SPEAK OUT AFRICA
...action beyond words

**ELECTION RADAR AND OBSERVATION MISSION (EROM) REPORT ON THE 2024 SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS**

South Africa

**ELECTION RADAR REPORT (ERAR)**
**JOHANNESBURG, 05 JUNE 2024**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BY SOAI

The Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI); as an independent actor of good governance embarked on a rigorous observation mission during the 2024 South African National and Provincial Elections, spanning multiple dimensions of the electoral process.

This extensive report encapsulates the culmination of our observations, commendations, and recommendations derived from a meticulous scrutiny of the electoral landscape. Our objective is to furnish an intricate analysis that looks into every facet of the electoral journey, encompassing the political milieu, legal constructs, operational mechanisms, voter engagement, and beyond.

Throughout our mission, SOAI meticulously x-ray the intricate layers of South Africa's electoral dynamics, aiming to capture the interplay between various stakeholders, processes, and outcomes. Our findings are distilled into a comprehensive narrative that not only elucidates the challenges and triumphs but also illuminates pathways toward enhancing the integrity and inclusivity of future electoral endeavors.

This report is not merely a recounting of events but a testament to our commitment to democratic ideals and our unwavering dedication to fostering transparent, accountable, and equitable electoral systems across the African continent.

Through our objective analysis, we assembled astute election and democracy experts across Africa to contribute meaningfully to the discourse surrounding electoral governance pre, during and post elections, offering insights that inform policy reforms, institutional enhancements, and grassroots mobilization efforts.

This report serves as a guide to stakeholders toward a future where electoral processes uphold the principles of democracy, facilitate robust citizen participation, and inspire confidence in the democratic journey.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The 2024 South African National and Provincial Elections marked a significant milestone in the country's democratic journey, representing the seventh elections held since the end of apartheid in 1994.

The Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI) recognized the importance of these elections in shaping the future trajectory of South Africa's democracy and deployed a delegation from 15 African countries comprising both local and international observers ably led by the Global Lead Director: Kenneth Eze cpm (Nigeria) to monitor the electoral process.
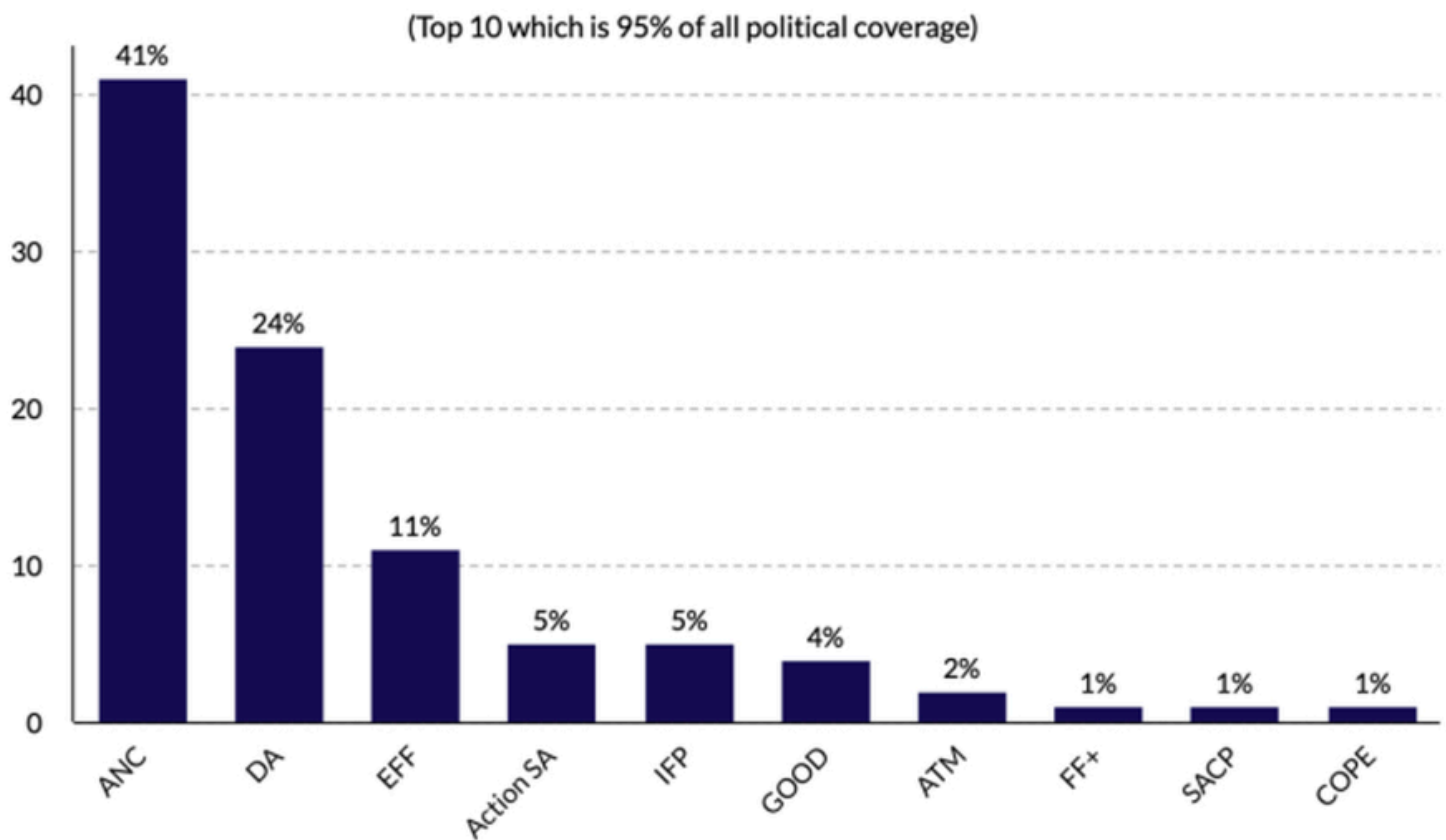


