



Ballot Update

Bulletin

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WOMEN URGED TO BE MORE VISIBLE IN ELECTIONS



Honourable Monica Mutsvangwa speaking during the meeting

ZESN conducted a research on the challenges that women in Zimbabwe face in elections. Findings from the research revealed that women are reluctant to participate in elections due to fear of violence and intimidation. Women highlighted that there are weapons of disempowerment that are used to deter them from active participation in elections such as gossip, hackling at political rallies and negative media coverage.

challenges that women face include fear of violence and victimisation particularly during election time, lack of education relative to the men against whom they contest in elections, limited financial capacities to launch vibrant electoral campaigns and inadequate access to the electorate as compared to men.

To present the findings of the research, ZESN held a breakfast meeting for the management committee of the Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus (ZWPC) on the challenges in attaining gender balance in elections in Zimbabwe in Harare on the 10th of March 2015. Women parliamentarians present argued that to strengthen women's participation in elections, political parties need to be strategic in deploying female candidates to ensure that their best candidates are deployed in areas where they stand a good chance of winning.

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UP COMING EVENTS

- ♦ May 5- Local Authority by-elections in Mazowe, Gokwe and Mbire Rural
- ♦ May 15 - Hwedza North By-elections



ZESN Observes Parliamentary By-Elections

ZESN observed the Parliamentary by-elections in Mt Darwin West and Chirumhanzu-Zibagwe constituencies. ZESN deployed static, constituency and mobile observers at polling stations and collation centres.

Prior to the holding of the by-elections, ZESN observed the voter registration and inspection processes.

ZESN commends ZEC for ensuring that polling stations were easily accessible to people with disability and for giving priority to pregnant women, nursing mothers and the elderly.

ZESN noted with concern the continued use of voter registration slips during the by-elections. Though ZEC was authenticating the slips, ZESN is concerned that the continued use of the voters' slips might be an indication that the voters' roll has not been updated despite voter registration and inspection exercises in the constituencies. This can bring into question the integrity of the voters' roll and votes cast by those using such slips.

ZESN observers noted with concern the number of people who were turned away on the basis of being in the wrong wards or because they were not registered. There were also a significant number of voters who requested for assistance in casting their vote. This has been a documented concern in previous polls and has yet to be addressed.

ZESN continues to work towards a Zimbabwe where democratic electoral processes are upheld. ZESN urges the government to ensure the full alignment of the electoral law to the constitutional provisions and review the regulations in order to improve electoral processes and increase transparency and public confidence in elections, including in the areas of voter education, registration and inspection. Financial resourcing of ZEC must be improved to enable them to



Above: A ZESN Observer arriving at a polling station in Mt Darwin

fully discharge their mandate on key electoral processes.

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ZEC should provide gender disaggregated information on elections to stakeholders in order to facilitate informed interventions by CSOs.

There must be full enforcement of the code of conduct for candidates to commit to zero tolerance to violence and intimidation against the electorate.

ZESN recommends that voter education must involve more stakeholders and must be strengthened to reduce the number of turned away and assisted voters. ZEC must include all stakeholders, including political parties and the civil society in the on-going voter registration exercises and must diligently provide access to the voters roll to all



WOMEN URGED TO BE MORE VISIBLE IN ELECTIONS

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Political parties and pressure groups need to ensure that women's issues are visible and to fight against negative vices such as violence against women which deters their participation in elections

Hon Monica Mutsvangwa noted that Zimbabwe is falling short of achieving gender balance in representation in parliament, women need to strategise on how to increase participation. Luta Shaba of the Women's Trust said instead of asking for men to create spaces for women, women should be looking out for opportunities especially where men are failing to deliver so that women capture the electorate. "Women in politics in Zimbabwe should close ranks and support each other regardless of political affiliation" added Luta Shaba. Hon Mabel Chinomona also said there is need for civic education on women's issues to be taken to the grassroots level.

Women were urged to take advantage of social media platforms and other market places to increase their visibility thereby enhancing their chances of performing well in elections. The Government needs to ensure an electoral environment that is free from violence and put in place measures to protect women who are politically active. Measures must be put in place to increase the representation and of women in elections so that gender balance is realized in Parliament.

The MPs present called on the government to ensure that there are certain constituencies that are reserved for women candidates' only and for political parties to train women candidates so that they become more effective in discharging their roles. CSOs working on women's issues and elections were urged to assist in capacity building of women in parliament so that they contribute meaningfully in parliamentary debates.



Left: A cross section of participants at the breakfast meeting with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus

Impending by-elections

There are a total of 17 parliamentary by-elections scheduled for May and June 2015 prompted by the recall of legislators who left the MDC-T party to form the MDC Renewal and the expulsion of Didymus Mutasa and Temba Mliswa from ZANU PF.

The by-elections come on the back of ZEC assuming the mandate to compile the voters' roll and having recently conducted a pilot for the Mt Darwin West and Chirumhanzu-Zibagwe by-elections. Observers have called on ZEC to compile a new register all together using the polling station based voters' roll to deal with recurrent issues with the

current register such as deceased voters, duplicate names. ZESN has been calling for the full alignment of the electoral law to the constitution and for the adequate resourcing of ZEC for comprehensive election administration by ZEC.

The by-elections will be held in Harare East, Kamubuzuma, Kuwadzana East, Glen View South, Luveve, Dzivarasekwa, Pelandaba-Mpopoma, Highfield West, Pumula, Lobengula, Tsholotsho North, Mbizo, Makokoba, Dangamvura-Chikanga, Hurungwe West, Wedza North and Headlands.



PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

**For any comments or further details please contact us on ;
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