

Local government elections

Rwanda's local elections were in 2011 expanded to comprehensively include women and people with disabilities (PWDs) councils to be represented. The elections started February 4, 2011 with representatives at the Umudugudu level.

The media reported a high voter turnout but delays by voters. There is no need for voters' cards since this is the only level of elections where even non-citizen residents are allowed to vote.

The media reported delays by voters a contrast with the presidential election last year where voters came early, and finished hours before the stipulated closing time.

Students were a serious factor in this and other elections of universal suffrage.

At secondary schools and Institutions of higher learning such as Kigali Institute of Education, students largely determined the result because of 'a numbers advantage.'

There were reports of local leaders directly influencing the vote in this way, in Nyagatovu cell in Kimironko Sector in Gasabo district.

This distortion also occurred in Gihisi sector in Nyanza, another student-dominated polling station.

Observers from the Civil Society Observation Mission at hand to monitor the elections concur that this phase the election passed peacefully, with Prime Minister Makuza Bernard remarking that Rwandese have matured politically and 'long are the days when citizens quaked on hearing about elections.'

The second phase on February 13, 2011 at the cell level involved elections for women and representatives to the National Women Council. However, due to serious delays and lack of quorum in many places the elections were postponed to the next day. This was evident in places such as Nyamagana, in Ruhango District and, Gahogo in Muhanga Districts and several other districts where voting was out of duty rather than enthusiasm. This demonstrates a gap of voter-education especially targeting women.

This was evident in Kigali and southern province because of work people had to do before turning up for elections in some locations those supposed to elect not showing up or appearing late leading to postponement of voting to the next day. The Executive Secretary of NEC Charles Munyaneza said this happened in a few cells.

The only stage where universal suffrage by balloting happened was on 21st Feb to elect district councilors and NEC reported voter turnout of 93%. It is among these councilors that district mayors and their deputies were later chosen from.

N.B

This article was posted by CSEOM/ Rwanda civil Society Platform