

2024



**Zimbabwe Election
Support Network**
Promoting Democratic
Elections In Zimbabwe

REPORT ON THE 3 FEBRUARY 2024 **BY-ELECTIONS**





ACRONYMS

CCC

Citizens Coalition for Change

DOP

Democratic Opposition Party

MDC


Movement for Democratic Change

ZANU-PF

Zimbabwe Africa National Union-Patriotic Front

ZEC

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 14 November 2023, the Speaker of Parliament declared six (6) National Assembly seats vacant with effect from 7 November 2023. This followed a recall of the then sitting Members by the party's Interim Secretary General Sengezo Tshabangu who declared the affected Members ceased to belong to the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC). On 3 February 2024, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) conducted by-elections to fill the National Assembly and Local Authority vacancies. National Assembly by-elections were conducted to fill vacancies created following the recall of Mutasa Oliver (Zvimba East), Chagwiza Stephen (Goromonzi South), Chivero Admore (Chegutu West), Madzimbamuto Willard (Seke), Siziba Gift (Pelandaba-Tshabalala) and Chibaya Amos (Mkoba North). ZESN observed events leading to the by-elections like Nomination Court sitting and pre-electoral environment as well as voting processes for the six (6) National Assembly seats.

Nomination of candidates overall saw a reduction in competition for Constituency seats by candidates who lodged their nomination papers. This is in comparison to the 21 June 2023 nomination process, in preparation for the 23 August 2023 Harmonised Elections for the same Constituencies. CCC filed double candidates in two (2) Constituencies (Goromonzi South and Pelandaba-Tshabalala) and three (3) candidates in (Pelandaba-Tshabalala, Mkoba North and Goromonzi South). Three (3) recalled CCC candidates decided to run as Independents in Zvimba East, Seke and Chegutu West.

ZESN relied on authentic online and print media to scan and assess the electoral environment in the run-up to the by-elections. The environment preceding the conduct of the by-elections was very peaceful and calm. Campaigns were minimal and the electoral aspirants used various means to reach out to the electorate. Methods included, but were not limited to posters, flyers, door-to-door visits and social media. On election day, ZESN deployed 271 static and 15 mobile teams. Observers were on the ground to observe the election day processes during opening, voting, closing and counting of the results. The election day recorded some worrying incidents that ZESN believe have the potential to hinder the ability of observers to discharge their duties as outlined in the Electoral Act. Further, ZESN also observed very low turn-out of voters who trickled in to cast their votes at different polling stations.

ZANU-PF gained control of all the six (6) electoral Constituencies. This has increased the party's number of elected seats in Parliament. In August 2023, ZEC declared ZANU-PF as winner in 136 parliamentary seats. The November 11 by-election saw an increase in the party's parliamentary seats to 137. In December 2023, ZANU-PF was declared the winner by the ZEC in a total of seven (7) out of nine (9) of the contested seats, making a further upward move from 137 to 144 seats. During the 3 February 2024 by-elections, the ruling party was declared the winner by the ZEC in an additional six (6) seats bring the party's total number of seats to 150 elective National Assembly seats out of the 210 there by thereby surpassing the two thirds (2/3) majority which is 140 seats.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE ELECTIONS

Zimbabwe has so far conducted three (3) rounds of by-elections, barely six (6) months after the 2023 August Harmonised Elections. Reasons for the by-elections are centred on deaths and recalls of elected officials. The by-elections have been conducted at three (3) different intervals, firstly on 11 November 2023, followed by 9 December 2023 with the recent round conducted on 3 February 2024. The first round of by-elections was triggered mainly by deaths of the officials and candidates, with subsequent rounds resulting from recalls. Since October 2023, the opposition CCC has been hard hit by a wave of recalls of the elected officials, both at National Assembly and Local Authority levels as the Interim Secretary General declared them non-party members. Regardless of numerous efforts to challenge Tshabangu in the Courts of law, recalled candidates have always lost to Tshabangu, triggering the by-elections to fill the vacancies.

