

# ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



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14 MARCH  
BY\_ELECTIONS  
REPORT

## Table of Contents

### **Contents**

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. BACKGROUND TO THE BY-ELECTION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. ELECTION CAMPAIGNS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6. WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION AND ELECTIONS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8. BY-ELECTIONS RESULTS.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>9. RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>10. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>16</b>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the member organisations and volunteers who continue support the Network's election observation initiatives.

The ZESN Members supported the observer recruitment, training, deployment and debriefing of observers who were deployed to the polling stations and ward collation centres. ZESN appreciates the volunteers who demonstrated considerable commitment and effort to observe electoral processes such as pre-electoral environment and preparations, voter education and polling day processes. The by-elections report was informed by the observations made by these volunteers.

ZESN observers objectively reported on the processes and conducted themselves professionally throughout the Election Day. Their assessment of the by-elections was informed by the Electoral Laws of Zimbabwe and a number of regional and international conventions and declarations which Zimbabwe is signatory to such as the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). ZESN observation was also guided by the GNDEM's Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations, and the Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observers.

## ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
AU	African Union
GNDEM	The Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
MDC-A	Movement for Democratic Change Alliance
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZESN	Zimbabwe Election Support Network

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) conducted two Local Authority by-elections for Chimanimani Rural District Council (RDC) ward 16 and Mangwe RDC ward 17 Local Authority by-elections. Both by elections were held fill vacancies that arose following the deaths of the incumbents and the by-elections were held within the 90 day prescribed timeframe, which is permitted by the Electoral Act.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network deployed strategically to both by-elections. A total of 12 static observers were deployed to both by-elections to assess the electoral processes at the respective polling stations and collation centres as well as the political environment around wards where the by-elections were held.

To complement ZEC voter education efforts ahead of the by-elections, ZESN deployed a team of voter educators to ward 17 of Mangwe RDC which interacted with eligible voters resident in ward. In Chimanimani ZESN reached out to potential voters using a radio programme aired at Diamond FM<sup>1</sup>, which is a community radio station that covers the whole of Manicaland Province.

The number of persons registered to vote in Chimanimani ward 16 was 4,027 and 1,220 for Mangwe ward 17. Although the ZEC registration centres at the Provincial and District offices remain open throughout the electoral cycle, the voting populations for both Chimanimani and Mangwe have not changed significantly since 2018 for both by-elections.

While ZANU-PF and MDC-Alliance contested both by-elections, only ZANU PF campaigns were more visible. ZESN observers reported that MDC Alliance campaigns in both wards were 'low key'. ZANU-PF campaigns on other hand were reported to be more vibrant.

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<sup>1</sup> 8 Community Radio Stations Issued Licenses By BAZ  
< <https://www.creativeloop.co.zw/2015/03/8-community-radio-stations-issued-licenses-baz/> >

On election-day ZESN observers reported that polling stations opened on time with all the essential polling materials and due processes were followed in accordance with laid out procedures. ZANU-PF comprehensively deployed party agents in both by-elections, while the MDC Alliance only did so in Mangwe. In Chimanimani the MDC Alliance only had party agents at two of the 5 polling stations where ZESN had static observers.

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. ZANU-PF won in both by-elections and therefore retained the both seats.

Following the observations highlighted in the report, ZESN proffers the following recommendations.

- i. ZEC, CSOs, and political parties should do more in encouraging voters to vote in municipal by-elections.
- ii. Political parties should comprehensively deploy party agents during by-elections so that they can authoritatively comment on the voting process.
- iii. Political parties should mobilise their supporters to register as this will assist ZEC's task of re-aligning constituency boundaries which have experienced vast demographic changes since the last (2008) delimitation exercise.

## 2. BACKGROUND TO THE BY-ELECTION

### 2.1. Introduction

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) conducted two Local Authority by-elections for Chimanimani Rural District Council (RDC) ward 16 and Mangwe RDC ward 17 Local Authority by-elections. Both by-elections were held to fill vacancies that arose following the deaths of the incumbents. The Chimanimani ward 16 seat fell vacant following the death of ZANU-PF Councillor, Tendai Nyabaya, in December 2019 while the Mangwe RDC ward 17 seat fell vacant following the death of ZANU-PF Councillor, Majahana Alfred Clement, in January 2020.

