

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



Preliminary Statement on Harare Municipality (Kuwadzana) Ward 44 and Mwenezi Rural District Council Ward 15 Local Authority By-elections

09 February 2020 – The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) observed the Harare Municipality (Kuwadzana) Ward 44 and Mwenezi Rural District Council (RDC) Ward 15 by-elections that were conducted by ZEC on 08 February 2020.

Both seats fell vacant following the death of Councillors who had held them since the 2018 harmonised elections. The late, Renias Masunda, was Councillor for Harare Municipality Ward 44 was elected under an MDC Alliance ticket in the 2018 harmonised elections. The late, ZANU-PF Councillor for Mwenezi Ward 15, Edson Chauke got the uncontested seat in the 2018 harmonised elections. The two by-elections were held in accordance with Section 121A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13).

Candidates for the by-elections were nominated on Friday 13 December, the day of the sitting of the Nomination Courts. In the case of Harare Municipality Ward 44, three candidates; Makurwe Lloyd of ZANU-PF, Ndoya Wenell of NCA, and Shoko Adonis of the MDC Alliance were duly nominated. For the Mwenezi by-election, Dzuda Shepherd Tiripamwe of MDC Alliance and Kwinika Samuel of ZANU-PF were duly nominated.

Observation methodology

ZESN trained and deployed observers to observe polling proceedings at selected polling stations in both by-elections. In Harare Municipality Ward 44 ZESN had observers at six out of 12 polling stations while in Mwenezi Council RDC Ward 15 ZESN observers were present at six out of 11 polling stations. ZESN also deployed observers at the Ward Collation Centres in both by-elections. Observers had also observed the pre-election period, shortly before the Election Day. 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 ZESN's observers and is specific to polling stations where they were deployed.

Political environment

The political environment in both Wards was reported to be peaceful before and during the Election Day. ZESN did not receive any reports of violence or any other serious electoral malpractices.

Displaying of the voters' roll

In both by-election areas, voters' rolls were reported to have been posted outside polling stations before the Election Day. ZESN commends ZEC for maintaining this administrative practice that helps ensure that voters can check their names before or on Election Day, thus reducing the number of redirected voters.

Set up and opening of polling stations

All polling stations in Kuwadzana and Mwenezi, where ZESN had observers, were reported to have opened on time, in accordance with the law. The polling booths were set up in a manner that allowed voters to secretly cast their ballots, consistent with the key principle of secrecy of the vote in democratic elections. Further, ZESN observers reported that all essential polling materials used for polling, such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, indelible finger markers, voters' rolls, the ZEC official stamps, were available at all polling stations where ZESN had observers.

Polling officials

Reports from ZESN observers show that polling stations in Kuwadzana and Mwenezi had an average of seven polling officials. In the interest of gender equality, ZESN implores ZEC to consistently ensure the participation of women in elections administration as the majority of polling officers were male.

Voting process and procedures

At all polling stations where ZESN had observers, voting procedures were reported to have been fully followed from opening through to the closing, in accordance with the provisions of the law. Commendably, the elderly and people with disabilities were given the privilege to cast their ballots without having to join queues.

Political parties' agents

It is commendable that ZANU-PF and the MDC Alliance deployed party agents to track the polling process at all the polling stations where ZESN observers were deployed, in both Kuwadzana and Mwenezi. ZESN encourages other parties that contest in elections, to deploy agents who observe polling processes on their behalf. While the NCA participated in the Kuwadzana by-election, no party agents were present at polling stations where ZESN had observers.

Assisted voters

ZESN observers witnessed a few voters being assisted to vote in Kuwadzana. None of the ZESN observers in Kuwadzana reported numbers of assisted voters exceeding five. Reasons given for those who were assisted to vote include visual impairment and illiteracy. By contrast, higher numbers of assisted voters were recorded in Mwenezi. For example, about 30 or more voters were assisted to vote at Valley Primary School and Turf Primary School polling stations.