On February 3, Zimbabwe conducted six (6) by-elections in line with Statutory Instrument 235 of 2023, Proclamation 10 of 2023. By-elections were meant to fill vacancies that arose when the following MPs were affected by the recalls; Amos Chibaya – Mkoba North, Gift Siziba – Pelandaba-Tshabalala, Willard Madzimbamuto – Seke, Oliver Mutasa – Zvimba East, Admore Chivero – Chegutu West and Stephen Chagwiza – Goromonzi South.

The Speaker of Parliament notified the President on the 15 November 2023, of the vacancies for the six (6) Constituencies, causing the President to order by-elections in the affected Constituencies. The President fixed Monday 18 December 2023 for Nomination Court sittings. Accordingly, Nomination Courts convened in Bulawayo at Tradegold Building, Gweru Magistrates Court, Marondera Magistrates Court and Chinhoyi Magistrates Court to receive prospective candidates' nomination papers. Bulawayo received nomination papers for Pelandaba-Tshabalala, Gweru received those for Mkoba North, Marondera received for Goromonzi South and Seke and finally, Zvimba East and Chegutu West nomination papers were submitted to the Chinhoyi Magistrates Court. All recalled candidates submitted nomination papers but holding different portfolios, three (3) of the recalled candidates submitted nomination papers as Independent candidates while other three (3) submitted under CCC, a party whose 'Secretary General' had recalled them.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Section 129 (k) of the Constitution provides that if a Member of Parliament (MP) ceases to belong to a political party of which he or she was a Member when elected to Parliament, the seat they represent technically becomes vacant. The party recalls the MP for disassociating themselves from the party that voters elected them under and trigger a by-election to replace them.

The conduct, conditions and electoral system of by-elections is governed by the 2013 Constitution, the Electoral Act as well as the Subsidiary legislation that usually takes form of Statutory Instruments. Sections 159 of the Constitution and Section 39 of the Electoral Act stipulate that whenever a vacancy occurs, it must be filled through a by-election. Statutory Instrument 235 of 2023, Proclamation 10 of 2023 set in motion electoral processes to fill the parliamentary seats left vacant by the recalls of the six (6) incumbent legislators. President Emmerson Mnangagwa proclaimed December 18 as the Nomination date for candidates and 3 February 2024 as the by-election date for the affected constituencies. President Mnangagwa's proclamation complied with Section 158 (3) of the Constitution which mandates that any vacancy should be filled through a by-election within 90 days of the date in which the vacancy occurred.

The Electoral Act outlines the key procedures for candidate nomination, voting, counting and announcement of the results of the said by-election. ZEC, as mandated by the Constitution to conduct by-elections, therefore was in charge and supervised the by-elections. Voter registration for the by-elections closed as per Section 26 of the Electoral Act which provides that no person shall be registered as a voter no later than the second day following the publication and proclamation of the election.

4. PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATIONS

4.1 Electoral Environment

To effectively gather, disseminate and communicate objectively verifiable information about the by-elections, ZESN heavily relied on information from its members, authentic online and print media to gather information on the pre-election events and processes. Zimbabweans across the six (6) Constituencies marked for by-elections exhibited a high level of political maturity and tolerance. The environment was very peaceful and calm, with no recorded incidences of overt violence.

4.2 Litigated By-elections

On 12 January 2024, interim Secretary General Sengezo Tshabangu filed an application at the High Court of Zimbabwe seeking to bar 23 candidates (three (3) National Assembly and 20 Local Authority candidates) from contesting in the 3 February 2024 by-elections. On 20 January 2024, the High Court granted the application of Sengezo Tshabangu and barred previously recalled parliamentarians and councilors from contesting in the by-election under the CCC's banner. The High Court granted a declaration that the Nomination Court had erred in accepting the nomination papers of three (3) ex-MPs namely Gift Siziba of Pelandaba -Tshabalala Constituency, Amos Chibaya of Mkoba North and Stephen Chatiza of Goromonzi South as they had not been readmitted into the party following their recalls.

