

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



ZESN Mid-day Situational Statement on Mutoko North By Election

24 November 2018 – Mutoko North – As part of its comprehensive efforts to observe the Mutoko North National Assembly by-election, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) has deployed over 76 election observers to the 54 polling stations, ward and constituency collation centres in the constituency.

This midday Situational Statement is based on reports received from 54 static observers stationed at all the polling stations in Mutoko North and mobile observers roving around the constituency.

Voting is still on-going and ZESN is observing the voting process throughout the day, the counting process at the end of the day and the collation of results at the ZEC Constituency Collating Centre. By midday the following are the observations so far:

Set up and Opening of Polling Stations

ZESN observers have reported that polling stations were set up in accordance with the requirements of the law to ensure that voters mark their ballots in secret. 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. Furthermore, observers reported that 100% of the polling stations opened on time and had started processing voters by 7:15AM. 100% of the polling stations were reported to be easily accessible to everyone, including people with physical disabilities.

Assisted and turned away voters

ZESN observed high numbers of assisted voters especially the elderly and illiterate in Mutoko North. For instance, at Kawere Primary school in Ward 4, 21 voters had been assisted to vote and 5 turned away by 9:30 AM. At Hunda Village Tent, as at 9 AM, 5 voters had been assisted to vote while 2 were turned away. At Botsanzira Preschool, 9 people had been assisted to vote by 8AM whilst at Ndemera Business Centre of the 15 who had voted by 9:50AM, 12 were assisted to vote. Reasons for turned away voters include having photocopies of their IDs and turning up at the wrong polling stations. For example, at Gwanza Baptist Church, a female voter was turned away for not appearing on the voters roll, she had assumed that when she moved residency from Mutoko East to Mutoko North her name would be transferred.

Role of traditional leaders

In the run up to the by-election, ZESN reported on the partisan involvement of traditional leaders in campaigns and in food aid distribution in Mutoko North. The participation of the traditional leaders has continued with some of the village headsman (Sabhuku) reported to be election agents for ZANU PF in this by-election. ZESN notes that the participation of traditional leaders in partisan politics is in contravention of the Traditional Leaders Act.

Party Agents

Political Parties and candidates are allowed to have one election agent inside the polling station and an additional agent stationed within the vicinity of the polling station. Of the three contesting parties in Mutoko North, only ZANU PF and the MDC Alliance have deployed election party agents comprehensively with the NCA deploying very few polling agents.

Turnout

ZESN observed short queues in the morning with the majority of voters being elderly women. The processing of voters by the polling officials was observed to be efficient.

Polling Officials

There is an average of 7 polling officials at each polling station in Mutoko North Constituency.

Conclusion

ZESN notes that polling stations are still open and encourages all registered voters in Mutoko North Constituency and Chegutu East Local Authority to go out and exercise their right to vote peacefully.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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