



SHOWSTOPPERS OF 2027 ELECTIONS

MAJOR RED FLAGS REQUIRING THE COMMISSION'S URGENT ATTENTION

With approximately one year remaining before the General Election, the following matters constitute major red flags requiring urgent Commission-level decisions and intervention:

1. BUDGETARY CUTS

Why it requires urgent attention

FY 2026/2027 is the most critical period for election preparation. The allocation of only **Ksh. 41** billion, is grossly inadequate. The resulting funding gaps, particularly in personnel wages, transport and election technology, may significantly undermine implementation of the Election Operations Plan. The Commission must urgently secure adequate funding and ensure timely and predictable exchequer releases. When the funding comes very late in the day it may not help much especially in procurement matters.

Potential impact

The Commission may be compelled to reduce, delay or cancel critical activities. This could affect recruitment and payment of personnel, procurement of technology, transportation of materials and nationwide deployment, ultimately compromising operational readiness as well as pending bills.

Recommendation

The Commission should work out strategies to get the budget deficit covered. In the event there is no adequate budget committed, we should let the key stakeholders know that we have no budget to run the critical matters of the General Elections so that we craft a way forward on interventions or adjustments in full knowledge of the stakeholders.

2. DELAYED PROCUREMENT OF BALLOT PAPERS, TECHNOLOGY AND OTHER CRITICAL MATERIALS

Why it requires urgent attention

Major election procurements require sufficient time for tendering, dispute resolution, contracting, production, testing and deployment. Experiences from the 2013, 2017 and 2022 elections demonstrate that vendor disputes and litigation can consume a substantial part of the election calendar. In the 2022 General Election, the major international tenders were already advertised by May 2021. In 2013 the delay resulted in poor testing of technology and consequently there was the failure.

Potential impact

Further delay may leave the Commission without adequate time to conclude procurement and address challenges arising from administrative reviews or litigation. Critical materials or systems may not be available when required, jeopardizing conduct of the election. As per the EOP timelines simulation of election technology is slotted in February, 2027. This will be preceded by robust stakeholder engagement. Further delay will result in inadequate stakeholder buy ins. The Commission may not have adequate time to test and remedy the areas that will have come from testing and simulations.

Recommendation

The tenders of critical and strategic items should be out as soon as possible to enable us to salvage the already lost time.

3. UNCERTAINTY REGARDING KIEMS KITS AND ELECTION TECHNOLOGY

Why it requires urgent attention

The independent technical assessment by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy reportedly raised serious concerns regarding the condition and suitability of the existing KIEMS kits. The relevant support and maintenance contract expired and was extended for few months. It is worth noting that ECVR II scheduled for early next year is dependent on availability of workable KIEMs and supporting systems and licenses. The transfer from one vendor to another in case there is a new vendor may be a challenge.

Potential impact

Unless the Commission urgently decides on the election technology to be deployed, the implementation of ECVR Phase II, biometric verification, audit of the register of voters and preparations for the 2027 General Election will remain uncertain, potentially affecting voter registration, voter identification and results transmission.

Recommendation

- 1.The Commission need to decide urgently on the technology to be used especially on the critical process of processing the register which includes ECVR II, verification, inspection, audit of the register. Without a credible register elections cannot happen.
- 2.If IEBC has a new Vendor in place of current service provider the Commission need to craft a strategy on how the transfer of critical credentials will happen e.g. Keys and Drivers.

4. LEGAL REFORMS

Why it requires urgent attention

Pending reforms affect election procedures, technology, conduct of election, voter registration, nominations and results management. The Commission cannot conclusively finalize specifications, manuals, forms, systems and training content while the applicable legal framework remains uncertain. Some of the proposals in the legal reform documents are meant to align with supreme court ruling and gaps noted in the last two electoral cycles. It should be noted that the last legal reform was done in 2016, even then it was only on technology.

Potential impact

Late reforms may require processes and procedures be revised. This may delay production, of training materials, delay the design of training program. create inconsistent procedures, compress training timelines and expose the Commission to injunctions or challenges against key electoral processes.

Recommendation

The Commission should be intentional on the pushing parliament to conclude all Bills related to elections.

5. PERSISTENT INADEQUACY OF VOTER EDUCATION

Why it requires urgent attention

Inadequate voter education has been evident during recent by-elections and ECVR exercises. The Commission requires an early and sustained voter education programme rather than interventions undertaken shortly before polling.

Potential impact

Failure to address the gap may create space for political actors and other parties to become the principal sources of electoral information.

6. GROWING MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Why it requires urgent attention

Deep fakes and false narratives relating to the Commission, voter register, election technology, procurement and results transmission are likely to intensify. The Commission requires a proactive communication, monitoring and rapid-response mechanism.

Potential impact

If not countered promptly, misinformation may erode trust in the Commission, discourage participation, threaten the safety of election officials and compromise integrity of election.

7. GOONISM, POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND ELECTORAL INSECURITY

Why it requires urgent attention

Recent electoral activities have demonstrated the growing use of organized groups to disrupt meetings, intimidate participants and interfere with electoral processes. The Commission should escalate this matter through the electoral security framework and demand timely enforcement of the law.

Potential impact

Continued impunity may embolden organized groups ahead of party primaries, campaigns, polling and tallying. Violence could restrict access to electoral areas, suppress voter participation, compromise staff safety and make it difficult for the Commission to conduct polling in affected areas.

Recommendation

The ESAP project should be activated immediately. Through this programme the strategies to deal with this menace should be crafted and shared with the relevant authorities.

8. DELAYED RECRUITMENT AND DELAYED SKILL AUDIT

Why it requires urgent attention

Existing staffing gaps and delayed recruitment may affect preparatory activities. The delayed skills audit means there are persons who are holding positions that they do not qualify or have the requisite skills audit of the docket they are holding.

Potential impact

Delayed action will overstretch existing staff and increase operational errors.

Recommendation

The skills audit and matching of jobs to qualification should be priority.

9. NATURAL CALAMITIES AND INADEQUATE BUSINESS-CONTINUITY ARRANGEMENTS

Why it requires urgent attention

Floods, drought and other natural calamities are foreseeable. The Commission must identify vulnerable electoral areas and approve alternative routes, reserve transport, backup facilities and continuity arrangements.

Potential impact

A natural calamity could isolate electoral areas, displace voters and prevent the movement. Polling may be disrupted or fail to take place in affected areas, delaying the declaration of results and exposing the election to legal challenge.

In conclusion, the immediate Commission-level decisions relate to election funding, procurement, KIEMS technology, legal reforms and staffing. Delays in these areas may soon become irreversible because the Commission must still accommodate procurement disputes, testing, training, stakeholder engagement and nationwide deployment before 10 August 2027.