

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



MIDDAY SITUATIONAL STATEMENT ON THE BEITBRIDGE, CHITUNGWIZA AND MATOBO LOCAL AUTHORITY BY-ELECTIONS

Harare - 23 February 2019 - The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) has deployed over 17 trained and accredited observers to every polling station in Beitbridge East Ward 15, Chitungwiza South Ward 24 and Matobo North Ward 25 by-elections. In addition, there are three mobile teams in the wards observing the voting process as well as the political environment outside the polling stations.

This midday Situational Statement is based on reports received from the polling station based and mobile election observers in the three local authority wards. Voting is still underway and ZESN is observing the voting process throughout the day, the vote counting and results collation processes. By midday the following observations have been made:

Set up and opening of Polling Stations

Observers have reported that all polling stations were set up on time and in accordance with the laid down ZEC procedures in a manner that ensures secrecy of the vote. ZESN observers also reported that polling stations are equipped with small booths to cater for persons with disabilities particularly those in wheelchairs. All polling stations were reported to have opened on time with all requisite voting materials such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, voter's rolls, indelible marker ink and official ZEC stamps.

Turned away, redirected voters

As of midday, ZESN has observed a significant number of voters being turned away for turning up at the wrong polling stations, not being registered to vote and having improper identification. Voters who turned up at wrong polling stations were redirected to their appropriate stations. For instance, at St Aidain's B polling station in Chitungwiza 10 voters had been redirected to other polling stations and 13 turned away as at 10:30AM and at Unit M seke polling station c 15 were turned away. In Matobo North Ward 25, at Mgadla polling station, 7 voters were turned away. As at 10:30 AM at St Aidain's B polling station in Chitungwiza a total of 27 voters were redirected to other polling stations this may be attributed to the fact that there are three polling stations at the school.

Assisted voters

ZESN observed that the majority of assisted voters are the elderly mostly in Beitbridge and Matobo. For instance, at Mgadla primary school in Matobo, 10 people (3 male and 7 female) had been assisted to vote as at 10:30 Am while at Shabwe primary school in Beitbridge 15 voters (4 male and 11 female) had been assisted to vote during the same period. At Dumba School in Beitbridge, at 10 AM of the 138 who had voted 23 were assisted to vote (18 female and 5 male).

Polling Officials

On average, there are 6 polling officials at the polling stations. Observer reports have shown that the officials are conducting the voting process in line with laid down procedures.

Party Agents

In Chitungwiza South Ward 24, of the four contesting parties only ZANU PF and the MDC Alliance have deployed comprehensively. ZESN observers have reported that the MDC-T has agents at Seke High school and in St Aidains B. In Matobo of the two contesting parties, only ZANU PF has deployed comprehensively. For instance, at Ekukhanyeni Clinic polling station ZANU PF had two party agents while the MDC Alliance did not have an agent. In Beitbridge the two contesting parties namely the MDC Alliance and ZANU PF deployed comprehensively.

Conclusion

As noted, ZESN will share its preliminary findings on voting and counting in due course. ZESN notes that polling stations are still open and encourages all registered voters in the local authority wards to go out and exercise their right to vote.

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