

# PLANACT's REPORT ON THE NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

**2024** in  
South Africa

Submitted on 21 June 2024 to the  
Independent Election Commission

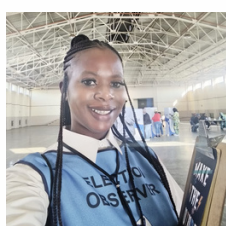
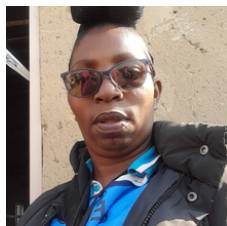
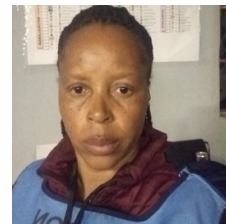
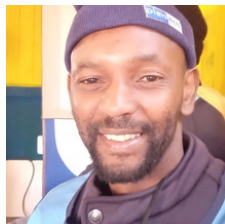
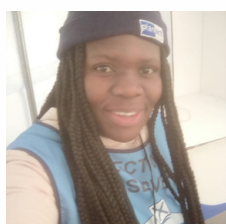
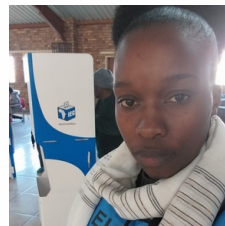
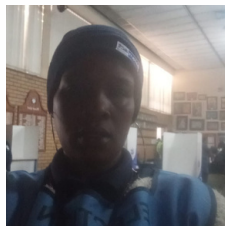
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*All pictures used in this report were supplied by Planact's election observer team.*

# ELECTION OBSERVERS

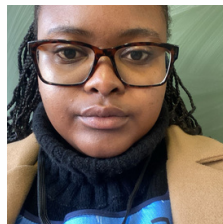
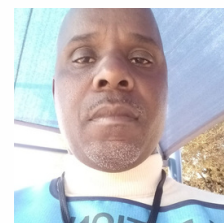
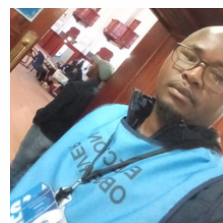
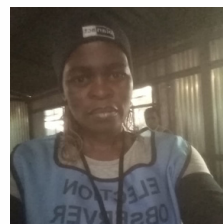
## Gauteng and Mpumalanga





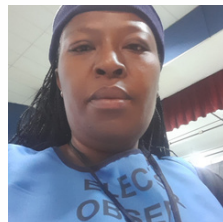
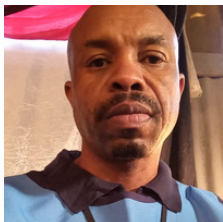
# ELECTION OBSERVERS

## Gauteng and Mpumalanga



# ELECTION OBSERVERS

## Gauteng and Mpumalanga





# VOTING STATION



SOUTH AFRICA

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planact deployed observers to various Voting Stations in the provinces of Gauteng and Mpumalanga to observe the 2024 National and Provincial Elections (NPE) process.

The observers reported that the election was generally free and fair, with some minor concerns noted.

The report highlights challenges with voter registration, voter education, and the use of Voter Management Devices (VMDs). It was also noted that the election staff and officials require more training, and that queue management needs improvement.

The report concludes with recommendations for improving the election process, including intensifying voter awareness and education, optimising VMDs, and providing better training for election staff.

Overall, the report suggests that while the election was successful, there are areas for improvement to enhance the voting experience and ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

## INTRODUCTION

In January 2024, Planact, a Non-Governmental Organisation focusing on civic state relations, and participatory democracy, successfully applied for observer accreditation status with the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC).

The accreditation certificate was granted on 5 February 2024 in terms of section 86 of the Electoral Act, 1998.

The organisation received a one-year accreditation for observing the 2024 NPE on the condition that it strictly adheres to the Code for Accredited Observers.

This report summarises the observations and experiences of Planact NPE Observer Mission (Observer Mission).

The elections presented an opportunity for alignment with Planact's work on civic and political education and highlight Planact's Strengthening Grassroot Voices programme.

Planact's role in the elections and specifically in the observer mission was inspired and guided by the constitutional values set out in section 1 of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which enshrines fundamental values, including; "[u]niversal adult suffrage, a national common voters roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness."

