

## ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



### **Preliminary Statement on the Chimanimani Rural District Council Ward 16 and Mangwe Rural District Council Ward 17 By-elections**

**15 March 2020 – Harare** – In line with its mission to promote democratic elections in Zimbabwe, ZESN observed the Chimanimani Rural District Council (RDC) Ward 16 and Mangwe RDC Ward 17 local authority by-elections. Both seats fell vacant following the death of ZANU-PF Councillors who won in the 2018 harmonised elections. The Chimanimani Ward 16 seat fell vacant following the death of Tendai Nyabaya while the Mangwe Ward 17 seat fell vacant following the death of Majahana Alfred Clement. The by-elections were held in accordance with Section 121A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13).

The Nomination Courts sat on Friday 14 February 2020 to receive nominations of prospective candidates to fill the vacancies. At the close of nomination, Chinamira Charles of ZANU-PF and Murada Erasmus Brighton of the MDC Alliance were duly nominated to contest in the Chimanimani Ward 16 by-election. For the Mangwe Ward 17 by-election, Ndlovu Onthibile of ZANU-PF and Phuthi Sindisiwe of MDC Alliance were duly nominated as candidates.

#### **Observation methodology**

Pre-election observations were reported by ZESN observers who were deployed to observe in the short period prior to the Election Day. To observe on Election Day in Chimanimani, ZESN deployed static observers to 5 out of 11 polling stations. ZESN had a static observer at one out of 4 polling stations in Mangwe, with a mobile team of 2 observers covering the other 3 polling stations. ZESN observers were also present at the Ward Collation Centres in both by-elections.

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 the ZESN observers.

#### **Pre-elections observations**

ZANU-PF rallies were more prominent than the MDC Alliance's in both by-elections. ZESN observers reported on a ZANU-PF rally attended by top party officials including the Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services and Senator, Honourable Monica Mutsvangwa and the Member of Parliament for the Constituency, Honourable Joshua Sacco.

ZESN observers reported that the voters' rolls were displayed outside polling stations in both by-elections areas at least 2 days ahead of the by-elections. ZESN commends ZEC for continuing with this practice that potentially serves to lower the numbers of redirected and turned away voters as people are afforded an opportunity to check their names on the voters' rolls ahead of the polling.

### **Polling day political environment**

The political environment in both Wards was reported to be tranquil with no observed incidents of violence or misdemeanours.

### **Set up and opening of polling stations**

ZESN observers reported that polling stations opened on time with all the essential polling materials such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, indelible finger markers, voters' roll and the ZEC official stamp available at all polling stations where they were deployed.

### **Political parties' agents**

ZANU-PF deployed agents at all the polling stations where ZESN had observers in both Chimanimani and Mangwe. However, the MDC Alliance did not deploy party agents comprehensively. For instance, MDC Alliance party agents were reported to be present at three of the five polling stations where ZESN had observers in Chimanimani. Political parties are encouraged to comprehensively deploy agents to monitor the voting process on polling day. This affords them an opportunity for first hand observation of the processes, enabling them to authoritatively comment.

### **Polling officials**

On average, each of the polling stations where ZESN observers were deployed had 6 polling officers at the time of opening, the majority of whom were female. This is commendable as it is important to ensure women participation in elections administration among other processes.

### **Voting process and procedures**

Voting went well at all polling stations where ZESN had observers. 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 and ballot papers were stamped with an official ZEC stamp before being given to voters.

## Assisted voters

Overall, not many voters were assisted to vote in the by-elections. By end of day, about 22 voters had been assisted to vote at Tiya Primary School polling station in Chimanimani. Most of the assisted voters were illiterate and fewer were visually impaired. About six were assisted at Makorokoro Primary School and two at New Dam polling stations.

