

1. Introduction

Located in Mashonaland West Province, the town of Norton is about 45 kilometres from Harare. The Constituency which was hived off the old Manyame Constituency in the last delimitation exercise comprises of 16 wards covering areas such as Norton Township, Makwiro and Chibero. The wards cover urban, peri-urban and rural areas signifying a varied array of interests for its residents. A significant number of Norton residents travel to Harare for employment and to sell wares. The platinum mines in areas like Makwiro also offers employment to some of the residents. The presence of the platinum mining firms such as Makwiro Mine has led to some significant development such as a good road network and other social amenities such as schools. Residents in the rural areas engage in subsistence farming and seasonal farm work on surrounding farms. Norton is home to Chibero agricultural college the oldest agricultural college in Zimbabwe established in 1961.

For the by-election the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) carried out a constituency mapping exercise for the purposes of demarcating polling stations from 26 August to 6 September 2016. ZEC has allocated 56 polling stations for the by-election from 64 polling stations in the 2013 harmonised election. In the 2008 elections the seat was won by the MDC-T while ZANU PF won the seat in the 2013 elections.

1.1 Population Demographics

According to the ZimStat Census Report of 2012, Norton Constituency has a total population of 67,591 of which 35,209 are females and 32, 382 are males.¹

1.2 Previous Election Results

The Norton Parliamentary seat has previously been won by both the MDC-T in the 2008 elections with ZANU PF wresting it from the MDC-T in the 2013 elections. In 2008 the winning MDC-T candidate polled 6,070 votes compared to 4,516 garnered by the ZANU PF candidate whilst the MDC candidate received 946. In the 2013 polls the winning ZANU PF candidate received 10,592 votes; the MDC-T candidate received 9,360 votes while the MDC and MKD polled 894 and 129 respectively. In 2013 ZANU PF received

¹ www.zimstat.co.zw/sites/default/files/img/National_Report.pdf

6,076 more votes than in the 2008 elections and the MDC-T's votes increased by 3,290 compared to the 2008 elections.

Table 1: Comparison of 2008 and 2013 Election Results

Year	Candidate	Political party	Number of votes
2013	Mutsvangwa H Christopher	ZANU PF	10,592
	Chinake Voice	MDC-T	9,360
	Gumede C Siphos	MDC	894
	Mariro Chance	MKD	129
2008	Musumbu Edward	MDC-T	6,070
	Mutsvangwa H Christopher	ZANU PF	4,516
	Gumede Lister	MDC	946

Source: www.zec.org.zw

1.3 Background to the by-election

On 19 August 2016 in accordance with Section 39 (2) of the Electoral Act, President Mugabe proclaimed 22 October 2016 as the date for the Norton by-election. The seat fell vacant following the expulsion of the Member of Parliament Christopher Mutsvangwa from ZANU PF and his subsequent recalling from Parliament. The seat therefore became vacant in line with Section 129 (1) (k) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe which states that the seat of a Member of Parliament becomes vacant if the member ceases to belong to the political party of which he or she was a member when elected to Parliament. The Norton by-election is the 28th National Assembly by-election to be held since the 2013 harmonised elections.

1.4 Political Environment in the run up to the by-election

The campaign period in Norton has been marred by allegations of violence and intimidation, defacing of posters, the politicisation of food aid distribution and vote buying. According to the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and Independent

candidates, the absence of the Special Police Liaison Officer has hindered the ability of the ZEC, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and the police to expeditiously investigate cases of politically motivated violence and intimidation in the Constituency.

1.5 Nomination and Contesting Parties

The Nomination Court sat on Tuesday 6 September 2016 at the Chinhoyi Magistrates Court and was presided over by the ZEC Provincial Elections Officer Mr Austin Ndlovu. Three candidates successfully filed their nomination papers and will contest the by-election. The MDC formations are not taking part in this by-election maintaining their call for meaningful electoral reforms before they can participate in any election.

Below is the list of candidates who managed to successfully submit their papers to the Nomination Court.

Table 2: List of Contesting Candidates for the Mhondoro Mubaira By-Election

CANDIDATE	PARTY	GENDER
Chindeza Tinashe Ronald	ZANU PF	Male
Choga David	NCA	Male
Mliswa Temba	Independent	Male

1.6 Biographies of the Candidates

Ronald Chindedza

Ronald Chindedza was born in Norton and attended Chikowore Primary and Secondary Schools. Upon completion of secondary education he was trained at Chibero College of Agriculture and worked as a Farm Manager in Mhondoro and. Ronald won the ZANU PF primaries for the Norton by-election receiving the mandate to contest the by-election on behalf of the party.

David Choga

David Choga is 38 years old and was born in Norton. He attended Ruvimbo Primary and Ngezi Secondary Schools. David is a farmer by profession. He is contesting the Norton by-election as the NCA candidate.

Temba Mliswa

Temba Mliswa is 45 years old and former Member of Parliament for Hurungwe West and ZANU PF Provincial Chairperson for Mashonaland West Province. He recently contested in the Hurungwe West national Assembly losing to Keith Guzha of ZANU PF. Mliswa grew up in Harare and has various business interests including agriculture and mining. Temba is contesting the Norton by-election as an independent candidate.

1.7 Voter Registration

The ZEC registered voters in the constituency using the new polling station based voter registration model at 56 voter registration centres. Voting will take place at the same places where the voter registration was conducted. At the completion of the exercise 18,577 persons had been registered. There is need for the Electoral Act to specifically state the timeframes for access to the voters' roll by political parties as the current provision is vague. As in recent by-elections, ZEC used the 2013 ward-based voters' rolls as the basis for the registration exercise and will use two separate voters' rolls on polling day. In 2013 the registered voters for Mashonaland West province were 609,732 while Norton Constituency had 27,793 registered voters².

1.8 Voter education

ZEC invited ZESN to make a presentation as well as to observe the voter education training for election officials. The Commission conducted voter education for voter registration for the Norton National Assembly by-election from 10-16 September. However, due to financial constraints the Commission was unable to do voter education for Nomination and for inspection. The voter education for polling will be held from 14-18 October 2016. The Commission invited accredited civic society organisations to

² Research and Advocacy Unit Report on key statistics from the June 2013 Voters' Roll

conduct the voter education as provided for in the Electoral Act and ZESN will be conducting voter education for polling. The financial constraints that ZEC is facing have hamstrung the Commissions' operations and resulted in the reduction in the number of days for voter education from 10 days to 5 days. It is imperative that the government avails adequate funding to ZEC to ensure that electoral processes such as voter education are comprehensively conducted.

1.9 Conclusion

In the run up to the Norton by-election there have been a number of reports of intimidation, violence, politicisation of food aid and defacing of campaign posters. It is imperative for all contesting political parties and candidates to observe the stipulated Political Parties' Code of Conduct, which if observed, will help to usher in an enabling environment that supports the holding of credible elections. ZESN urges contesting candidates to respect the right to vote and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Constitution.