Planact further played an active role as part of its commitment to building more democratic and accountable governance systems that are responsive to the needs of citizens, especially those communities that are most vulnerable.

Regular elections are an important part of the country's democracy contributing to long-term development outcomes and laying a foundation for responsive governance.



## OBSERVER RECRUITMENT

Planact has a strategic partnership with informal settlement communities in three provinces where Clusters of Community Agency (CCA) leadership forums have been established.

Planact turned to its partner communities to recruit observers from different regions thereby expanding its presence and reach across key cities.

The focus of recruitment was on existing CCAs in Gauteng and Mpumalanga that have representatives from different communities to achieve the desired spread.

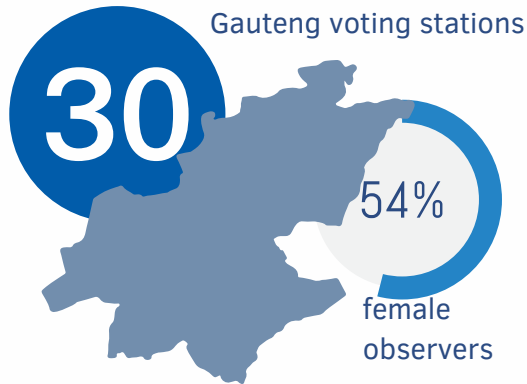
Planact had observers in at least one community from its partner communities in the two provinces. Planact also invited interested staff members to join the Observer Mission and the response was positive with 50% of staff volunteering.

The total number of accredited Planact Observer Mission was 48, however, 41 observers made themselves available for the task eventually. Most of those who could not make it presented valid reasons.

In Gauteng, Planact had observers stationed at 30 different Voting Stations (see table below). This covered major areas in all regions in the City of Ekurhuleni, three regions in the City of Johannesburg and two regions in the City of Tshwane.

An emphasis was placed on recruiting women and youth to the Observer Mission to present an opportunity for these categories of people to take part in this democratic process.

Planact's Observer Mission in Gauteng had a fair representation with 54% of observers being female and a substantial number of young people.

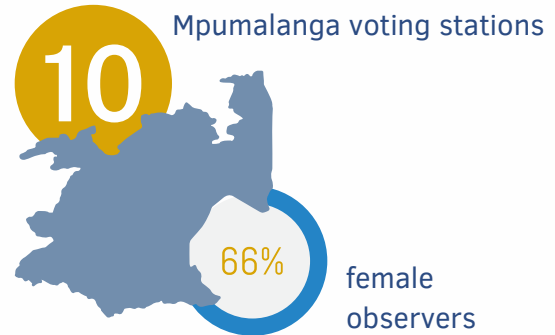


*Above: The number of voting stations and female observers in Gauteng.*

In Mpumalanga, Planact focused their Observer Mission on Emalahleni Local Municipality.

The 12 observers were placed at 10 different Voting Stations throughout the municipality and provided a comprehensive spread across informal settlements, farm plots and peri-urban areas.

66% of Planact observers in Mpumalanga were female - a testament to the mission's dedication to making vulnerable groups visible in democratic processes.



*Above: The number of polling stations and female observers in Mpumalanga.*

The table below shows all the stations where the Planact observers carried out their mission:

PROVINCE	CITY	VD NUMBER
Gauteng	City of Tshwane	32980372
Gauteng	City of Tshwane	32952056
Gauteng	City of Johannesburg	32871326
Gauteng	City of Johannesburg	32910140
Gauteng	City of Johannesburg	33060024
Gauteng	City of Johannesburg	32862652
Gauteng	City of Johannesburg	32860694
Gauteng	City of Johannesburg	32862663
Gauteng	City of Johannesburg	32910050
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33030537
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33030335
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33010018

PROVINCE	CITY	VD NUMBER
Gauteng	City of Ekurhukeni	33030448
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33080093
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	32900295
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	32900217
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	32900228
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	32910443
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	32862483
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33020524
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33020109
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	32900217
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33090106
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33030469




PROVINCE	CITY	VD NUMBER
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33010142
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	32860010
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33030355
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33020524
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	32910544
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	33010052
Gauteng	City of Ekurhuleni	32362641
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni Local Municipality	54700051
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni Local Municipality	54650101
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni Local Municipality	54700129
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni Local Municipality	54650741
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni Local Municipality	54700095