## Redirected and turned away voters

Those whose names were not on the voters' rolls were turned away and not allowed to vote in accordance with the law. The numbers were relatively high at some polling stations where ZESN had observers. For example, by end of polling, about 12 people had been turned away at Tiya Primary School polling station while about 13 had been turned away at Nyabamba Secondary School polling station. The numbers were lower in Mangwe, for example about six people were turned away at Tjedza Primary School polling station for because their names were not on the register. ZESN observers reported that no voters were turned away at Makorokoro Primary School and New Dam polling stations.

There were some instances where a few people were redirected to other polling stations in both by-elections. In Chimanimani, the number was about four by end of day at Nyabamba Secondary School polling station and two at Tiya Primary School polling station. In Mangwe, ZESN observers reported on one case at Tjedza Primary School polling station and none at Makorokoro Primary School and New Dam polling stations.

## Voter turnout

Consistent with ZESN's observations in most by-elections, voter turnout was low in both by-elections where it was below 50%. Turnout was 46% and 42% for Chimanimani and Mangwe, respectively.

## By-elections results

ZANU-PF won in both by-elections and therefore retained the seats. The results of the by-elections and of the 2018 harmonised elections are shown in tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1 Chimanimani RDC Ward 16 elections results**

2020 by-election				2018 harmonised elections			
Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes	Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Chinamira Charles	M	ZANU-PF	1589	Nyabanga Tendai	F	ZANU-PF	2709
Mudanda Brightwell	M	MDC Alliance	231	Sigauke Patrick	M	MDC Alliance	667
				Madhuku Bornface	M	PRC	0

<b>Valid Votes Cast</b>		1820		<b>Valid Votes Cast</b>		3376
<b>Votes Rejected</b>		15		<b>Votes Rejected</b>		63
<b>Total Votes Cast</b>		1835		<b>Total Votes Cast</b>		3439
<b>Voter Population</b>		4027		<b>Voter Population</b>		4032
<b>Percentage Poll</b>		46%		<b>Percentage Poll</b>		85.29%

**Table 2 Mangwe RDC Ward 17 elections results**

<b>2020 by-election</b>				<b>2018 harmonised elections</b>			
<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Votes</b>
<b>Ndlovu Onthibile</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>ZANU-PF</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>Majahana Alfred Clement</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>ZANU-PF</b>	<b>404</b>
Phuthi Sindisiwe	F	MDC Alliance	201	Ncube Zinkabi Tommy	M	ZAPU	339
				Phuti Sindisiwe	F	MDC Alliance	242
<b>Valid Votes Cast</b>			514	<b>Valid Votes Cast</b>			985
<b>Votes Rejected</b>			2	<b>Votes Rejected</b>			15
<b>Total Votes Cast</b>			516	<b>Total Votes Cast</b>			1000
<b>Voter Population</b>			1220	<b>Voter Population</b>			1240
<b>Percentage Poll</b>			42%	<b>Percentage Poll</b>			80.65%

As shown in table 1 turnout was low at 46% in the Chimanimani Ward 16 by-election. While the voter population declined by only five people, the total votes cast declined by more than half between the 2018 harmonised elections and the 2020 by-election. Votes received by both parties decreased between the 2018 harmonised elections and the 2020 by-election. The MDC Alliance lost to ZANU-PF by 1358 votes.

As table 2 shows, in Mangwe, a low voter turnout of 42% was recorded. Voter population decreased by 20 people between the 2018 harmonised elections and the 2020 by-election, but valid votes cast decreased by almost half. The MDC Alliance lost to ZANU-PF by 112 votes.

### **Conclusion**

ZESN underscores the importance of all elections and encourages voters to participate. Local authority elections are crucial as they enable citizens a chance to elect leaders who will be responsible for service delivery in their respective areas. /Ends

### **Recommendations**

ZESN recommends the following, based on its observations:

- ZEC, CSOs, and political parties should do more in encouraging voters to vote in municipal by-elections.
- Political parties should comprehensively deploy party agents during by-elections so that they can authoritatively comment on the voting process.

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### **PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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