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## ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



### MID DAY STATEMENT: JUNE 10 PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTIONS

**Harare-10 June 2015**-ZESN is observing the by-elections in Dzivarasekwa, Glen View South, Harare East, Highfield West, Kambuzuma, Kuwadzana, Lobengula, Luveve, Makokoba, Pelandaba-Mpopoma, Pumula, Headlands, Dangamvura/Chikanga, Tsholotsho North, Hurungwe West and Mbizo. ZESN observer reports show that the opening of polling in the 16 constituencies where by-elections are being held, commenced on schedule and is proceeding smoothly in all the polling stations.

All polling stations covered by ZESN observers have adequate polling personnel and voting materials.

ZESN deployed 158 observers for the by-elections comprising static observers based at some of the Ward and Constituency Collation Centres. In addition 42 mobile observers were deployed.

**Election observation is still on-going; however reports from ZESN observers indicate the following trends:**

**Voter Intimidation:** ZESN has received numerous reports that ZANU PF officials in different constituencies are asking voters to register their names and identity particulars before they go and cast their vote. It has also been reported that after casting their votes, voters are being asked to pass through the same registration centres to confirm that they have voted. These reports have come from observers in the following areas: Tsholotsho (Zabagwuadi Business Centre) and Headlands (Nehumba Primary School). The practice violates section 133B (c)(1) of the Electoral Act which outlaws any attempts to compel voters to vote for a particular candidate or party.

**Bussing-in of voters:** has been reported in Headlands, Harare East (Courtney Selous Primary), and Kambuzuma. In Kambuzuma it has been alleged that the ZANU PF candidate has been seen ferrying voters to polling stations within the constituency resulting in heightened tension. One of the independent candidates contesting the by-election has brought this electoral violation to the Presiding Officer's attention. However the issue has not been addressed, at the time of writing this press statement.

**Political Party Agents:** every political party was allowed to have one agent inside the polling station and to have an additional agent stationed within the vicinity of the polling station. This is consistent with provisions of the Electoral Act. It is however regrettable that some political parties and independent candidates failed to deploy agents at all polling stations.

For instance in Tsholotsholo only ZANU PF party agents were present in all the polling stations where ZESN mobile observers have visited so far.

This development is unfortunate because election observation remains an important tool that allows for systematic assessment of the conduct of an election process on the basis of national legislation, regional and international best practices. Political parties observe key electoral processes in order to enhance their ability to speak authoritatively on the quality of the election, and to support improvements of future electoral processes.

**Voter Education:** the need for adequate voter education is evident as ZESN observers continue to report that a significant number of voters are being turned away because of reasons that could have been addressed through voter education, such as turning up in the wrong ward, and not bringing the required identity documents. For instance in Manicaland at Sheni Primary School in Dangamvura-Chikanga, 27 out of 78 people that had visited the polling station by 11:00hrs were turned away.

**Police Presence:** ZESN notes that the heavy police presence inside and outside the polling stations may intimidate voters. Furthermore observers have witnessed Police Personnel being actively involved in assisting voters. This practice goes against international best norms and standards where the role of the police is limited to maintaining law and order.

ZESN will continue to observe voting throughout the day, the counting process at the end of the day and the collation of results at ZEC Constituency Centres.

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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