PROVINCE	CITY	VD NUMBER
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni Local Municipality	54700084
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni Local Municipality	54700021
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni Local Municipality	54490057
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni Local Municipality	54650101

ELECTION DATE	290524
ELECTION TYPE	X X M B
VD NUMBER	54490024
WARD NUMBER	83104001
BALLOT BOX SEQUENCE	
MUNICIPAL CODE	MP314
PROVINCE	MPUMALANGA

SUB-REGIONAL



SOUTH AFRICA

ELECTION DATE	290524
ELECTION TYPE	X X M B
VD NUMBER	54490057
WARD NUMBER	83104001
BALLOT BOX SEQUENCE	
MUNICIPAL CODE	MP314
PROVINCE	MPUMALANGA


SUB-PROVINCIAL



SOUTH AFRICA

ELECTION DATE	290524
ELECTION TYPE	X X M B
VD NUMBER	54490057
WARD NUMBER	83104001
BALLOT BOX SEQUENCE	
MUNICIPAL CODE	MP314
PROVINCE	MPUMALANGA

SUB-REGIONAL



SOUTH AFRICA

## OBSERVER TRAINING

In the run-up to observer training Planact held voter education sessions in Gauteng. These were done in collaboration with Good Governance Africa, Media Monitoring Africa and Centre for Faith and Community at the University of Pretoria.

Planact's partner organisations were able to provide context on the tense political climate the election was taking place in as well as valuable information about misinformation and disinformation during the election period.

In both Mpumalanga and Gauteng, training for the Observer Mission took place over several days to ensure enough time for observers to process the information and ask questions to seek clarity on any issues they were not sure about.

In Mpumalanga, the 13 observers were trained over two days in the same venue. The first day was a general voter education session where an outreach officer from the IEC explained the new procedures for the upcoming elections and what voters should expect.



*Above: Mpumalanga observers after their two-day IEC observer training.*



Various demonstrations showed community partners what the new ballot papers looked like as well as cleared up any rumours and misconceptions that observers heard in their communities and circles.

The second day was dedicated to the observer process and what the Planact observers should be on the lookout for, and most importantly understanding the observer code of conduct

In Gauteng, the observer training was also spread out over different days to provide a comprehensive training programme and provide observers with information that would be valuable in carrying out their responsibilities. Planact hosted two separate general voter education days in partnership with peer organisations within the province.

The IEC outreach officer assigned were able to provide information on the new processes in the upcoming elections and clear up any misconceptions that the observers may have had.



*Above: Gauteng observers received training from the IEC in collaboration with partner organisations.*

Just as in Mpumalanga, the observer's training took place on a separate day where the designated IEC outreach officer was able to explain the details of the process and what was expected from observers.

## SPECIAL VOTING DAY

Planact made a conscious decision to focus primarily on the main voting day. However, the Planact mission had a small delegation of observers who observed the special voting days at selected Voting Stations, in Gauteng and Mpumalanga.

This small observation sample gave insight into how the election process was made free and fair for voters who require assistance.

Most of the stations observed opened on time except VD: 32862483 which opened after 10:00 due to ballot papers and the list of special voters arriving late.

All stations observed had a small official component with staff having to perform double duties in some stations.

None of the observers were able to follow the IEC officials for the home visits, however, all observers reported seeing the Presiding Officers present the list, bag and ballots that would be used for home visits.

Members of the South African Police Services (SAPS) soon came to the stations to escort the IEC officials on their home visits. VD: 32910364 reported that while the Presiding Officer was out on home visits, the role was immediately assumed by the Deputy Presiding Officer.

Voters with any impairments were assisted in the station by IEC officials under the close observation of Party Agents. The Voting Stations closed at 17:00 with no reports of stations having to open longer. The ballot boxes were sealed in front of all observers and Party Agents. The Planact Observer Mission noted that those who could not exercise their special vote on the designated days were allowed to vote on 29 May 2024.

## MAIN VOTING DAY *Station Opening*

On 29 May, Planact instructed that all observers participating in the observation mission be at their designated stations no later than 6:45 to effectively observe the opening of each station.

Most of the stations observed by the Planact mission personnel opened on time with eight Voting Stations opening after 07:00 (VDs: 33060024, 33030335, 32862483, 33020109, 32900317, 32862652 and 54650101, 32950548).

Observers reported the reasons for the stations opening late varied from the IEC staff not having the keys to the venue, IEC staff stuck in traffic and voter material not being present at the venue by 07:00.