This comprehensive report aims to provide an in-depth analysis of various aspects of the electoral process, including the political context, legal framework, election management, voter registration, civic education, gender equality, the media environment, security measures, and the role of civil society organizations

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The primary objective of this report is to present the findings, commendable practices, and recommendations based on the observations made during the electoral period. By providing a detailed analysis of the electoral process, the report seeks to contribute to ongoing efforts to strengthen democratic governance, electoral integrity, and citizen participation in South Africa. Through a thorough examination of key areas such as campaign finance regulation, electoral systems, voter education, and electoral dispute resolution, the report aims to identify both strengths and challenges within the electoral framework and offer actionable recommendations for improvement.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY
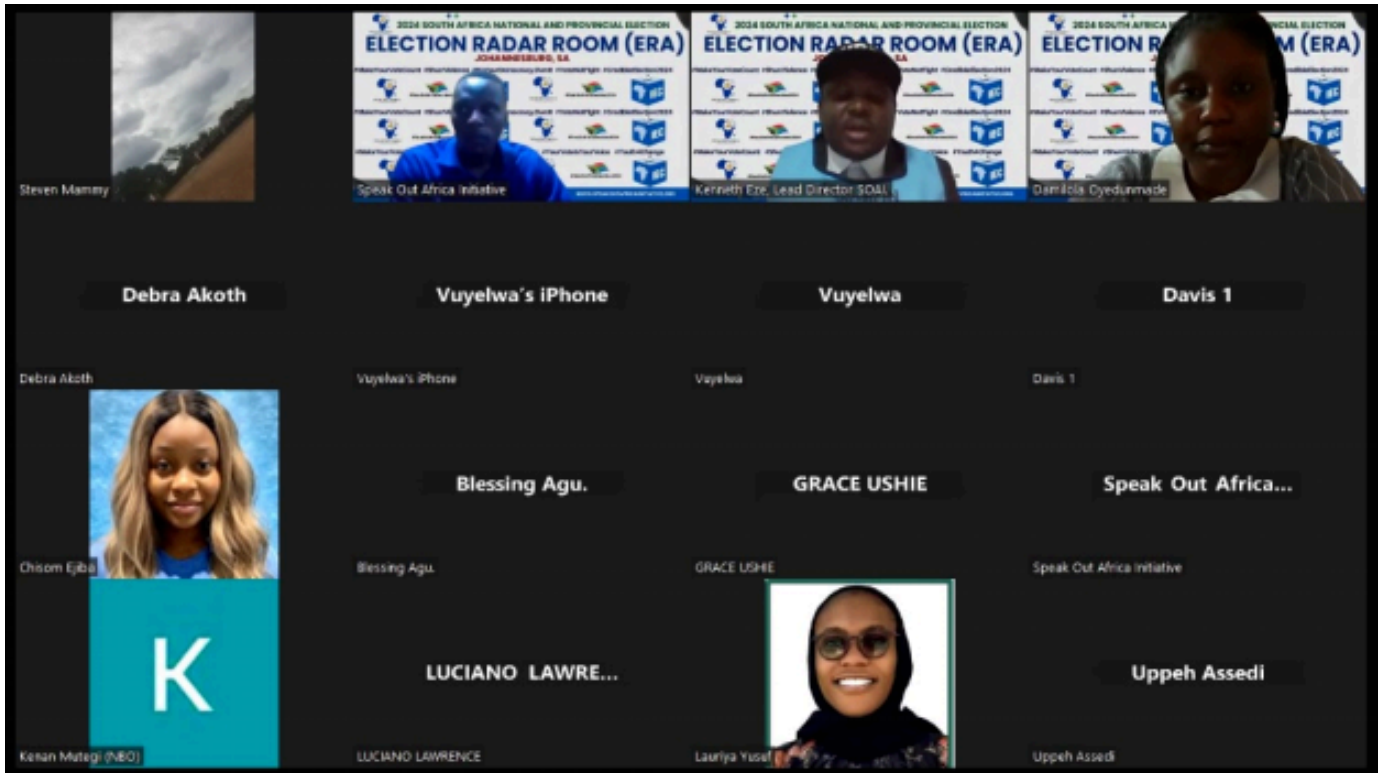
(Top 10 which is 95% of all political coverage)



