

# ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



## 25 January Local Government By-election Press Statement

**Harare, 26 January 2014** –The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) observed the three local government by-elections in Harare, Karoi and Zaka. ZESN observers reported a peaceful electoral process in all three wards albeit the heavy police presence that was reported particularly in Sunningdale Ward 12.

### Voting

All polling stations opened on time and voting started on schedule although short queues were witnessed. Voters essentially trickled in after the opening of polling stations. All polling stations had all their essential electoral material and ZESN commends ZEC for their preparedness. The voting process went on peacefully in all polling stations. ZESN observers reported a number of critical incidents that took place during the voting process. These included:

- The use of voting slips which were used in the harmonized election of 2013 showing that the Registrar-General's Office had not updated the voters roll as their names could not be found in the voters roll. This is a matter of concern as almost 6 months have elapsed since the last election and the Registrar-General's office have not been updating the voters roll. The voting slips cannot be authenticated hence voters not resident in the particular ward holding the by election can vote. In addition, there was a deadline given to the use of voting slips for the by election, only those whose slips were dates the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 and below could vote. ZESN is concerned that this deadline for slips could disenfranchise some voters as voter registration is a continuous process in Zimbabwe and the deadline for the use of slips could disenfranchise those that registered after the Harmonized election of 2013.

In addition, there was inconsistent use of the slips as some voters using slips were allowed to vote and others were denied access to the vote.

- ZESN was concerned about the heavy deployment of the police in Harare's Ward 12. While each polling station was manned by at least 5 police officers, the deployment of the riot police at Stodart Hall seemed unwarranted.
- ZESN observed different application of the law when it came to the place of the police officer. In some stations, the presiding officers called the police officer to be inside the polling station and in some cases, the police men were stationed outside the polling station and they would come inside the station when called in by the presiding officer. ZESN calls for uniformity of application

of electoral laws. This is a similar problem that occurred during the harmonized elections of 2013.

- ZESN observed confusion regarding the manner of assisted voters. This is similar to the problems that took place regarding assisted voters in the harmonized elections of 2013. ZESN observers have noted that even when a voter who needs assistance has brought in a person of their choice to assist, the presiding officer was present which eroded the secrecy of the vote. ZESN is of the view that if the assisted voter is sighted, they can see the candidate of their choice and indicate their preference using an X or even ink. Failure to write cannot mean inability to see the symbol of your party or the face of your candidate. Once a person can see the candidate of their choice they can mark their intention on the candidate of their choice thereby preserving the secrecy of their choice.
- In some cases ZESN observed cases where people who had voted in the harmonized election in these polling stations could not find their names in the voters' roll and were therefore barred from voting. This brings questions on which voters roll is being used for this by-election.
- Of concern was the procedure of showing the ballot paper to the presiding officer after casting a vote. This system was done away with using the Electoral Amendment Act of 2013 which prescribed that the voter did not have to show the seal to the Presiding Officer but simply place their ballot paper in the box after voting. ZESN noted that in almost all polling stations, the voters would show their ballot paper to the presiding officer after voting. This raises issues of voter education on the part of the electorate and training on the part of the presiding officer who did not correct this practice.

### **Counting**

Counting in all polling stations took place according to procedures and votes were displayed outside the polling stations. All party agents agreed that the process had gone well and signed the V11 form.

### **Results**

In all the wards, ZANU PF councilors won the seats. The table below shows the results of the by-elections.

Ward and Candidate	Political party	Number of votes
<b>Zaka RDC Ward 32</b>		
<b>T. Toruvanda</b>	ZANU PF	1054
<b>B.E Mutanga</b>	MDC T	129
<b>E. Chikamhi</b>	NCA	67
<b>Harare Municipality Ward 12</b>		

<b>Maureen Nyemba</b>	ZANU PF	843
<b>Albert Muponda</b>	MDC T	835
<b>Takura Gadzira</b>	NCA	76
<b>Jack Ethen Muzanenhamo</b>	Independent Candidate	26
<b>Karoi Municipality, Ward 10</b>		
<b>Fortune Madamombe</b>	ZANU PF	725
<b>Solomon Chiwaya</b>	MDC T	226

The results show that ZANU PF has retained the seats that were made vacant by the death of the councilors and in addition, they have also managed to acquire the Harare municipality ward 12 seat that had been won by MDC T. ZANU PF has made inroads in places which were formerly MDC T strongholds.

Citizens can participate and receive regular updates on the by elections on the official ZESN social media platforms; <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Election-Support-Network> ZESN and Twitter handle: [@ZESN1](https://twitter.com/ZESN1)

**PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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