Another reason is that ballot boxes still needed to be opened and sealed appropriately, which took time.

One Voting Station observed by a Planact observer reported opening at 10:00 (VD: 54700095). While the late opening were reported in fewer cases, this remains a concern for attention.



**Above:** Voting station opening proceedings, showing empty ballot boxes to Party Agents and Observers.

## Venue

The Planact Observer Mission was deployed across different venues. There were no significant problems reported with the Voting Stations at schools and community halls.

Observers noted that the ballot booths were set far apart enough to ensure privacy for voters and had enough walking room to ensure the smooth flow of voters in the venue.

Some of the Voting Stations were reported to be too small to accommodate the process, like (VD: 32871326) where there was not enough room for all the IEC officials to comfortably sit/stand at their posts.

Temporary Voting Stations like the tent at (VD: 33030537) were too small to accommodate IEC officials and voting material, resulting in compromised privacy for voters.



*Above: ATM voting booth setup and placement of ballot boxes at two voting stations.*



## Venue



The IEC's mandatory "ATM style" setting of ballot booths could not be followed properly because the venue was too small that voters' secrecy would have been compromised had the staff continued with that setting style which was seen at VD: 33030469.

Because the NPE took place in winter, the tent was found to be unsuitable, especially after sunset.



*Above: Voting station setup in a tent presented space issues that was unsuitable for voter secrecy.*

## Safety and Security

The observer team reported that there were adequate law enforcement agents present at the Voting Stations in the form of SAPS, Metro Police, Traffic Police and Community Policing Forums.

The presence of law enforcement agents greatly aided the voting process with their intervention during instances of theft (VD: 33030448) and fights (VD: 33080093).

Most observers noted that voters generally conducted themselves respectfully, and small conflicts were quickly resolved by presiding officers on their own in most cases.

Planact noted that the IEC put sufficient safety and security measures in place, such as allowing observers and party agents to note down sealing tags, to ensure that voters were not denied their right to vote, and this is applauded.



*Above: Party Agents and Observers acknowledged the safety measures with tagged and sealed ballot boxes.*

## Safety and Security

Law enforcement agents were either always present or paid frequent visits to the Voting Stations.

They intervened decisively where the nature of conflicts were beyond the capacity of the presiding officers. Emergency services were reported at less than 20% of the Voting Stations observed by the Planact mission.

This was especially concerning at stations where voters fainted in the long queues in the sun, or experienced other conditions such as at VD 33010018 where a voter collapsed.

While, it is not expected that emergency services be stationed in every Voting District, it is important to consider their easy and swift access in an event such elections.



*Above: Law enforcement was present at voting stations throughout the day or made frequent visits.*

## IEC Officials and Staff

During the Special Voting days, observers noted that IEC officials were well-trained and able to deal with most of the issues that would arise at the station.

However, on the main voting day, observers reported that the stations were not well equipped for the large influx of voters.

It was apparent that the staff recruited for the main voting day did not receive sufficient training and this slowed down the flow of voters and queues outside and inside the Voting Stations.

Presiding officers did follow different protocols when handling voters who did not complete their Sections 24A notices; some would only give the voters the national ballot, while others would turn the voters away completely.

There was an observation that some staff members at Voting Stations did not wear their IEC t-shirts in time or for most of the day. Some staff members also did not put on their nametags.

This had a negative effect concerning the visibility of IEC staff. Despite these issues, all observers noted that the IEC staff and officials generally upheld their duty to conduct free and fair elections.



*Above: IEC staff marking voters off the Voter's Roll and the VMD.*





*Above: IEC staff collaborated effectively with party agents and observers.*

A particular concern at VD 32950548 that was observed was the difficulty voters had to fit their ballot papers in the ballot box with the ballot papers being so lengthy.

Party Agents and some observers also urged voting staff to colour code the boxes to reduce confusion for voters and this was duly done.

Ballot boxes also got quite full and staff had to use a ruler to press the papers down.



*Above: Voters had difficulty placing ballots correctly, leading to ballot box color-coding at voting stations.*

## Voters Roll and Voters Management Device

The voters roll and the VMD were reported as a challenge across most of the stations where the Planact mission observed the elections.

While very few observers noted that the machines were working well and improved the voting process (VD: 33020109 and 54700129), most reports noted that the devices were not working.