The observation mission conducted by the Speak Out Africa (SOAI) Initiative employed a comprehensive methodology to assess various aspects of the electoral process. The delegation was deployed across all nine provinces of South Africa, ensuring comprehensive coverage of electoral activities, including special voting on May 28 and polling on May 29.

Observers utilized a range of data collection methods, including document reviews, interviews with electoral stakeholders, direct observation of polling stations, and analysis of media coverage. The data collected was analyzed systematically to identify trends, challenges, and best practices in the conduct of the elections.

## 1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured into several sections, each focusing on a specific aspect of the electoral process. Following this introduction, subsequent sections will provide detailed analyses of the political context surrounding the elections, the legal framework governing the electoral process, campaign finance regulation, electoral systems, election management, voter registration, civic and voter education initiatives, gender equality and social inclusion efforts, the media environment, security measures, the role of civil society organizations, and electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

The report will conclude with a summary of commendable practices observed during the elections, an overview of Election Day observations, and actionable recommendations for improving future electoral processes in South Africa.

## 2. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

### 2.1 POLITICAL CONTEXT

The 2024 General Elections unfolded against the backdrop of a highly competitive political landscape, characterized by the emergence of several new political parties and independent candidates seeking to challenge the dominance of established political entities. This increased competition injected a sense of dynamism into the electoral process, as parties vied for the support of the electorate through vigorous campaigning and policy debates. Despite initial concerns regarding the potential for social media manipulation and the spread of misinformation to disrupt the electoral process, the elections were conducted in a largely peaceful manner, underscoring the resilience of South Africa's democratic institutions 30years down the line.



Fig: Our Intl Lead Observer: Kenneth Eze with the political parties agent at the ACTs Church Wesdene after a successful interaction and receiving party feedbacks on Election Day.

## 2.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework governing the 2024 elections provided the foundation for the electoral process, encompassing key legislative instruments such as the Constitution of South Africa, the Electoral Act of 1998, the Electoral Commission Act of 1996, and the Political Party Funding Act (PPFA) of 2019.

These legal provisions underwent significant amendments aimed at enhancing the inclusivity and transparency of the electoral system. Noteworthy changes included the introduction of provisions allowing independent candidates to contest for regional seats in the National Assembly, the implementation of a third ballot, and adjustments to signature requirements for new political parties.

However, despite these advancements, challenges persisted in the enforcement of transparency measures outlined in the PPFA, raising questions about the efficacy of existing mechanisms for monitoring and regulating campaign finance.



## 2.3 CAMPAIGN FINANCE REGULATION

The PPFA of 2019 represented a significant step forward in promoting transparency and accountability in political funding by mandating the disclosure of private donations to political parties.