The recalled candidates appealed against the High Court judgement in the Supreme Court of Appeal. In common law principle, an appeal suspends the operation of judgment, therefore, the CCC MPs and councilors were now able to contest in the by-election. However, to ensure that the recalled members do not contest in the by-election, Tshabangu made an application to the High Court, for the High Court judgement to be executed pending appeal. The High Court granted the application on 2 February 2024, and this resulted in the effective barring of the CCC candidates from contesting in the 3 February by-elections.

4.3 Nomination Court Sitting Procedure and Outcome

4.3.1 Commencement of nomination and environment

On 18 December 2023, the Nomination Courts were open to aspiring candidates sponsored by political parties as well as independents. Overall, the process was very peaceful and calm. There were no reported incidents of violence or intimidation by candidates or their supporters during the verification and nomination period.

Civic observers and the media- (Centre for Innovation and Technology, Chronicle, NewsDay, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation), Civic Society Organizations and Faith Based Organisations (ZESN and Zimbabwe Council of Churches) observed the proceedings. The conduct of the Police was observed as professional as they maintained law and order without curtailing political rights and freedoms.

Below is a table of the duly nominated candidates

CHEGUTU WEST

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party
Chivero Admore	M	Independent
Konjana Gift Machoka	M	CCC
Timburwa Shakemore Wellington	M	ZANU-PF

MKOBA NORTH

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party
Chibaya Amos	M	CCC
Ncube Edgar	M	ZANU-PF
Tayiya Patrick	M	DOP

SEKE

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party
Chisi Everisto	M	CCC
Kashambe Munyaradzi Tobias	M	ZANU-PF
Madzimbamuto Willard Tapfumanei	M	Independent

GOROMONZI SOUTH

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party
Chagwiza Stephen	M	CCC
Chikudo Rueben	M	CCC
Zhanda Washington	M	ZANU-PF

PELANDABA – TSHABALALA

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party
Nkomo Abraham	M	DOP
Siziva Gift	M	CCC
Tembo Moreblessing	F	CCC
Tshuma Joseph	M	ZANU-PF

ZVIMBA EAST

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party
Alberito Agrippa	M	CCC
Mananzva Kudakwashe	M	ZANU-PF
Mutasa Oliver	M	Independent

CCC recorded a high number of double candidates. The party forwarded double candidates in two (2) Constituencies of Pelandaba-Tshabalala and Goromonzi South and three (3) of the recalled MPs filed their nomination papers as independent candidates.

4.3.2 Readiness of the Candidate

Aspiring candidates who were present filed polished, compliant and organised submissions and this demonstrated stronger levels of preparedness for the nomination process. In Marondera, ZANU-PF aspiring candidates for Goromonzi South and Seke successfully filed their nomination by mid-morning. ZANU-PF candidate for Pelandaba-Tshabalala also successfully filed before 11.00am. By midday, the ZANU-PF aspiring candidate for Zvimba East had successfully lodged his nomination papers in Chinhoyi, though he was initially denied because of a missing document. CCC and many other candidates came after midday. It is, however, important to note that there were no rejected submissions, nomination papers were all accepted as valid and candidates were officially nominated.

4.3.3 Decrease in the number of candidates submitting nomination papers.

The 18 December 2023 Nomination saw a reduction in competition for Constituency seats by candidates who lodged their nomination papers when compared to the 21 June 2023 nomination process conducted in preparation for the 23 August 2023 Harmonised Elections. For example, in June 2023, six (6) candidates submitted papers in Pelandaba-Tshabalala Constituency, two (2) points drop to four (4) was witnessed in December of the same year. Mkoba North had five (5) aspiring candidates in June 2023 and three (3) in December, Chegutu West had six (6) in June 2023 and half the number three (3) in December 2023. The decrease in numbers may be attributed to fatigue, protest and disgruntlement which affects both candidates and voters.

5. CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns commenced towards the end of December 2023 following the sitting of the Nomination Court on 18 December 2023. Across all the Constituencies, the political environment was reported to be calm with low levels of participation and few political gatherings.