In some instances, the VMDs were affected due to networks being down. Most of the VMDs were reported to struggle with the network and spent a significant portion of the voting day offline.

In the instances where the devices did eventually pick up the network; the VMDs did not align with the physical voters roll and caused a lot of confusion, slowing the queues down.

To address the concerns around the VMD, it was noted that a manual handwritten register was used to record voters' information.

The Voters Roll was also reported as a major challenge on the voting day due to the number of voters who were turned away when their names did not appear.

Many observers noted that many voters were not aware of the requirements concerning the Section 24A provision and would be turned away at the doors of the Voting Stations after waiting in long queues.

Voters who were previously registered to particular Voting Stations were not guaranteed on the voters roll and this caused many conflicts with some voters refusing to leave the station when their names did not appear on the roll (VD: 7 32910364).

## Voters Roll and Voters Management Device

Planact mission noted that the management of the voters roll including the use of the VMD was the main downside of the elections process.

This had the potential to be a factor in the lower voter turnout as many people who were frustrated would have given up on voting on the day despite the intention to vote.

There is need for improvement in this regard.



# Voter Behaviour

Voters showed an unrivalled determination to cast their vote on the main voting day despite the heat and long queues. Many new voters were excited to be part of the process and contribute to shaping their democracy.

Voters were distressed by the long queues and waiting hours in the heat. One of the Planact observers monitored and noted that it took a voter more than one hour from the start of the queue to the end in the afternoon (VD 32862483).

These delays were mostly attributed to the non-performance of the VMDs and the lack of sufficient training for queue walkers.

Until late in the evening, long queues were visible outside Voting Stations and voters were getting rowdy with numerous reports from observers about some voters getting to the station under the influence of alcohol or still drinking in queues.



*Above: Voters faced long queues but remained determined to vote on election day.*

# Voter Behaviour

1

Observers noted that the clear IEC branding they wore made them targets for harassment and verbal attacks from frustrated voters in some instances.

2

Political parties had their small tents (gazebos) outside Voting Stations and observers noted that the party deployments carried themselves with respect and dignity in the majority of instances.

3

There were no reports of loud music or harassing voters with flyers and regalia, except in very few cases.

4

Observers noted that many of the party tents were simply selling their merchandise for enthusiastic supporters to wear as they cast their votes.

There were reports of ANC tables having copies of the voters roll in Tshwane. This raised concern as to the protocols regarding this information.

## Observers and Party Agents

Planact observers were scattered across different Voting Stations with different conditions.

No reports were received concerning obstacles for Planact observers to access Voting Stations. In the vast majority of these Voting Stations, Planact noted that the only observers present were from its mission.

In a few Voting Stations observers noted the presence of other local observers, while some were international observers from either Russia, Kenya and the United States of America.

Presiding officers in different VDs used inconsistent diaries to sign observers into their Voting Stations. This left the question as to why this was the case.

**The low number of local observers from different organisations at Voting Stations is a cause for concern.**

Easy access and the presence of Party Agents were consistent and noted in all the reports Planact received from their observers.

Due to the large number of political parties participating in the election, there was a large variety of political parties reported by observers including (but not limited to): ANC, DA, EFF, UAT, UDM, MK, PA, Action SA, Rise Mzansi FF+, etc.

Larger venues like schools and halls were able to accommodate at least two Party Agents per party during the voting process but smaller and temporary stations had to rotate the parties observing as not to crowd voters casting their votes.



## Station Closing

The closing time of 21h00 was not met from the information provided in the reports from a majority of the Planact observers.

As an organisation, Planact proposed that observation be ended by 19:00 for the safety of observers who may not have been able to arrange reliable transport in the evening.

Those who managed to stay for the closing reported stations staying open as late as 23:30 and waiting until the early hours of the morning to start observing the counting.

Boxes were sealed in front of observers and Party Agents who also confirmed that the sealed boxes from the Special Votes were also brought out for inspection before opening and counting.



