



ZESN's Presidential Results Projection from Sample-Based Observation

Harare – 03 August 2018 – The Sample-Based Observation (SBO) Project is an initiative of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), the largest local observer group in Zimbabwe. ZESN is a coalition of 36 Non-Governmental Organizations formed in 2000 to coordinate activities pertaining to elections. Its major focus is on the promotion of democratic processes and free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. The organisation is strictly nonpartisan. ZESN observes elections so that citizens can exercise their fundamental right to vote and to provide independent non-partisan information on the conduct of elections to citizens, political contestants and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). All of ZESN's activities are in accordance with the Declaration of Global Principles for Citizen Election Observation and Monitoring, the laws of Zimbabwe and, in particular, the ZEC's Code of Conduct.

ZESN closely monitored the pre-election period in accordance with its electoral cycle approach to the observation of electoral processes in Zimbabwe. As such, 210 long term observers were deployed in the run up to the harmonised election to observe and report on the pre-election environment. In addition, ZESN also conducted an audit of the voters roll.

As part of its comprehensive effort to observe the 2018 Harmonised Elections, ZESN trained and deployed over 6,500 observers to every ward, constituency, district and province of the country. Out of these, 750 were Sample-Based Observation observers. The SBO is an advanced Election Day observation methodology which allows ZESN to confidently comment on the voting and results tabulation processes, including an independent verification of the Presidential results as announced by the ZEC. SBOs have contributed to systematic election observation efforts around the world and in 12 countries in Africa such as Cote d'Ivoire (2016), Malawi (2009 and 2014), Zambia (2008, 2011, 2015 and 2016), Ghana (2008, 2012 and 2016), Uganda (2011), and Nigeria (2011, 2012 and 2015). In all cases the SBO accurately projected the vote tabulation outcomes including presidential results.

SBO observers were deployed to a nationally representative sample of polling stations throughout the country. This random sample was representative in terms of the geography of the country, the distribution of polling stations and the distribution of registered voters across Zimbabwe. SBO observers witnessed the entire voting and counting process at sampled polling stations and recorded the official result as announced by the polling officials. By 12 noon 31 July, ZESN had received reports from all 750 sampled polling stations and had verified and analysed their data; therefore, this report is based on a 100% response rate.

Key Findings from the Pre-Election and Election Day Processes

As highlighted in ZESN's preliminary statement released on July 31, the electoral process was marked by improvements from previous elections as well as lost opportunities that could have measurably increased confidence in the integrity of the election.

Key findings in the pre-election period included:

- The pre-election environment was more peaceful and open than in previous elections including the broad invitation of international observers; however, incidents of intimidation to manipulate voters was still noted throughout the country. The signing of the National Peace Pledge and the Code of Conduct by the political parties during the campaign period is commendable, though there were limited enforcement mechanisms.
- ZEC did not address concerns raised by stakeholders with regards to the design, printing, and dispatch of ballot papers and did not permit meaningful observation of the production of ballot papers or testing of indelible ink.
- The voters roll has improved from 2013; however urban registration lagged behind rural registration with 73% of people in urban areas registered to vote compared to 82% in rural areas.
- State media and other state resources were abused throughout the pre-election period to the advantage the ruling party.

Key findings from ZESN's observation on Election Day include:

- At 99% of polling stations polling officials were present when ZESN observers arrived prior to opening, and 97% of polling stations opened by 7:15 am.
- 98% of polling stations were set up in a manner that allowed voters to mark their ballot papers in secret.
- At 6% of polling stations many voters (26 or more) were turned away and not permitted to vote, but for Harare province this affected 19% of polling stations.
- At 45% of polling stations many voters (26 or more) were assisted to vote. This was particularly prevalent in Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Masvingo, Matabeleland North, and Matabeleland South provinces.
- At 98% of polling stations all polling agents present were given an official copy of the V11 results form and/or the official results were immediately posted. At only 2% of polling station were official copies of the V11 results form not provided to all polling agents and the official results not immediately posted.