### 2.2. Observation methodology

ZESN conducts its observation efforts in conformity with Zimbabwe's electoral laws, the Declaration of Global Principles for Citizen Election Observation and Monitoring which was launched at the United Nations on 3 April 2012 as well as the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation in the SADC Region (PEMMO). The findings and recommendations of this election observation are made in reference to the laws of Zimbabwe, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections as well as other regional and African election standards.

ZESN deployed strategically to both by-elections. A total of 12 static observers were deployed to both by-election to assess the electoral processes at the respective polling stations and collation centres as well as the political environment around wards where the by-elections were held. In addition observers tracked electoral developments during the final one and half weeks leading to the by-elections. ZESN's observation methodology allowed the Network to measure compliance of the Election Day processes with the Constitution, Electoral Laws as well as regional and international standards. Compliance of electoral contestants to the code of conduct for elections, and electoral preparations by the Commission were also assessed by the ZESN observers.

### 3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution, Electoral Act, Statutory Instruments and Regulations form part of the Legal framework governing the conduct of by-elections. The Legal framework requires that set polling dates comply with both section 158(3) and 159 of the Constitution, and section 39 of the Electoral Act, both require voting in a by-election to be held within 90 days of the vacancy occurring. Both by-elections were held within the 90 day prescribed timeframe, which is permitted by the Electoral Act.

### 4. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

#### 4.1. Voter Education

Voter education is an important component of the election cycle as it ensures that the electorate understand their rights, political systems, how and where to vote. For an election to be successful and democratic, voters must fully understand their rights and responsibilities, and must be sufficiently knowledgeable and well informed to cast ballots that are legally valid and to participate meaningfully in the voting process.

To complement ZEC voter education efforts ahead of the by-elections ZESN deployed a team of voter educators to ward 17 of Mangwe RDC which interacted with eligible voters resident in the ward. The ZESN teams distributed 310 posters and 1,200 flyers during the voter education exercise. The team took opportunity to address public gatherings including village meetings, funeral wakes among others. ZESN coordinated voter education efforts with the ZEC team that was deployed in the ward from 3 to 5 March 2020.

ZESN reached out to potential voters in Chimanimani using a radio programme aired at Diamond FM, which is a community radio station that covers the whole of Manicaland Province. ZESN raised awareness of electoral rights and the importance and utility of Municipal elections.



ZESN educators addressing village meetings in Ward 17

#### **4.2. Voter Registration**

Voter registration is provided for in Section 17A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13). In keeping with the requirement to provide voter registration continuously.

The number of persons registered to vote in Chimanimani ward 16 was 4,027 and 1,220 for Mangwe ward 17. Although the ZEC registration centres at the Provincial and District offices remain open throughout the electoral cycle, the voting populations for both Chimanimani and Mangwe have not changed significantly since 2018 for both by-elections.

ZESN appreciates that voter registration is done on a purely voluntary basis according to the law. Nevertheless, ZESN is of the opinion that all electoral stakeholders, including political parties need to do more to mobilise voters in their respective constituencies to register to vote and not wait for the periodic voter registration blitz that are conducted by ZEC at different intervals. In light of the impending boundary delimitation exercise it is pertinent that political parties mobilise their supporters to register as this will assist ZEC's task of re-aligning constituency boundaries which have experienced vast demographic changes since the last delimitation exercise which was conducted in 2008.

## 5. ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

Election campaigns in Zimbabwe are regulated by the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates and Other Stakeholders as contained in the Fourth schedule of the Electoral Act. The Fourth schedule guarantees that everyone has the right to freely express their political opinion, campaign and canvass for membership and support from voters.

While ZANU-PF and MDC-Alliance contested both by-elections, only ZANU PF campaigns were more visible. ZESN observers reported that MDC Alliance campaigns in both wards were ‘low key’. ZANU-PF campaigns on other hand were reported to be more vibrant. The party’s rallies were addressed by senior party officials. For instance in Chimanimani ward 16, Senator for Chimanimani, Monica Mutsvangwa and the ZANU-PF National Political Commissar, Victor Matemadanda and the Member of Parliament for Chimanimani East Constituency, Joshua Sacco addressed the rally that was held at Duri Business Centre.