However, the effectiveness of these measures was called into question by discrepancies between reported financial outlays at political rallies and officially declared funding. Furthermore, the exclusion of independent candidates from the purview of the PPFA highlighted gaps in the regulatory framework, necessitating a reevaluation of existing provisions to ensure comprehensive oversight of campaign finance activities.

## 2.4 ELECTORAL SYSTEM

South Africa's electoral system, primarily based on party list proportional representation, underwent notable changes with the implementation of the Electoral Amendment Act, which granted independent candidates the opportunity to contest elections. While this move was lauded for its potential to promote inclusivity and broaden the pool of political leadership, concerns were raised regarding the complexity of the electoral system and the perceived unequal playing field for independent candidates compared to established political parties. These concerns underscored the need for ongoing review and refinement of electoral mechanisms to uphold the principles of fairness and equality in the electoral process.

## 2.5 ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) demonstrated a commendable commitment to accountability and constitutional principles throughout the electoral process. The institution's open-door policy facilitated timely resolution of electoral disputes and engendered confidence among stakeholders in the integrity of the electoral process. However, the amendment to Section 24A of the Electoral Act, which required voters to notify the IEC when voting outside their registered district, introduced additional complexity to the voting process, highlighting the importance of clear communication and voter education initiatives to mitigate potential challenges.

A major setback observed in many polling centers is non-alphabetical arrangement order of the voters name as enshrined in the electoral act which triggered voters' reaction due to election officials delay in identifying eligible voters.

Furthermore, there seem to be disparities in the reporting/update frequency of vote casted to political parties agent by election officials to keep them abreast as we see presiding officers devising their own reporting frequency which led to discordance tune since there was no clear cut guideline known to stakeholders.

## 2.6 VOTER REGISTRATION

Voter registration efforts in South Africa were characterized by targeted strategies aimed at encouraging widespread participation in the electoral process.

Despite these initiatives, a significant number of eligible voters, estimated at over 15 million, did not register, pointing to underlying challenges in ensuring comprehensive voter engagement. The widening gap between the voting-age population and registered voters underscored the need for sustained efforts to address barriers to registration and promote civic participation among marginalized communities.

## 2.7 MOBILE VOTING

The establishment of 32 mobile voting stations by the IEC represented a proactive measure to enhance inclusivity and accessibility in the electoral process. These mobile stations played a crucial role in ensuring that voters in remote and less accessible areas had the opportunity to participate in the elections. The initiative reflected the IEC's commitment to upholding the principle of universal suffrage and ensuring that all eligible citizens could exercise their right to vote.