ZANU-PF held a series of rallies in all the six (6) Constituencies and most of them were addressed by senior party officials. The 26 January 2024, Zvimba East rally was addressed by the party's National Chairperson, Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri; on 8 January, the party's Mashonaland East provincial chairperson Daniel Garwe led ZANU-PF campaign rallies in Goromonzi South and Seke; and ZANU-PF National Political Commissar Mike Bimha visited Bulawayo to drum up support for Pelandaba - Tshabalala ZANU-PF candidate Joseph Tshuma.

The CCC party's campaigns in several Constituencies stopped after the 20 January High Court ruling which barred the three (3) former Members of Parliament (MPs) who were recalled.

5.1 Voter Education

ZESN observers reported that the ZEC conducted voter education for the 3 February by-elections. Voter education exercises primarily used online platforms, door to door, in churches and also the use of public hailers.

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ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

6.1 Polling day political environment

The polling day environment was predominantly peaceful in most of the areas that ZESN observed. This peaceful setting is crucial as it fosters a safe and conducive environment for voters to participate in the electoral process.

6.2 Set up and opening of polling stations

Prior to the setting up of polling stations, voters rolls were displayed outside to enable the voters to verify and confirm their registration details, reducing the likelihood of being redirected or turned away on polling day. ZESN observers reported that the polling stations were opened on time and equipped with all necessary materials, including ballot boxes, ballot papers, indelible finger markers, voters rolls, and official stamps. This timely and well-prepared setup contributes to a smoother and more efficient voting process, instilling confidence in the electoral process and minimizing the number of voters being redirected or turned away on polling day.

6.3 Political parties' agents

ZESN members and observers reported that ZANU-PF and CCC comprehensively deployed political party agents at all polling stations they were observed, while Democratic Opposition Party (DOP) deployed agents in Mkoba North and Pelandaba-Tshabalala Constituencies. ZESN commends the political parties for their consistency in deploying political party agents in all elections as this permits them to track polling processes which in turn empowers them to make any arbitrations where desirable.

6.4 Polling officials, Voting process and procedures

Each of the polling stations was manned by an average of seven (7) polling officers at the time of opening and the majority of the polling officials were female. ZESN observers noted that ZEC ensured gender parity by assigning both male and female Presiding Officers. Polling procedures were duly followed in accordance with the law, for example, checking voters' names on the voters' roll and checking their fingers for ink before they could be allowed to vote. Ballot papers were stamped with an official ZEC stamp before being issued to voters.