SBO Methodology

The SBO percentage estimates for turnout, vote for each candidate, and rejected ballots are based on the official results as announced by polling officials at the 750 sampled polling stations. At these polling stations there were 383,272 registered voters and 324,948 votes were cast. The SBO data is based on these actual votes. The SBO is not an exit poll. No voters were asked whom they voted for. Since the SBO is based on a sample of polling stations it produces estimated ranges within which the results announced by the ZEC should fall. The ranges are based on the SBO estimates plus or minus a margin of error.

Turnout

The SBO data shows overall turnout at 84.7%, with a margin of error of +/- 0.7%, with all provinces with turnout over 80%. There were 11 (1.5%) polling stations with turnout over 95% of which 5 (0.8%) had turnout of 100% or more.

Presidential Results

Below are the SBO estimated ranges for each of the major candidates. As noted, the official results as announced by the ZEC should fall within these estimated ranges.

SBO Estimates and ZEC Official Results for the 2018 Presidential Election				
Presidential Candidate	SBO Estimate	Margin of Error	SBO Estimated Range	ZEC Announced Official Results (3 August)
Nelson Chamisa (MDC Alliance)	45.8%	+/- 2.0%	43.8% to 47.8%	44.3%
Emmerson Mnangagwa (ZANU-PF)	50.7%	+/- 2.0%	48.7% to 52.7%	50.8%
All Other 21 Candidates	3.5%	+/- 0.2%	3.3% to 3.7%	
Rejected Ballots	1.4%	+/- 0.1%	1.3 % to 1.5%	

Conclusion

ZEC's announced official results are consistent with the SBO projections. The percent vote for each candidate as officially announced by the ZEC fall within the SBO estimated ranges. Because the SBO estimated range for the leading candidate falls above and below 50%, the SBO cannot definitively confirm whether or not there should have been a runoff.

ZESN calls upon the ZEC to urgently release on its website polling station level results for all elections, including the presidential election, to enhance transparency and accountability. This is even more important given concerns raised by some stakeholders about the process. We encourage all Zimbabweans to be peaceful and if there are any disputes related to this electoral process, the aggrieved parties should seek peaceful redress and exercise restraint. ZESN also calls upon security forces to avoid being heavy handed in their efforts to restore order.

ZESN will continue to observe the post-electoral environment in pursuit of its mandate of promoting democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe.//End/

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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ANNEXURE 1

Distribution of All Polling Stations and Sampled Polling Stations by Province				
Province	All Polling Stations		Sampled Polling Stations	
	Stations	Percent	Stations	Percent
Bulawayo	428	3.9%	28	3.7%
Harare	1,175	10.7%	78	10.4%
Manicaland	1,438	13.1%	99	13.2%
Mashonaland Central	973	8.9%	66	8.8%
Mashonaland East	1,244	11.3%	86	11.5%
Mashonaland West	1,322	12.0%	90	12.0%
Masvingo	1,324	12.1%	92	12.3%
Matabeleland North	877	8.0%	60	8.0%
Matabeleland South	664	6.0%	46	6.1%
Midlands	1,540	14.0%	105	14.0%
Total	10,985		750	

Distribution of Registrants at All Polling Stations and at Sampled Polling Stations by Province (figures based on ZEC's List of Polling Stations)				
Province	All Polling Stations		Sampled Polling Stations	
	Registrants	Percent	Registrants	Percent
Bulawayo	258,567	4.5%	17,177	4.5%
Harare	900,728	15.8%	58,140	15.2%
Manicaland	733,370	12.9%	48,098	12.5%
Mashonaland Central	531,984	9.3%	34,169	8.9%
Mashonaland East	633,410	11.1%	41,063	10.7%
Mashonaland West	655,133	11.5%	44,113	11.5%
Masvingo	617,212	10.8%	45,256	11.8%
Matabeleland North	339,135	6.0%	25,289	6.6%
Matabeleland South	264,185	4.6%	18,597	4.9%
Midlands	761,982	13.4%	51,370	13.4%
Total	5,695,706		383,272	