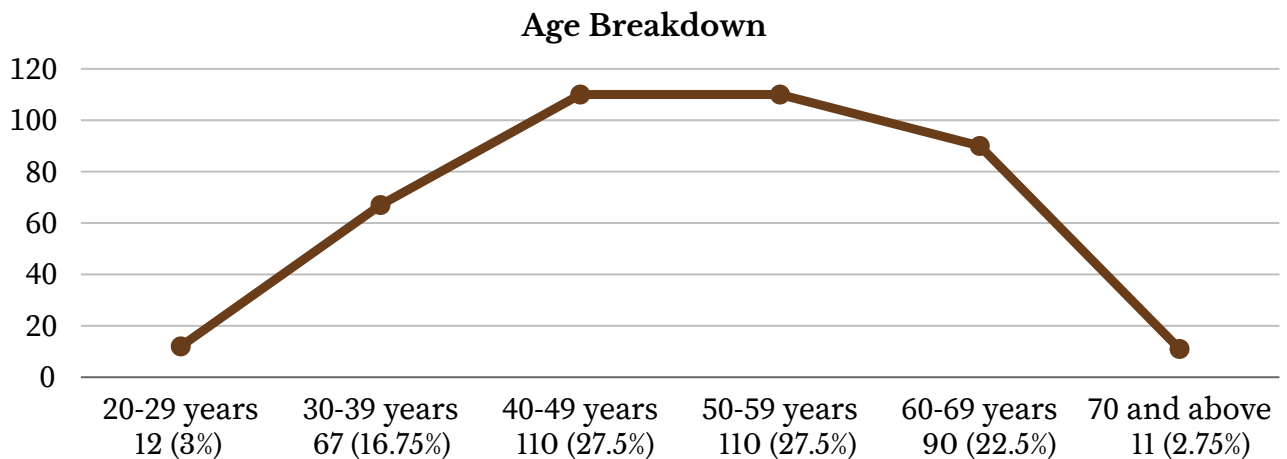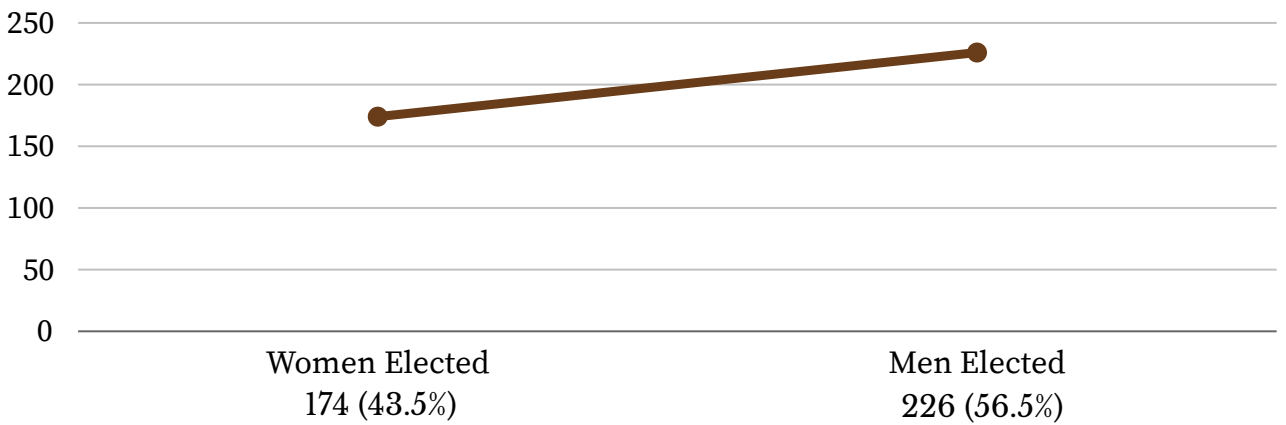## 2.8 CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

The IEC's collaboration with civil society organizations, faith-based groups, and businesses to implement voter education initiatives was instrumental in promoting civic awareness and inclusivity. Despite these efforts, challenges such as misinformation, disinformation, and the use of hate speech persisted, particularly in a polarized election environment. Addressing these challenges required sustained collaboration between electoral authorities, media organizations, and civil society actors to foster an informed and engaged electorate.

## 2.9 POLITICAL PARTY AND CANDIDATE NOMINATION

High nomination fees emerged as a significant barrier to entry for new political parties seeking to participate in the elections. Despite this challenge, a substantial number of candidate lists were submitted, indicating broad participation in the electoral process. However, the prevalence of high nomination fees underscored the need for measures to promote greater inclusivity and diversity among political candidates, particularly from marginalized communities. More so, the high participation of the women and youth as flag bearer should be commended from the following statistics though withba little dcline from 2019. On the other hand, the low participation of persons living with disabilities (PWDs) should be squarely addressed in subsequent elections by making provisions in the electoral act to give it a boost and widen their chances.

**Breakdown of 2024 South Africa National and Provincial Election:**



| Women Elected | Men Elected |
| --- | --- |
| 174 (43.5%) | 226 (56.5%) |

**Age Breakdown**



| 20-29 years | 30-39 years | 40-49 years | 50-59 years | 60-69 years | 70 and above |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 12 (3%) | 67 (16.75%) | 110 (27.5%) | 110 (27.5%) | 90 (22.5%) | 11 (2.75%) |

*Source: IEC*

## 2.10 ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

Electoral campaigning, governed by the Electoral Act of 1998 and the Electoral Code of Conduct, was characterized by a diverse range of activities aimed at mobilizing support and shaping public opinion. However, the absence of a legal framework regulating the campaign period allowed for campaigning even on Election Day, raising concerns about the potential for undue influence on voters.



In particular, the issue about political parties allowed to erect their stand with campaign posters on the Election Day is a trend that may need to be reviewed since politicians and parties now cross the line to canvass votes on Election Day which has inherent potential to breed conflicts if left unchecked.

Despite these challenges, the 2024 political campaign was generally peaceful and issue-focused, reflecting a commitment to democratic principles and peaceful coexistence among political rivals.

