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**ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK**



**MID-DAY STATEMENT: MUDZI WEST PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTION**

**Harare-24 July 2015** - ZESN is observing the by-election in Mudzi West constituency which fell vacant following the death on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015, of the ZANU-PF incumbent, Mrs Aqualinah Katsande.

According to reports from the 13 static and mobile observers deployed by ZESN, the opening of polling in the constituency commenced on time and all polling stations have adequate polling personnel and voting materials. Based on the information from observers each polling station has an average of 6 ZEC polling officers and 2 police officers.

Election observation is still on-going and mid-day reports from ZESN observers indicate that there are significant numbers of voters who have been assisted to vote especially on the basis of being illiterate. For instance at Chimhango Primary School as at 0900hrs of the 89 people who voted 21 were assisted and all were illiterate. This observation is of concern given that voter education for the by-election was conducted. ZESN calls for continuous rather than the current targeted voter education for by-elections being provided by ZEC and electoral stakeholders.

Furthermore, ZESN has also noted that the reasons for turned away voters such as having no identity documents or bringing the wrong identity documents should have easily been addressed by a comprehensive voter education programme.

It is regrettable that at most polling stations where ZESN is observing only ZANU PF has deployed election agents. ZESN notes that the failure by the other contesting candidate to deploy agents is unfortunate given that the presence of election agents is not only crucial in enhancing the transparency of the electoral process but provides candidates with a basis for informed calls for reforms to electoral processes.

ZESN has observed that police officers are actively involved in the election process especially in assisting voters. ZESN reiterates its position on police presence and roles inside the polling stations which goes against international best norms and standards. ZESN calls for the role of the police to be limited to maintaining law and order.

ZESN is still observing the voting throughout the day, the counting process at the end of the day and the collation of results at the ZEC Constituency Centre.

Citizens can participate and receive regular updates on the by-elections on the official ZESN social media platforms; Facebook: **Zimbabwe-Election-Support-Network (ZESN)** and Twitter handle: **@ZESN1**

**PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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