6.5 Assisted Voters

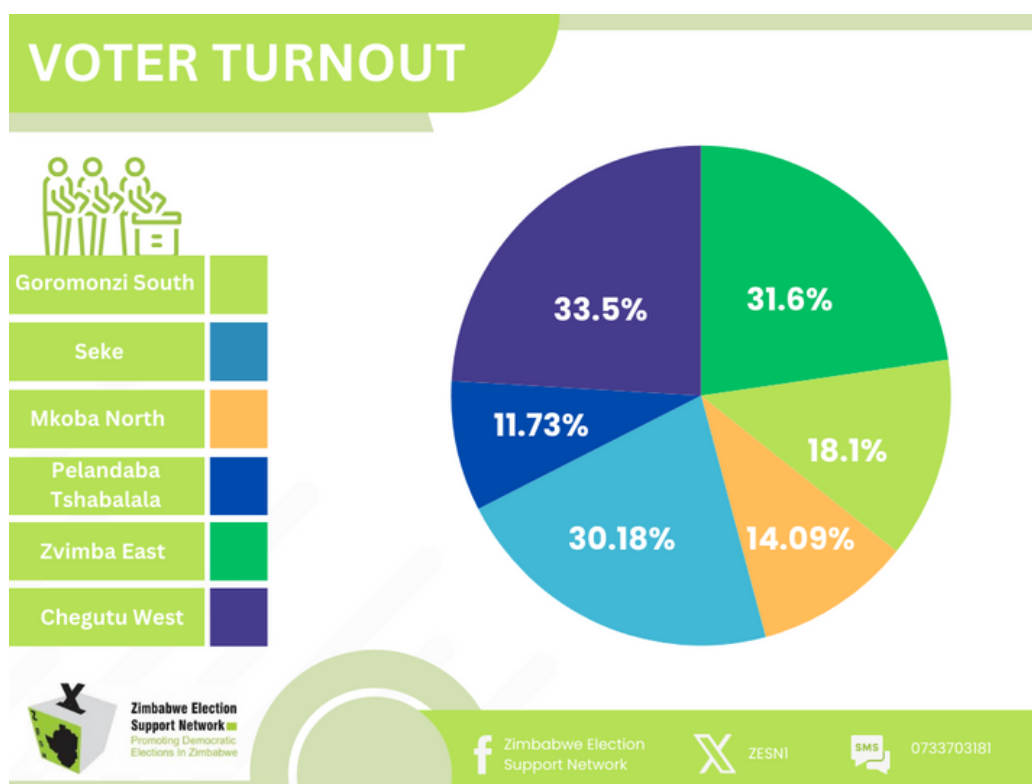
Section 59 of the Electoral Act on voting by illiterate or physically handicapped voters provides that: (1) Upon request by a voter who is illiterate or physically handicapped and cannot vote in the way set out in Section 57, a Presiding Officer shall- (a) permit any other person, selected by the voter, to assist the voter in exercising his or her vote; or (b) in the absence of a person selected by the voter, assist the voter in exercising his or her vote in the presence of two other electoral officers or employees of the Commission and a Police Officer on duty. ZESN observers reported that there were low numbers of assisted voters during the by-elections. Varying numbers of assisted voters were recorded across all constituencies. These were assisted for various reasons but mainly due to illiteracy or visual impairment. At Sizane High School B in Pelandaba - Tshabalala, four (4) out of the 145 who had voted by 6pm were assisted.

6.6 Voter turnout

While Section 67 of the Zimbabwean Constitution provides the right of every Zimbabwean to vote, there appears to be a limited uptake in exercising this constitutional right among eligible voters in the country, particularly during by-elections. Observers reported that there was a low turnout of voters exercising their constitutional right to select their preferred representatives in the six (6) National Assembly and Local Authority by-elections.

Voter turnout was very low across all the six (6) Constituencies. Overall, Mkoba North recorded 14.06% voter turnout. In Pelandaba-Tshabalala turnout stood at 11.73% and in Goromonzi South 18.1% casted their ballots. In comparison to the other three (3) Constituencies, voter turnout was relatively higher in Chegutu West with 33.5% and Zvimba East 31.6% and Seke 30.18%

ZESN expresses concern over the decline in voter participation, which can be seen as a form of voter protest, particularly in response to recalls. The influence of recalls on the democratic character of elections is apparent in the decreasing voter participation witnessed in by-elections after the 2023 Harmonised Elections. In a show of voter apathy, the total number of votes cast per Constituency was notably way below the votes garnered by the winning candidate alone in the August 2023 Harmonised Elections. In Mkoba North, ZANU-PF (2 415) and DOP (1 663) by-election contestants' combined votes fared well below the August winning candidate who polled 12 555. Chegutu West, the by-election valid votes cast towards three contesting candidates representing ZANU-PF (6 697), CCC (668) and Independent (2 626) could not match the total valid votes for the August winning result (13 942). This was the same scenario for the rest of the Constituencies in which by-elections took place.



Picture 1: illustration of the voter turnout for each Constituency

Voter apathy erodes the core principles of democracy. Moreover, inadequate intra-party democracy, procedural deficiencies, and shortcomings in the regulations governing the selection of candidates could be recognized as elements contributing to the low turnout, impacting voters' motivation and active participation in electoral processes.

6.7 Rejected Ballots

In what appears to be a new phenomenon characteristic of the by-elections the high numbers of rejected ballots that were recorded against the backdrop of low voter turnout may be indicative of voter fatigue and protest votes. For example, Goromonzi South recorded 369 rejected votes, Seke – 313; Zvimba East – 262; Pelandaba-Tshabalala – 212; Chegutu West – 191 and Mkoba North – 185. The same trend was witnessed across all electoral Constituencies during the 9 December 2023 by-elections.