## 2.11 GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

While progress has been made in promoting gender representation in politics, women continued to face systemic barriers such as patriarchy, harassment, and discrimination. Collaborative efforts between the IEC and civil society organizations aimed to address these challenges and promote peaceful and inclusive elections. However, sustained action was needed to dismantle structural inequalities and create an enabling environment for women's full participation in the political sphere.

## 2.12 THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The media played a crucial role in informing the public and shaping public discourse during the electoral period. However, weak accountability mechanisms and the absence of a regulatory framework for data protection and cybersecurity posed challenges in safeguarding the integrity of the media environment. Iinstances of cyberbullying, inflammatory language, and dissemination of misinformation underscored the need for concerted efforts to enhance media literacy and promote responsible journalism.



## 2.13 SECURITY CONTEXT

The South African Police Service (SAPS) and the joint security platform demonstrated professionalism and readiness in handling security-related incidents during the electoral period. Their proactive measures contributed to a peaceful election day, ensuring the safety and security of voters and electoral stakeholders.



The effective coordination between security agencies and electoral authorities underscored the importance of robust security measures in safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process.

## 2.14 THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Civil society organizations played a vital role in promoting voter mobilization, voter education, and ensuring the integrity of the electoral process. Their efforts contributed to increased voter registration, particularly among underrepresented groups.



However, challenges such as resource constraints and regulatory hurdles limited the effectiveness of civil society engagement, highlighting the need for greater support and collaboration between civil society actors and electoral authorities.

## 2.15 ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

South Africa's robust electoral dispute resolution mechanisms played a critical role in addressing electoral grievances and ensuring the integrity of the electoral process. These mechanisms, characterized by their accessibility, transparency, and efficiency, were instrumental in resolving numerous electoral disputes during the 2024 electoral period. We saw 579 objections filed by the political parties with about 24 vote recounts made to assuage grievances and instill further confidence in the process. Their continued functioning was essential in upholding the integrity of the electoral process and maintaining public trust in the outcomes of the elections.

However, some political parties still felt unsatisfied and ready to challenge the outcome by exploring available constitutional window via the electoral court. This is part of electoral process and should not be shut-out.

## 2.16 VOTER TURNOUT

The voter turnout rate for the 2024 General Elections was a subject of considerable analysis and scrutiny. Despite concerted efforts to promote voter engagement and registration, voter turnout remained below expectations, with only 16,290,156 out of 27,782,081 registered voters casting their ballots.



This trend raised concerns about voter apathy and highlighted the need for sustained efforts to address barriers to participation and enhance civic education initiatives. More work is needed at this area by all the stakeholders since this does not speak well about our democracy in its true sense.

## 2.17 INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

The presence of international observers from various organizations and countries provided an additional layer of oversight and legitimacy to the electoral process. Their impartial assessments and recommendations contributed to the credibility of the elections and served as a valuable resource for identifying areas for improvement in future electoral cycles.

International observers commended South Africa for its commitment to democratic principles and the peaceful conduct of the elections, while also highlighting areas such as campaign finance regulation and media freedom as areas warranting further attention.



*Lead Intl Observer SOAI, Kenneth Eze on election day*

# 3. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

## 3.1 VOTER TURNOUT

On Election Day, turnout rates were closely monitored to gauge the level of citizen engagement and participation in the electoral process.

Despite efforts to encourage voter registration and mobilization, turnout rates remained lower than expected in certain regions, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Factors contributing to low turnout included logistical challenges, voter apathy, and disillusionment with the political establishment.

In contrast, urban centers experienced higher turnout rates, reflecting greater access to polling stations and heightened political awareness among urban dwellers. The discrepancy in turnout rates between urban and rural areas underscored the need for targeted outreach efforts and improved access to voting facilities in underserved communities.

## 3.2 VOTING PROCEDURES

The voting process itself proceeded relatively smoothly, with polling stations opening on time at 07:00am - 09:00pm and election officials demonstrating professionalism and efficiency. However, isolated incidents of irregularities were reported, including instances of voter intimidation, ballot tampering/deficiency, ill-training of officals to mann devices, and logistical challenges including non-provision of internet wifi. Also, dysfunctionality of voter's management devices (VMDs) was prominent across board which delayed the voting process and made the officials resorted to using manual voter's roll.

Despite these challenges, the overall integrity of the voting process could be adjudged as fair, with election observers noting a generally free and fair electoral environment.