*Above: Observers who stayed for the voting station closing and vote counting.*

Ballot Box

ELECTION DATE	29	05	24
ELECTION TYPE	A	P	B
VD NUMBER	32900217		
WARD NUMBER	80		
BALLOT BOX SEQUENCE	4	-6	
MUNICIPAL CODE			
PROVINCE	Gauteng		

IEC SOUTH AFRICA

Ballot Box

ELECTION DATE	29	05	24
ELECTION TYPE	A	P	B
VD NUMBER	32900217		
WARD NUMBER	80		
BALLOT BOX SEQUENCE	4	-6	
MUNICIPAL CODE			
PROVINCE	Gauteng		

IEC SOUTH AFRICA

Ballot Box

ELECTION DATE	29	05	24
ELECTION TYPE	N	P	M
VD NUMBER	32900217		
WARD NUMBER	80		
BALLOT BOX SEQUENCE	1	-6	
MUNICIPAL CODE			
PROVINCE	Gauteng		

IEC SOUTH AFRICA

Ballot Box

ELECTION DATE	29	05	24
ELECTION TYPE	N	P	M
VD NUMBER	32900217		
WARD NUMBER	80		
BALLOT BOX SEQUENCE	1	-6	
MUNICIPAL CODE			
PROVINCE	Gauteng		

IEC SOUTH AFRICA

Ballot Box

ELECTION DATE	29	05	24
ELECTION TYPE	N	P	M
VD NUMBER	32900217		
WARD NUMBER	80		
BALLOT BOX SEQUENCE	6	-6	
MUNICIPAL CODE			
PROVINCE	Gauteng		

IEC SOUTH AFRICA

# Conclusion and Recommendations

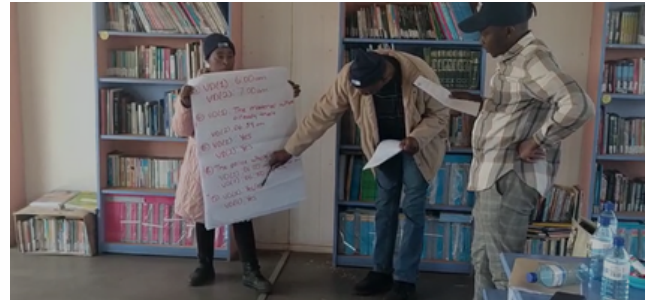
The 2024 National and Provincial Election marks Planact's second Observer Mission.

**All observers support the IEC's declaration of the elections being free and fair.**

Despite hiccups, logistical oversights, and capacity issues the elections were successfully carried out to the delight of first-time and seasoned voters.

Despite the tense atmosphere brought by recent changes and developments, the Independent Electoral Commission continues to carry out its mandate with professionalism

The reports collected by the Planact Observer Mission flagged some major obstacles during the election process that started conversations on how it can be improved.



*Above: Post election observer debriefing in Mpumalanga*

**Post the elections, Planact hosted a debrief session for the observers in Gauteng and one in Mpumalanga.**

**These sessions amplified the discussion on how some of the problems faced by voters can be avoided in upcoming elections. Below are some of the recommendations made by the observers:**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on debrief sessions with election observers after the elections.

1

Voter awareness and education needs to be intensified to ensure that the public is aware of any crucial changes to the voting system such as the new rules around voter registrations.

2

Proof of registration, like the proof of an approved Section 24A, should be provided to voters to resolve disputes concerning voters not appearing on the Voters Roll.

3

The Voter Management Devices and related interface should be optimised to ensure that the devices speed up the voting process. The IEC need to improve its network services for efficiency.

4

Election staff and officials should receive comprehensive training to provide a better understanding of their roles and functions in the station on the day of voting.

5

The debrief given to station support staff on the day of elections is not sufficient. A three-day workshop would imprint the importance of work that all staff do on the day of elections.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on debrief sessions with election observers after the elections.

6

The criteria for Special Votes should be well publicised to avoid the slowing of queues on main election day due to numerous voters being brought to the front of the line.

7

Education about independent candidates should be increased and improved to ensure that voters make informed decisions when voting.

8

The definition of a “suitable” Voting Station should be revised to ensure a conducive environment, this is particularly important for temporary Voting Stations.

9

A stronger focus on marketing and communications to create more visibility and awareness surrounding election processes, regulations and rules would ensure better voter knowledge and appeal to younger/first-time voters.

10

Queue/voter management must be intensified to avoid stations closing late resulting in voters standing in long lines, exposed to the elements.



Connect with us  
Email: [info@planact.org.za](mailto:info@planact.org.za)

Social Media:  
[@planact\\_ngo](#)

Call us:  
011 403 6291  
071 938 0577

Contributors: Siphwe Segodi and Wetu Memela  
Designed by: Chelsea Ndlovu-Nachamba and Kiara Britton