6.8 Redirected and turned away voters

The by-elections had a very low number or none of redirected voters and turned away persons. In Zvimba East the highest number of turned away persons was recorded at Umzururu Primary School polling station where five (5) people were turned away. At Chegutu Community Hall A in Chegutu West, ten (10) people were turned away, which was the highest number recorded at any polling station in that Constituency. At Mandedza Shopping Centre Tent A, 13 people were turned away. Many of the cases of people who were turned away involved voters who had turned out to vote without acceptable forms of identification. A few others had their names not found in the voters roll of the specific polling station. ZESN observers also noted that some of the turned away voters would later on return to the polling stations with acceptable identification documents.

In Seke, at Pamutiti Tent A polling station, 11 people were redirected. In the same Constituency, at Manyama Old Council Offices 21 people were redirected to other polling stations after they had turned up to vote at a wrong polling station. A significant number of redirected voters was recorded at Mandedza Shopping Centre Tent A in Goromonzi South where 26 were redirected to other polling stations.

6.9 Critical Incidents

During the Seke Constituency by-elections, five (5) alarming incidents were reported involving ZESN observers. At Ruwa Country Club Polling Station in Ward 24, an observer was harassed and intimidated by unidentified individuals in an unmarked vehicle. The aggressors demanded information about her activities, escalated to threats of physical violence, and forced her to leave the polling station, removing her ZESN Observer T-shirt. Law enforcement officers and the Presiding Officer were present but were instructed not to intervene by the unidentified individuals. Fearing for her safety, the observer complied, and the incident was reported to ZEC, leading to her removal from the polling station by ZESN for her safety.

In another incident at Rusoveri Methodist Polling Station in Ward 15, a ZESN observer monitoring the electoral process was threatened and chased away by unidentified individuals believed to be affiliated with the ruling party. Despite the Presiding Officer's attempts to intervene, the observer faced accusations of being a sell-out and misrepresenting to the West that elections are stolen in Zimbabwe and was forced to leave. Before intimidating the ZESN observer, the aggressors had a meeting with ZANU-PF party agents and demanded that only ZEC officials, the police and political party agents remain at the polling station.

Three additional incidents were recorded on election day, at the following polling stations Sundai Makonde ward 4, Charakupa clinic ward 4, and Pamusasa Tent A. Observers at these polling stations were also harassed on Election Day within the 300m radius of their respective polling stations. Due to fear, one female observer ended up sleeping at the polling station with no blankets, while the other 2 observers left the polling stations they had been assigned to.

These incidents highlight the challenges faced by election observers and the interference they may encounter while carrying out their duties. The act of intimidating and chasing away election observers not only weakens the values of transparency and accountability but also raises apprehensions about the general fairness of the electoral process. There is a need for the police to ensure the safety and security of observers when discharging their duties without fear of reprisal. These security threats on observers are on the rise, hence ZEC must address this problem before it gets out of hand to ensure public confidence in the electoral process and electoral credibility.

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BY-ELECTIONS RESULTS

CHEGUTU WEST

2023 Harmonized Election Result

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Chivero Addmore	M	CCC	13 942
Chigavazira Last Farai	M	ZANU-PF	11 308
Konjana Gift Machoka	M	Independent	875
Makiyi Elizabeth	F	Independent	72
Matibe Takalani Prince	M	Independent	320

February 2024 By-Elections

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Timburwa Shakemore Wellington	M	ZANU-PF	6 697
Chivero Admore	M	Independent	2 626
Konjana Gift Machoka	M	CCC	668

GOROMONZI SOUTH

2023 Harmonized Election Result

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Chagwiza Stephen	M	CCC	16 312
Chikonye Tinashe	M	ZANU-PF	15 216
Chikudo Rueben	M	Independent	421

February 2024 By-Elections

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Zhanda Washington	M	ZANU-PF	6 865
Chikudo Rueben	M	CCC	1 067

