

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



MID-DAY STATEMENT: BIKITA WEST NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY-ELECTION

Harare- 21 January, 2017 - ZESN has deployed 33 static and mobile observers to the National Assembly by-election in Bikita West Constituency to measure compliance of the Election Day processes with the Constitution and Electoral Laws as well as regional and international standards. The political environment in the constituency is calm and peaceful and voting is proceeding smoothly despite the tense pre-electoral period.

ZESN observer reports have shown that voting started on time in 100% of the polling stations. Voting is still on-going and ZESN is observing the voting process throughout the day the counting process at the end of the day and the collation of results at the ZEC Constituency Collating Centre. By midday ZESN observer reports have shown the following trends:

Set up and Opening Procedures: The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) set up 58 polling stations in the constituency. ZESN has deployed observers at all the Ward collation centres as well as at selected polling stations. At 100% of the polling stations where ZESN observed set up and opening procedures were duly followed and there are adequate polling personnel averaging six (6) polling officials per polling station. In addition, essential voting materials such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, indelible ink marker pens and voters' rolls were present at polling stations before voting commenced.

Turnout: ZESN observed long queues in the morning, and an average of 100 people have voted at most polling stations by 09:00hours. The processing of voters, including those with special needs was efficient. ZESN observed more than 50% of the voters were women. In addition the majority of voters were elderly women.

Turned Away Voters: ZESN observed voters being turned away for various reasons, including turning up at the wrong polling stations and without proper identification. Some of the turned away voters were redirected to other polling stations.

Polling Agents: At all polling stations observed by ZESN, ZANU PF, Zimbabwe People First and Independent candidate Innocent Muzvimbiri have deployed election agents. However the other three electoral contestants deployed a limited number of election agents.

Other observers: ZESN observed high presence of other observers from local CSOs, and development partners.

Voter Intimidation: "In the run up to the by-election ZESN observers reported that they were plans to intimidate voters by recording serial numbers of voting slips and requesting voters to report to their village heads and party structures after casting their votes. ZESN is observing these developments closely which are clearly in violation of Section 133B(c)(1) of the Electoral Act which outlaws any attempts to compel voters to vote for a particular candidate or party" said ZESN Board Chairperson Mr Henry Masaya.

ZESN will issue a preliminary statement on the by-election at the end of the election processes, which will include verified incidents that would have been reported during the day.

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**PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE
FOR COMMENTS AND INTERVIEWS CONTACT:**

ZESN Chairperson: +263775642217

ZESN Director: +263712415902

zesn2011@zesn.net, info@zesn.net