## 3.3 INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION

While the majority of polling stations operated without major incidents, sporadic outbreaks of violence and intimidation were reported in certain hotly contested regions. Political rivalries and tensions between supporters of competing parties occasionally escalated into physical confrontations, disrupting voting activities and endangering the safety of voters and election officials.

In response, law enforcement agencies were deployed to maintain order and ensure the safety of polling stations. Additionally, community leaders and civil society organizations played a crucial role in mediating conflicts and de-escalating tensions, promoting dialogue and reconciliation in divided communities.

## 3.4 ACCESS FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

Efforts to ensure access to voting facilities for vulnerable and marginalized groups were largely successful, with special provisions made for elderly, disabled, and visually impaired voters. However, challenges remained in certain areas, where inadequate infrastructure and logistical barriers hindered access for individuals with disabilities.



Moving forward, it will be important for electoral authorities to prioritize the needs of vulnerable groups and implement targeted measures to enhance accessibility and inclusivity in the electoral process.

# 4. POST-ELECTION ANALYSIS

## 4.1 ELECTION RESULTS

The outcome of the 2024 National and Provincial Elections in South Africa signaled a significant shift in the country's political landscape, with no single party securing an outright majority. The African National Congress (ANC) emerged as the largest party, securing 40.18% of the vote and 159 seats in the National Assembly. However, its share of the vote declined compared to previous elections, reflecting growing dissatisfaction with the ruling party's performance.



| NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TOTAL SEATS | REGIONAL | NATIONAL | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| ANC | 86 | 73 | 159 |
| DA | 45 | 42 | 87 |
| MK | 27 | 31 | 58 |
| EFF | 22 | 17 | 39 |
| IFP | 9 | 8 | 17 |
| PA | 4 | 5 | 9 |
| VF PLUS | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| ACTIONSA | 2 | 4 | 6 |

The Democratic Alliance (DA) maintained its position as the official opposition, securing 21.81% of the vote and 88 seats in the National Assembly. While the DA's performance was relatively stable, it fell short of its target of becoming the largest opposition party, highlighting the challenges of competing in a multi-party system.

The emergence of new political players, such as the MK Party who got 15% securing 58 seats and the Patriotic Alliance (PA), added complexity to the political landscape, with smaller parties gaining traction among disaffected voters. The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) also secured 9.03% of the vote and 39 seats in the National Assembly, consolidating its position as a significant force in South African politics.

Overall, the election results reflected a diverse and fragmented political landscape, underscoring the need for coalition-building and consensus politics in the formation of a new government.

## 4.2 POST-ELECTION CHALLENGES

The period following the announcement of election results was marked by both celebrations and challenges especially as some political parties insist result should not be announced pending when all objections are addressed. However, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) had to announced the election in accordance with the electoral act provision which now implies that aggrieved parties should approach electoral court for remedy.

While the peaceful announcement of result and handing over to the chief justice demonstrated the resilience of South Africa's democratic institutions, concerns are raised about the potential for post-election violence and political instability especially as some parties canvas to boycott the first parliamentary sitting. Efforts to address socio-economic disparities, unemployment, and corruption emerged as key priorities for the incoming government, underscoring the need for inclusive governance and effective policy implementation to address the underlying root causes of social unrest.

## 4.3 LESSONS LEARNED

The 2024 General Elections provided valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of South Africa's electoral system. Key lessons learned included the importance of inclusive electoral regulations, robust campaign finance oversight, and proactive voter education initiatives. Additionally, the elections highlighted the need for ongoing efforts to address systemic barriers to political participation, promote gender equality, and enhance media literacy. These lessons served as a foundation for future electoral reforms and underscored the importance of continuous improvement in safeguarding the integrity and inclusivity of the electoral process.

## 4.4 IMPLICATIONS AND FORMATION OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT

Given the absence of an outright majority, the formation of a coalition government became necessary to ensure stability and effective governance. The potential coalition involving the ANC, DA, MK Party, EFF, IFP, and PA, along with smaller parties, must navigate complex negotiations to form a viable government. The success of the coalition will depend on clear agreements and a shared commitment to national interest over party interests.

## 4.5 LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR COALITION GOVERNANCE

A robust legal framework is essential to ensure effective and accountable governance in a coalition government. Key elements of such a framework include a binding coalition agreement outlining the distribution of cabinet positions, policy priorities, and decision-making processes. Additionally, governance structures should be established to facilitate proportional representation and joint policy development among coalition parties.