ZESN observer reports indicated that the contesting political parties utilised the following campaign methods during the campaign season for both by-elections<sup>2</sup>:

Political Party	Campaign Methods				
	Rallies	Meetings	Door to Door Campaigns	Posters	Flyers
<i>Movement for Democratic Change A [MDC-A]</i>	✓	✓			
<i>Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front [ZANU-PF]</i>		✓			✓

## 6. WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION AND ELECTIONS

Active participation of women, youth, civil society organizations, and people with disabilities, special needs groups and marginalized groups in the electoral process constitutes a critical element for the deepening of democracy and human rights in

<sup>2</sup> The table with summary of campaign methods utilized by electoral contestants is informed by ZESN observers’ reports (what ZESN observers witnessed)

Zimbabwe. As in past elections, a significant number of women participate in electoral process as voters, election agents, polling officers and citizen observers.

Name of Party	Sex of Candidate	
	Chimanimani Ward 16	Mangwe Ward 17
MDC Alliance		
ZANU-PF		

Both MDC Alliance and ZANU-PF fielded female candidates in Mangwe and male candidates in Chimanimani as illustrated above.

## 7. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

The findings in this section of the report are mainly informed by the observations made by ZESN observers who were deployed in the 2 both wards:

### 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 comprehensively deployed agents at all the polling stations where ZESN had observers in both Chimanimani and Mangwe. However, the MDC Alliance only did so in Mangwe. In Chimanimani the MDC- Alliance deployed agents to two of the five polling stations where ZESN had observers. In addition the MDC- Alliance did not deploy a party agent to monitor proceedings and the Collation Centre for ward 16 of

Chimanimani. Political parties are encouraged to comprehensively deploy agents to monitor the voting process, tabulation and collation of results on polling day. This affords them an opportunity for first hand observation of the processes, enabling them to authoritatively comment on all processes.

### **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 in Mangwe.

### **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 in Chimanimani, 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<sup>3</sup>. ZESN observers reported that no voters were turned away at Makorokoro Primary School and New Dam polling stations, in Mangwe.

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.

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<sup>3</sup> Some of the people who were turned away had not yet registered, while others were registered outside the ward where the by-election was being held.

## 8. BY-ELECTIONS RESULTS

ZANU-PF won in both by-elections and therefore retained the both seats. The results of the by-elections and of the 2018 harmonized elections for the same wards are shown in tables 2 and 3 below.

**Table 2 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%

### Chimanimani Ward 17 By-election Results

Winning Vote Margin **1, 358**

Share of the vote **87%** ZANU-PF (Chinamira Charles)

**13%** MDC-A ( Mudanda Brightwell)



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 during the 2018 harmonised elections and the 2020 by-election have also decreased. The MDC Alliance lost to ZANU-PF by 1358 votes.

**Table 3: Mangwe RDC ward 17 elections results**

2020 by-election				2018 harmonised elections			
Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes	Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Ndlovu Onthibile	M	ZANU-PF	313	Majahana Alfred Clement	M	ZANU-PF	404
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 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.

<b>Mangwe Ward 17 By-election Results</b>	
<b>Winning Vote Margin</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Share of the vote</b>	<b>61% ZANU-PF (Ndlovu Onthibile)</b>
	<b>39% MDC- A (Phuthi Sindisiwe)</b>



## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the observations highlighted in the report, ZESN proffers the following recommendations.

- i. ZEC, CSOs, and political parties should do more in encouraging voters to vote in municipal by-elections.
- ii. Political parties should comprehensively deploy party agents during by-elections so that they can authoritatively comment on the voting process.
- iii. Political parties should mobilise their supporters to register as this will assist ZEC's task of re-aligning constituency boundaries which have experienced vast demographic changes since the last (2008) delimitation exercise.

## 10. CONCLUSION

The relatively lower turnouts during by-elections can be partly explained by the widely held view, by citizens, that Local authority elections are less important than Presidential and National Assembly elections. ZESN does not subscribe to this viewpoint and regards Local Authority elections as equally important as they afford citizens a chance to elect leaders who are directly responsible for service delivery in the communities they reside in.