
ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



Preliminary Statement on the Kadoma Central Ward 2 local authority by-election

09- June 2019 - Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) observed Kadoma Central Ward 2 local authority by-election held 8 June 2019. This is part of its comprehensive efforts to observe all elections and electoral processes in Zimbabwe. In this by-election, ZESN deployed 5 polling station based observers, a ward collation centre observer and a mobile team which was assessing the political environment outside the polling stations.

Observation Methodology

ZESN's observation of the by-election included the deployment of an LTO to observe pre-election up to post election, the five polling station based observers, a ward collation centre observer, and the mobile team to observe the pre-election political environment during the campaign period. The findings and recommendations of this preliminary statement are made in reference to the Electoral Laws of Zimbabwe, the Revised Southern African Development Community (SADC) Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections as well as other regional and African election guidelines and principles. This preliminary statement is based on reports received from the ZESN's long term and short term observers.

Political environment

The pre-electoral and Election Day political environment was generally calm and peaceful in the by-election. However, towards the end of polling, the ZESN mobile team reported of blocked roads and violence that erupted approximately 500m outside Rimuka Government Secondary School where all the 5 polling stations for the by-election were located. Subsequent to this incident, the observers also noted the heavy presence of the riot police in the ward in response to the incidents. Some people are said to have been assaulted with machetes by gangsters who ZESN observers gathered habitually perpetrate similar acts in the area normally on weekends. This happened close to Mupedzanyota Bottle Store in the ward. While ZESN could not establish if these incidents were election-related, the Network strongly condemns violence in all forms, especially in areas where there are elections. ZESN particularly condemns the blocking of roads that was allegedly done to stop people from getting to polling stations. ZESN observers heard residents complaining about this and the MDC Alliance Deputy Mayor, who also alleged she had been beaten up and reported to the police who were providing security at the polling stations.

Set up and opening of polling stations

All polling stations in the by-election were set up in accordance with laid out procedures, and designed to ensure that voters could mark their ballots in secrecy. Observers reported that all the polling stations opened on time and had started processing voters by 7:15 AM. Essential voting materials such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, ZEC stamp, indelible marker ink, biometric voters' roll with pictures were reported to be present at all polling stations. However, ZESN observers reported that all polling stations were not equipped with voting booths to cater for persons with disabilities such as wheelchair users and voters of short stature that ZESN observers once reported were in use in some by-elections such as the Mutoko North National Assembly by-election.

Voting process and procedures

Observers reported that the voting process in the local authority by-election proceeded smoothly at all polling stations with procedures such as showing ballot boxes to be empty, checking voters' names against the voters roll, examining voters' fingers for indelible ink and applying the ink being duly followed. In addition, observers reported that all voters were required to present identification documents before voting. Some voters were turned away for not registered to vote at any of the polling stations in the Ward.

Redirected and turned away voters

ZESN observed that there were fewer turned away and assisted voters in the by-election. Some voters were turned away for not being registered to vote in the ward. ZESN observed that the turned away voters had not changed their registration upon transferring from other wards to be resident in ward 2. However the number of redirected was rather high, consistent with ZESN's observations in previous by-elections. The high number of redirected voters can be attributed to lack of knowledge by voters of the exact polling station they are supposed to vote at. While, ZESN commends ZEC for assigning a special usher who was directing voters to their polling station, the Commission should do more to ensure that voters know the exact polling station they are supposed to vote at. ZESN reiterates its recommendation to display the voters' roll outside the polling stations to enable voters to check their names first and urges ZEC to come up with mechanisms that ensure there is adequate signage to direct voters to their appropriate polling stations.

Election agents

Contesting political parties and candidates are allowed three polling agents on Election Day, one inside the polling station and two outside the polling station. ZESN observed that ZANU-PF and the MDC Alliance comprehensively deployed party agents to all the five polling stations in this by-election. ZESN commends these political parties for deploying party agents as it allows them or their candidates to track the election processes and authoritatively comment on the polling processes.

Voter turnout

Generally, the voter turnout was observed to be moderate, compared to ZESN's observations made in other local authority by-elections held after the 2018 harmonised elections. ZESN observed a relatively higher turnout of youths in the Kadoma Central Ward 2 by-election. This is commendable as ZESN continues to call for the increased participation of youths, particularly as candidates.

Counting and results collation

At all polling stations, ZESN observers were permitted to observe counting and results collation. ZESN observed that closing and counting procedures were duly followed including checking the seals on ballot boxes, requesting election agents to sign V11 forms and posting results outside polling stations to which the party agents all appended their signatures after agreeing that the results were correct and official.

Election Results Table

Name of Candidate	Political Party	Number of votes received
Svorai Chiwara	MDC Alliance	782
Lloyd Nyasha Nyambo	ZANU PF	381
Total valid votes Cast		1,163
Rejected votes		8
Total votes cast		1,171

Source: ZEC

Analysis of the results

The MDC Alliance retained its seat as their candidate Svorai Chiwara was duly elected as the Councillor for Ward 2 of Kadoma Central having garnered 782 votes against ZANU PF candidate who received 381 votes. The winning candidate is the wife of former MDC Alliance councillor Michael Gore who was jailed for inciting public violence during the January 2019 violent protests. Councillor Gore won by 1974 votes against 3 contestants who garnered Independent 563, PRC 11 and ZIPP 18 votes respectively in the 2018 Harmonized elections. There has been a 43.3 % decrease in the number of voters for this year's election compared to last year's 2703.

Recommendations

1. ZEC should enforce the Code of Conduct for political parties and their supporters to deter instances of intimidation.
2. Political parties should publicly commit to adopt peaceful and non-violent campaign strategies before, during and after elections.

3. ZESN urges ZEC to ensure that for all elections, polling stations are equipped with voting booths to cater for people with disabilities especially those on wheelchairs and voters of short stature.
4. Copies of the voters' roll should be posted outside polling stations to enable voters to check their names before proceeding into the polling station. This will allow easier identification of polling stations by voters.
5. ZEC must ensure that voter registration is continuous at district and provincial offices as provided for in the Constitution
6. ZEC should open registration centres to allow for first time voters whenever there are by-elections.