MKOBA NORTH

2023 Harmonized Election Result

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Chibaya Amos	M	CCC	12 555
Antonio Learnmore	M	FZC	68
Gondo William	M	ZANU-PF	4 906
Kandai Clifford	M	MDC-T	124
Mkandhla Tadious	M	UZA	56

February 2024 By-Elections

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Ncube Edgar	M	ZANU-PF	2 415
Tahiya Patrick	M	DOP	1 663

PELANDABA – TSHABALALA

2023 Harmonized Election Result

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Siziba Gift	M	CCC	6 529
Moyo Soneni	M	CCC	3 829
Ndlovu Gift	M	DOP	169
Maplanka Sanpoulas	M	EFF	144
Moyo Mourene	F	UZA	88
Verenga Cecilia	F	ZANU-PF	2 969

February 2024 By-Elections

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Tshuma Joseph	M	ZANU-PF	1 845
Tembo Moreblessing	F	CCC	464
Nkomo Abraham	M	DOP	156

GOROMONZI SOUTH

2023 Harmonized Election Result

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Kazhambe Munyaradzi Tobias	M	ZANU-PF	13 277
Madzimbamuto Willard Tapfumaneyi	M	CCC	14 032
Muzanenhamo Frederick	M	DUZ	235

February 2024 By-Elections

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Kashambe Munyaradzi Tobias	M	ZANU-PF	8 586
Chisi Everisto	M	CCC	669
Madzimbamuto Willard Tapfumaneyi	M	Independent	2 401

MKOBA NORTH

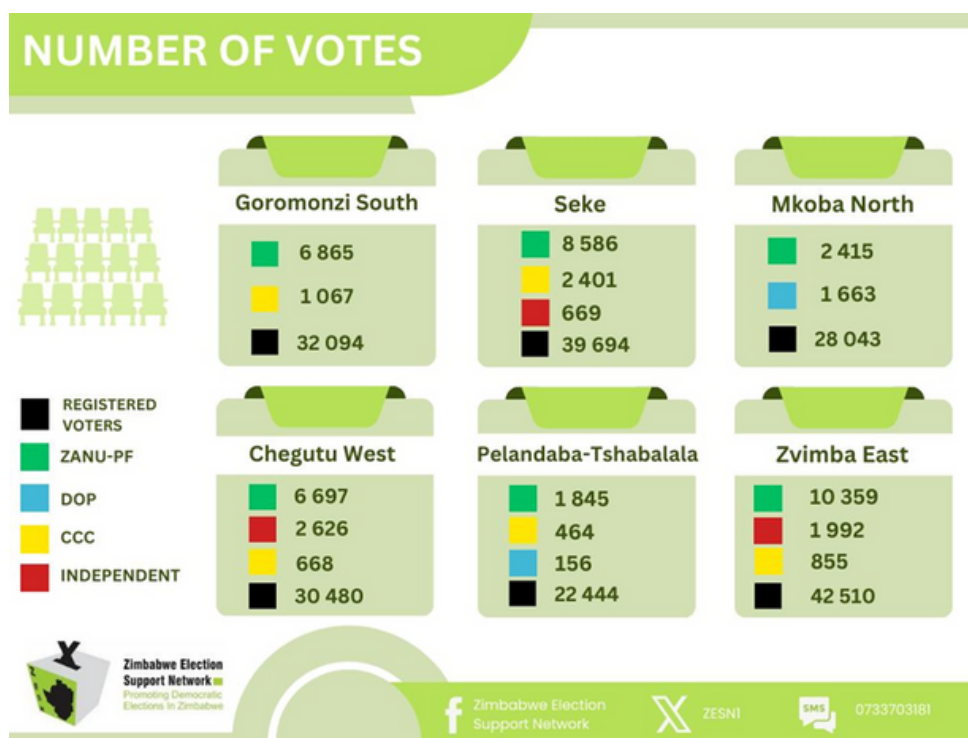
2023 Harmonized Election Result

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Mutasa Oliver	M	CCC	15 435
Mukwangariwa Francis Garikai	M	ZANU-PF	15 246

