. What you must remember is that after you have listened to all the political parties, you need not tell anyone whom you will vote for. On election day, just go to the polling or voting station and vote for the party of your choice. You need not tell anyone, and nobody will be able to find out which party you voted for. A secret vote means you freely make up your own mind which party to vote for. No one has the right to know which party you voted for, and no one can find out how you voted unless you tell them.

It is equally important to know that you cannot send your wife or anyone else to vote for you. Not me, not your friend, not your neighbour, not your son, not your daughter, not your employer. That is why it is called one-person-one-vote. You remember, Mbatha, you wanted to know what is meant by one-person-one-vote. It also means one person can vote only once, and their vote counts only once. The rich and the poor alike, black and white, the educated and the uneducated, the healthy and the sick, the young and the old, men and women - everybody’s vote is equal.

Mbatha. Moruti, there are too many of us. Perhaps I should not vote, even though this would be my first time to vote. I think there are going to be too many people, besides, what difference will my vote make?

Moruti. I think you are making a mistake by thinking that on election day everybody will go to the same place. There will be several places for voting. They are usually called voting/polling stations.
Another mistake you may be making is thinking that your vote will not make a difference. You will be surprised about how much each vote counts. Every vote is a statement. That statement says: "I, together with those who think like me, prefer a government led by this party." It is my belief that your vote, my vote, his vote and all other individual votes, are going to make a difference.

**Nkosil:**

What is going to happen on voting day, Moruti?

**Moruti:**

It is too early to say, but broadly speaking we can expect a lot of people to turn up at the voting stations, each having some form of identity - usually identity documents. The voting station itself may be a church, a school, a community hall or any place that can easily be reached by the voters. There will be signs and announcements informing people where their nearest voting station is. We can also expect a lot of peace keepers: they could be in the form of special police to make sure that nobody breaks the law by for example forcing other people to vote for parties they do not support. There may also be officials from other countries and from international organizations who will assist in creating a peaceful atmosphere at the voting stations by their presence. They are called election monitors. You will know some of the local people because they will be from our community. I may also be asked to be one of them. There will be a number of other officials around, ready to help with various matters.

If this sounds like a lot of information, do not be worried. It will be repeated over and over again in many ways before election day. For now, I am just trying to give you a general picture of what might happen.

**Mbatha:**

What are we supposed to do on that day at this place full of peace keepers and officials from other countries, and where will the political parties be?

**Moruti:**

If I may continue, the political parties will be some distance from the voting station. Outside the voting station we will all stand in a line, each of us awaiting her/his turn to enter the voting station. When you enter the voting station - which as I said might be a classroom or a church hall, etc. - there will be several tables with someone to assist voters at each table. We will enter one by one. Everyone will be asked to identify themselves at the first table by producing an identity document or any other agreed form of identification so that only people from South Africa, who are 18 years or older, can vote.

The officials at the second table might check whether you have not already voted somewhere else by examining your hands. This is to make sure that people vote only once. The officers will check for invisible ink on your hands.

**Mbatha:**

What is that, Moruti? The invisible ink?

**Moruti:**

It is an ink that you cannot see with the naked eye. If you have not voted before, your hands will not have that ink on them.

At the third table you will be asked to dip your hands in a bowl of this invisible ink. If you then go to another voting station and try to vote again, the ink will show. It is a harmless ink that will stay on your hands for not longer than two weeks. It is this ink the official at the second table will be looking for on your hands.

At the fourth table you will be given what is called a ballot paper. It is a piece of paper containing the names of all the political parties taking part in the election. They will probably be written in alphabetical order.
How many political parties will be on the ballot paper?

We do not know yet, but we will know as we move nearer the elections.

From the fourth table you will go into a small booth called a polling booth. This is where you alone will decide which party to vote for by making a cross in the square next to it on the ballot paper. Nobody is supposed to interfere with you in the booth.

Moruti, I smell trouble. Nkosi, I and many other people are not educated. We cannot read and write.

This matter is receiving attention. Something will be done to make the voting procedure easier for you. What I can assure you is that there will be plenty of assistance which will not interfere with your right of choice. Let's continue.

After you have made a cross in the block next to the party of your choice, you fold your ballot paper so that nobody can see which party you voted for. You then place the paper in a box called a ballot box, which will be locked. It will only be opened after everybody has cast their votes, so that the votes can be counted. That's all you have to do. After casting your vote, an official will show you the way out of the polling station.

Remember that your name does not appear on the ballot paper, so at the counting station, nobody will know who voted for which party because all the ballot papers have only the names of political groups/parties on them.

Remember, too, that even after you have voted for the party of your choice, that can remain your secret forever. You need not tell anyone.

After all the votes have been counted, i.e. the votes from all over South Africa, it will be announced how many votes each party got - then we will know which party received the most votes.

As I said earlier, this is what we can expect in broad terms. More detailed information will be made freely available as we move closer to the elections, so we need to be on the look out for it. For now this should do.