## 4.6 CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Citizen engagement and accountability are fundamental principles of democratic governance, requiring mechanisms for public participation and oversight. In a coalition government, it is essential to establish platforms for citizen engagement, including regular public forums, consultations, and performance reviews. Moreover, transparency measures such as public reporting and access to government information are crucial for maintaining accountability and trust in the political process.

## 4.7 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY AGENDA

The formation of a coalition/ government of National unity (GNU) presents an opportunity to address pressing economic and social challenges facing South Africa. Key policy priorities may include job creation, poverty alleviation, education reform, healthcare provision, and infrastructure development. By leveraging the diverse expertise and perspectives of coalition partners, the government can develop comprehensive solutions to complex problems and promote inclusive growth and development.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the preliminary findings and lessons learned from the 2024 General Elections, several recommendations emerge to strengthen South Africa's electoral system and promote democratic governance:

- **Enhance Campaign Finance Regulation:** Strengthen enforcement mechanisms for campaign finance laws to ensure transparency and accountability in political funding, including comprehensive oversight of independent candidates' financial activities.

- **Promote Inclusive Electoral Participation:** Implement measures to address barriers to voter registration and participation, particularly among marginalized communities, through targeted outreach, voter education, and accessibility initiatives.

- **Enhance Campaign Finance Regulation:** Strengthen enforcement mechanisms for campaign finance laws to ensure transparency and accountability in political funding, including comprehensive oversight of independent candidates' financial activities.

- **Promote Inclusive Electoral Participation:** Implement measures to address barriers to voter registration and participation, particularly among marginalized communities, through targeted outreach, voter education, and accessibility initiatives.

- **Review Electoral Laws and Regulations:** Conduct a comprehensive review of electoral laws and regulations to address gaps in the legal framework, enhance the inclusivity of the electoral process, and promote fairness and equality among political stakeholders.

- **Foster Media Literacy and Responsible Journalism:** Invest in media literacy programs and promote responsible journalism practices to counter misinformation, hate speech, and cyberbullying, thereby fostering an informed and engaged electorate.

- **Empower Civil Society Engagement:** Provide greater support and resources to civil society organizations engaged in voter mobilization, education, and electoral monitoring, while also addressing regulatory barriers to their effective participation in the electoral process.

- **Strengthen Electoral Security Measures:** Continuously assess and strengthen security measures to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process, ensure the safety of voters and electoral stakeholders, and prevent potential security threats or disruptions.

- **Promote Gender Equality and Social Inclusion:** Take proactive measures to address systemic barriers to women's political participation, including harassment and discrimination, while also promoting the representation of marginalized groups in the political sphere.

- **Facilitate International Collaboration and Oversight:** Foster collaboration with international organizations and observers to enhance transparency, credibility, and legitimacy in the electoral process, while also learning from international best practices and experiences.

By implementing these recommendations, South Africa can further strengthen its electoral system, promote democratic governance, and uphold the principles of transparency, inclusivity, and accountability in future electoral cycles.

# 6.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the 2024 National and Provincial Elections in South Africa represented a critical juncture in the country's democratic journey, marking a significant shift in the political landscape. Despite challenges and uncertainties, the elections were conducted peacefully, reflecting the resilience of South Africa's democratic institutions and the commitment of political stakeholders to uphold the principles of democracy and non-violence.

Moving forward, the formation of a coalition government presents both opportunities and challenges for governance and policy-making. By prioritizing national interest over party interests and embracing principles of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability, the new government can address the diverse needs and aspirations of South African citizens, fostering stability, prosperity, and social cohesion.

As South Africa enters a new phase of its democratic evolution, it is imperative for political leaders, civil society organizations, and citizens to work together in pursuit of a common vision for the future. Through dialogue, collaboration, and collective action, South Africa can overcome its challenges and realize its full potential as a vibrant and inclusive democracy on the African continent.

Thank you.

**Kenneth C. Eze cpm**
**Team Lead, Int'l Observer**

**Vuyelwa Hesewu**
**Deputy, Local Observer**

**Speak Out Africa Initiative 2024 SA elections**
info@speakoutafricainitiative.org
**Johannesburg, South Africa**

*God Bless Democracy !*
*God Bless the Republic of South Africa (RSA) !!*
*And God Bless Africa !!!*