

Tools for transparency

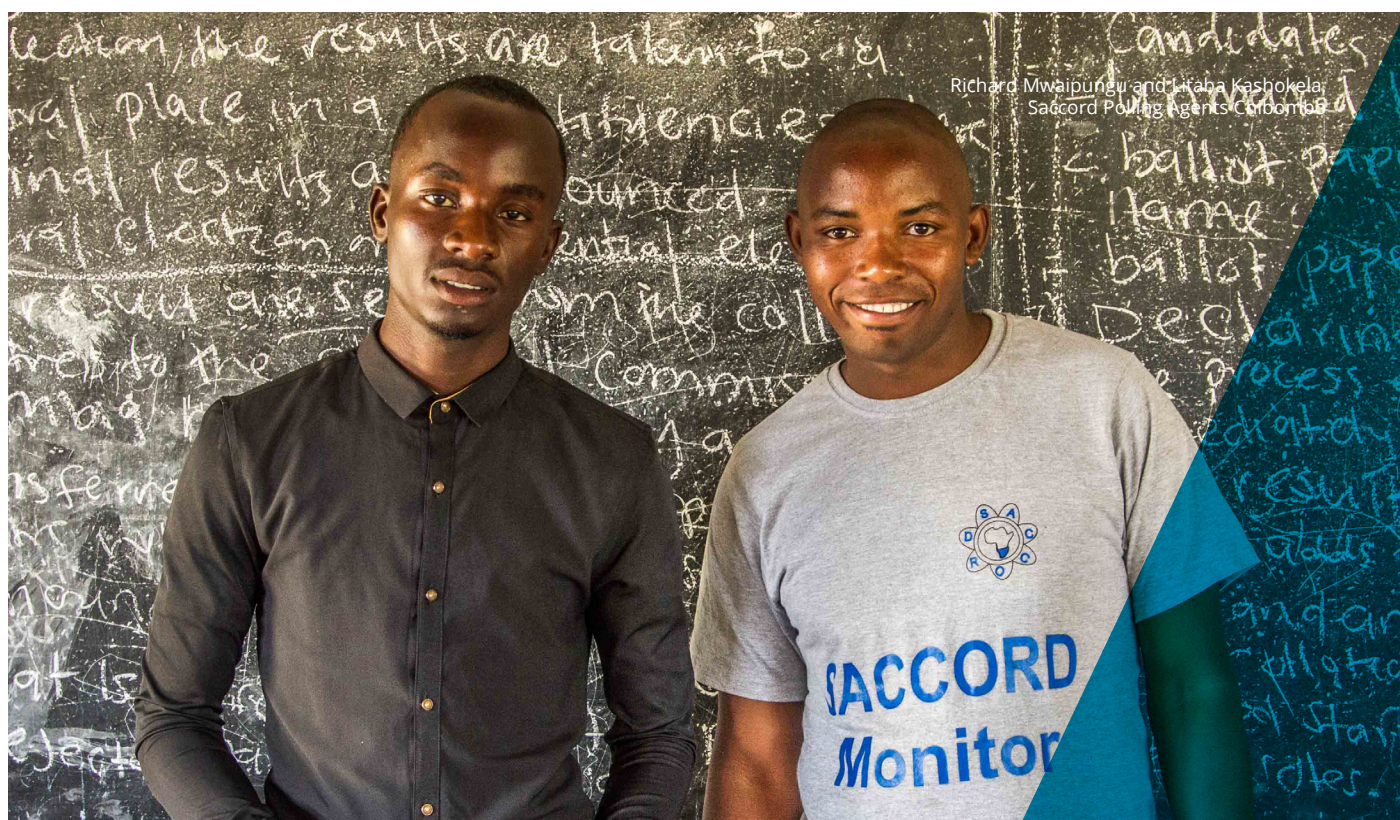


I got involved in election monitoring because I am a Zambian and I wanted to help people have trust in the voting process.



Richard Mwaipungu was a first time election monitor and one of over 9,000 election polling agents trained to participate in the 2016 general elections.

In past elections, a challenge has been deploying monitors to all provinces to ensure that there is nationwide transparency and accountability in the election process. From December 2015 to 2016, the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA), with the support of the Zambia Accountability Programme (ZAP), worked with five local civil society organisations: the Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP), CARITAS Zambia, the Southern African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (SACCORD), the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) and Transparency International Zambia (TIZ), to train and deploy monitors in all constituencies. In the past, the approach to election observation had been inconsistent and deployment plans had not been synchronised. As a result, observers have mostly been concentrated in urban areas, leaving out many hard to reach rural areas.



Richard Mwaipungu and Litaba Kashokela
Saccord Polling Agents Curriculum

Reaching all constituencies

“The idea was to cover the whole country, so that was a first. Both FODEP and SACCORD were in every province and they got to work in areas that they never worked in before and this widened their networks,” said EISA Country Director, Dr Catherine Masuva.

Using technology

The 2016 elections made use of mobile technology for monitors to communicate directly with the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ). **“We were given dial-in numbers to call in the event of an irregularity at the polling station on election day. There were specific numbers for different irregularities so that ECZ could easily know the particular problem at a polling station,”** said Mr Litaba Kashokela, a SACCORD polling agent based in Chisamba. To encourage the conduct of “free, fair and credible elections devoid of electoral malpractices”, a text messaging system was established with a database of citizens and candidates. An average of three messages were sent per day with various messages on avoiding malpractices in elections. Monitors created a Whatsapp group to communicate with each other across the different polling stations.



10 radio stations aired programmes on voter sensitisation



60 radio adverts and 55 TV adverts reaching approximately 1.5 million people



217 election anti-corruption educators deployed across all provinces



400 elections candidates sensitised (120 women and 280 men) on electoral malpractices

FODEP and SACCORD trained over 9,000 election monitors and achieved their goal of having one monitor at each polling station.

The programme had an impact in rural areas that were neglected in previous elections. The use of technology enhanced accountability and transparency in the election process.