



Zimbabwe Elections – March 2005

Objective:

- To explore democracy, the election of leaders and fair and free elections.

You will need:

- A3 paper (one piece for each group)
- Copies of Zimbabwe Goes to the Vote (one copy for each group)
- Copies of Election Results (one copy for each group)

Time: 45-60 minutes

Instructions:

- Divide the class into groups of four and ask them to discuss how leaders are elected in a democracy.
- After a few minutes ask each group in turn to summarise their thoughts and record their responses on a board or flipchart.
- Using their combined ideas ask the groups to construct a flow chart to show the different stages of an election and to think of as many ways as you can that an election could be unfair.
- Discuss with the class what makes a good leader then give each group a copy of the 'Zimbabwe Goes to Vote' sheet and ask them to decide who they would vote for and why.
- Find out who the class would vote for by a show of hands then give each group a copy of the 'Election Result' sheet and ask them:
 - Who won the election?
 - Do they think the election was fair?
 - Do they think Morgan Tsvangirai should have won?
 - If Morgan Tsvangirai had won would he improve the lives of Zimbabweans?


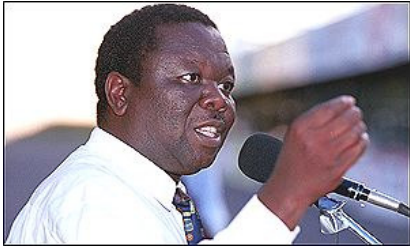


Zimbabwe Goes to the Vote March 2005

Up until 1979 Zimbabwe was a country called Rhodesia and ruled by a white minority government. In 1980 free elections were held; Robert Mugabe was elected president and independence for Zimbabwe was declared.

Before the general elections, President Robert Mugabe called for “zero tolerance” to violence, a thing that was common in previous elections. Violence and allegations of widespread vote rigging tainted the last general elections in 2000 and the presidential elections in 2002. There were 85 officially reported deaths and 152 displaced families in the presidential elections of 2002. The MDC claimed at least 100 of its supporters were killed in that campaign, including the driver of leader Morgan Tsvangirai and two other members of his campaign team who were burnt to death when their car was set on fire by suspected Zanu-PF militants.

The Candidates

Robert Mugabe Zanu-PF	Morgan Tsvangirai MDC
	
<p>Robert Mugabe, now aged 78, was a leader of Zanu-PF during the guerrilla war during the 1970s. World opinion saw him as a revolutionary hero, fighting racist white minority rule for the freedom of his people.</p> <p>Since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 and the election of Robert Mugabe as president, the world has moved on - but his outlook remains the same. The heroic socialist forces of Zanu-PF are still fighting the twin evils of capitalism and colonialism.</p> <p>One of the undoubted achievements of the former teacher's 25 years in power is the expansion of education. Zimbabwe has the highest literacy rate in Africa at 85% of the population. Ironically, though, by expanding education young beneficiaries are now able to analyse Zimbabwe's problems for themselves and most blame government corruption and mismanagement for the lack of jobs and rising prices.</p> <p>His opponents, in particular the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), are labelled "sell-outs" to white and foreign interests and, as during the war, this tag has been a death warrant for many MDC supporters.</p>	<p>Morgan Tsvangirai, now aged 53, rose from working in a mine to become one of the most important political figures in Zimbabwe.</p> <p>When he was 22 years old he began working in the mines and after being plant foreman of the Bindura Nickel Mine for 10 years, he climbed the unionist ladder until in 1988, he was elected secretary-general of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions.</p> <p>As Zimbabwe's economy declined and workers' living standards plummeted, the ZCTU took an increasingly political role. When Mr Mugabe tried to raise income tax to pay pensions for veterans of the 1970s war of independence, a ZCTU-organised nationwide strike forced him to back down.</p> <p>Morgan Tsvangirai, a former miner and trade unionist and a social democrat at heart, is the figurehead for all the disparate groups opposed to Mr Mugabe: unemployed and low-wage black workers; wealthy white farmers and industrialists and ethnic Ndebeles who remember the government's murderous campaign against them in the early 1980s.</p>

Election Results



The opposition (MDC) won 42 out of 120 elected parliamentary seats. The ruling Zanu-PF won 78 seats. Robert Mugabe can appoint another 30 MPs to parliament. After the election results, MDC spokesman David Cotart said, "...Aside from all allegations of the use of food as a political weapon, there were systematic and fundamental violations of the electoral laws by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission". There were more ballots counted than the number of people who actually voted in some constituencies Mr. Cotart claimed.

There was a considerable decrease in election related violence. Only 25 cases of assault were reported before polling day. The worst incidence in the campaign occurred in February, when a gang of about 30 youths from the ruling party went on the rampage in the town of Norton west of Harare, beating up opposition supporters and stabbing a police officer. Confirming the situation this year, Police Chief Superintendent Wayne Bvudzijena said "this year we have not recorded any deaths". Muyarandi Bindi, Director of Zimbabwe Human Rights Association also said the call for a "zero tolerance to violence" had an impact.

The opposition believes violence never came down. They argued that although there were no deaths or serious violence as the police chief confirmed, violence is violence even if it involves slapping someone in the face or tearing a poster down. Movement for Democracy (MDC) spokesman Paul Themba Nyathi said that "ZANU PF has invested in a culture of violence for a long time and what we have now is a nation of traumatised people who will be apprehensive to any hint of violence".

The director of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace said that the claim about a decrease in violence is misleading. "I know of areas that are still no go areas for supporters of certain political parties, so to say there has been a decrease in cases of violence would be adopting a simplistic approach".