Turned away and redirected voters

ZESN observers reported on cases where some voters were turned away because they had invalid identification documents, for example a photocopy of an ID card and a driver's licence. This was the case in both Kuwadzana and Mwenezi. The numbers of redirected voters and turned away voters were not high, at polling stations where ZESN had observers. At Turf Primary polling station, for example, about nine people were turned away because their names were not on the register of voters.

Counting and results collation

All ZESN observers were permitted to observe counting and results collation. They reported 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.

By-election results

The Harare Municipality Ward 44 by-election was won by the MDC candidate (table 1 below) while the Mwenezi RDC Ward 15 by-election was won by ZANU-PF (table 2 below).

Table 1 compares the by-election results with the 2018 harmonised election results in the case of the Harare Municipality Ward 44 by-election. Mwenezi RDC Ward 15 was one of the uncontested Wards in the 2018 harmonised elections. The by-election results for the Ward are shown in table 2.

Table 1: Harare Municipality Ward 44

| 2019 by-election | | | | 2018 harmonised elections | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----------------|-------|---------------------------|-----|-----------------|-------|
| Candidates | Sex | Political party | Votes | Candidate | Sex | Political party | Votes |
| Makurwe Lloyd | M | ZANU-PF | 718 | Gabaza Anesu Cleopas | M | ZANU-PF | 2042 |
| Shoko Adonis | M | MDC Alliance | 1517 | Mabika Edward | M | ZIPP | 72 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|-----|----|-----------------------|----------|---------------------|-------------|
| Ndoya Wenell | M | NCA | 12 | Masunda Renias | M | MDC Alliance | 6870 |
| | | | | Mukono Anxious | M | Independent | 124 |
| | | | | Ndoya Wenell | M | NCA | 67 |
| | | | | Svinurai Peter | M | PRC | 44 |
| Valid Votes Cast | 2247 | | | 9219 | | | |
| Votes Rejected | 9 | | | 76 | | | |
| Total Votes Cast | 2256 | | | 9295 | | | |
| Voter Population | 11125 | | | 11180 | | | |
| Percentage Poll | 20% | | | 83.14% | | | |

Table 2: Mwenezi Rural District Council Ward 15

| 2019 by-election | | | | 2018 harmonised elections | | | |
|--------------------------|------|-----------------|-------|---------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----------|
| Candidate | Sex | Political party | Votes | Candidate | Sex | Political party | Votes |
| Kwinika Samuel | M | ZANU-PF | 1811 | Chauke Edson | M | ZANU-PF | Unopposed |
| Dzuda Shepherd Tiripamwe | M | MDC Alliance | 27 | | | | |
| Valid Votes Cast | 1838 | | | | | | |
| Votes Rejected | 30 | | | | | | |
| Total Votes Cast | 1868 | | | | | | |
| Voter Population | 3750 | | | | | | |
| Percentage Poll | 50% | | | | | | |

Analysis of results

As with many other by-elections held before, ZESN observed worrying voter apathy in the by-elections. Voter population dropped by 55 in Kuwadzana from 11,180 to 11,125. Voter turnout was 20% in Kuwadzana. There was a decrease of over 7000 votes between the

total votes cast in the harmonised elections and in the by-election in Kuwadzana. Votes for ZANU-PF decreased by 1324 while for the MDC Alliance there was a decrease of 5353 votes between the 2018 harmonised elections and the by-election.

In Mwenezi, the MDC Alliance lost to ZANU-PF by a margin of 1784 votes. The seat was uncontested in the 2018 harmonised elections. Turnout was comparatively higher in Mwenezi where 50% of the registered voters turned up to vote.

Conclusion

The Network commends voters in Mwenezi and Kuwadzana for casting their voter in peace but is nevertheless dismayed by the voter apathy during municipal by-elections which continues to persist in the Country.

Recommendations

Based on the observations in this preliminary statement, ZESN makes the following recommendations:

- Political parties should encourage their supporters to participate in municipal by elections so as to address voter apathy.
- Civic and voter education efforts by ZEC and civil society organisations should emphasise the importance of by-elections.
- All political parties that contest in elections should comprehensively deploy party agents to monitor polling processes at all polling stations.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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