February 2024 By-Elections

Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Mananzva Kudakwashe	M	ZANU-PF	10 359
Mutasa Oliver	M	Independent	1 992
Alberito Agrippa	M	CCC	855

ZANU-PF was declared the winner by the ZEC for all six (6) National Assembly Constituencies where by-elections took place. Chegutu West, Seke are swing Constituencies which in the past have had either ZANU-PF or opposition parties winning the seat. By winning the two (2) seats of Pelandaba - Tshabalala and Mkoba North, ZANU-PF has gained ground in opposition strongholds. Pelandaba - Tshabalala and Mkoba North Constituencies are creatures of the 2022/2023 Zimbabwe Delimitation Exercise. Their predecessor Constituencies were predominantly opposition strongholds since their creation in the 2007/2008 delimitation exercise. The opposition party in the form of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) enjoyed strong support from these Constituencies. After the 2022/2023 exercise, the newly formed opposition CCC was declared winner in the two (2) Constituencies in the Harmonised Elections. In Mkoba North, Democratic Opposition Party (DOP) was quite competitive in the by-elections although it failed to garner sufficient numbers to win the seat. Zvimba East has been a ZANU-PF stronghold since the 2007–2008 delimitation process. However, the party lost the seat to the Citizens Coalition for Change in the 2023 Harmonized Elections. With the recalls and the subsequent by-election, ZANU-PF succeeded in taking back the seat from the opposition party.



Picture 2: Comparison of votes received and the number of registered voters.

The just-ended by-elections revealed the personification of allegiance to individuals by the electorate. The electorate in most of the six (6) Constituencies uncovered that people do not cast votes along political party lines per se, neither do their preferences reflect on the caliber of the contesting candidate. This accounts for the reason why, when former CCC candidates opted to contest as Independents, they lost seats they once won in the August Harmonised Elections and for those who filed as CCC- Tshabangu, they too lost the by-election.

In August 2023 Harmonised Elections, the Chegutu West CCC candidate polled 13 942 but when he decided to stand as an Independent, he got 2 626 votes. Seke Constituency's August winner, Williard Madzimbamuto garnered 13 277 but as an Independent, he got 2 401. A similar trend happened for the Zvimba East February 3 by-election Independent candidate who got 1 993, which is way below the August winning mark of 15 435.

In most Constituencies, ZANU-PF changed candidates who represented the party in the February 3 by-elections. Compounded by the low voter turnout, the number of votes polled by party representatives also fell across the six (6) Constituencies. In August, the ZANU-PF party candidate for Chegutu West received 11 308 votes and the winning party representative for the by-election polled just above half of the August votes (6 697). Goromonzi South Harmonised Election candidate got 15 216 with the by-election representative getting less than half of the August votes (6 865). The trend of low winning margins was evidenced in the Constituencies of Mkoba North, Pelandaba-Tshabalala and Seke. Zvimba East candidate for the August Harmonised Elections got 15 246 and the by-election candidate garnered a remarkable 10 359 votes.





9

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The by-elections for the National Assembly on February 3, 2024, took place in an atmosphere of low voter education and growing voter apathy in the nation. ZESN reiterates its call that Parliament develop legislation, especially to amend Section 129 (k) of the Constitution, to prevent recalls from being carried out arbitrarily. Recalls put a burden on the national budget and reduce the value of the vote. Further, the Network recommends that;

- The ZEC and other electoral stakeholders continue supporting voter and electoral education efforts to ensure that the electorate are well informed about electoral processes, active citizenry and the importance of accountability from elected leaders in order to continuously enhance participation.
- There is a need to ensure the safety and security of observers when discharging their duties without fear of reprisal to ensure public confidence in the electoral process and electoral credibility.
- It is imperative to establish clear mechanisms for the protection of observers, including legal frameworks that explicitly prohibit any form of harassment or reprisal against them.
- Political parties should promote a culture of non-violence and tolerance in order ensure that citizens participate freely in electoral processes.