



**Zimbabwe Election
Support Network** ■
Promoting Democratic
Elections In Zimbabwe

Press Statement

ZESN PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON THE 7 MAY 2022 LOCAL AUTHORITY BY-ELECTIONS

08-May-2022- In line with its mission to promote democratic elections in Zimbabwe, ZESN observed local authority by-elections in the Chitungwiza Ward 7, Mutare Ward 14 and 16, Rusape Ward 5, Pfura Ward 40, Kariba Ward 3, 4 and 8 as well as at the Ward Collation Centres. The by-election were held in accordance with Section 121 A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13) following the death of the incumbent Pfura Ward 40 Councillor Doniah Jeke and the recalls of Mutare Mayor Blessing Tandi of Ward 14; Chitungwiza Mayor Lovemore Maiko of Ward 7; Kariba Mayor George Masendu of Ward 4; Councillors Farai Magevha of Ward 3 and Pedzisai Munhuweyi of Ward 8 and Mutare Ward 16 Councillor Sekai Catherine Mukodza; by the MDC Alliance.

Observation methodology

Pre-election observations were reported by ZESN observers who were deployed ahead of Election Day and who reside in their respective areas of deployment on election day. On polling day ZESN deployed thirteen (13) static observers to selected polling stations and Ward Collation Centres.

The findings and recommendations of this preliminary statement are made in reference to the Electoral Laws of Zimbabwe, the 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's observers.

Pre-elections observations

Campaigns for the 7 May by elections officially commenced in early April following the sitting of the Nomination Court on March 16 and 31 March 2022. ZESN Observers noted that the political environment was generally peaceful and calm. Campaigns for the by elections were mostly door to door campaigns as well as the distribution of flyers and posters. There were no incidents of violence or intimidation that were reported except in Ward 7 Chitungwiza where there were clashes between ZANU-PF and CCC supporters who were gathered in close proximity to each other. ZANU-PF was holding a rally at an open space called 5 Grounds, while CCC was having a door-to-door campaign in a street near the ZANU-PF rally.

Polling day political environment

The polling day political environment was generally peaceful and calm. However, isolated incidents of political tensions and political violence were reported in the early hours of the evening at Tangenhamo Primary School, Ward 7 Collation Centre.

Set up and opening of polling stations

By 0620 the polling staff had arrived at the respective polling stations where ZESN observers were stationed. All ZESN observers were permitted to observe and reported that ZEC polling officials were professional and courteous in their conduct. ZESN observers reported that polling commenced on schedule (0700am) and all the polling stations had the essential polling materials.

Political parties' agents

In all the polling stations where ZESN had observers, ZANU PF and CCC contested in all the 8 wards and deployed party agents. MDC-Alliance contested in 4 wards and had polling agents in all the wards they contested and where ZESN observed. ZESN observers noted cases where party agents arrived after polling had started. For instance, at Murahwa B Primary School, CCC and MDC-Alliance agents arrived before 8am, after polling had commenced thus missing an opportunity to observe the polling station set-up and opening procedures.

Polling officials

At five of the polling stations where ZESN had static observers, the Presiding Officers were female. The Network commends ZEC for implementing their gender mainstreaming policy in elections by empowering women to hold substantive positions in the Commission.

Voting process and procedures

Voting throughout all the polling stations that ZESN observed was done in accordance with set procedure including adhering to ZEC COVID-19 policy which requires among other things for ZEC to keep a register of all those that present themselves at the polling stations to enable contact tracing.

Assisted voters

The number of assisted voters was relatively low. The major reasons were illiteracy and visual impairment. For instance, in Ward 40 Pfura RDC, 82 people were assisted to cast their ballot while in Ward 3 Kariba 23 people were assisted to vote and in Ward 14 Mutare, 5 people were assisted to vote.

Redirected and turned away voters

ZESN observed that there were relatively lower numbers of redirected and turned away voters. Some were turned away after their names could not be found in the voter's roll whilst others turned up to vote with legally unacceptable forms of identity such as driver's license. For example in Ward 40 Pfura RDC, 84 people were turned away while 20 were

Kariba Ward 8	Munhuweyi Pedzisai	M	CCC	107				
	Machirimba Samuel	M	ZANU-PF	62				
Mt Darwin Pfura RDC	Chigango Tobias Samuel	M	CCC	77	Jasna Elijah		MDC-A	135
	Madziva Gift	M	ZANU-PF	1461	Jeke Doniah		ZANU-PF	3125
Mutare Ward 14	Masenyama Patrick	M	CCC	819	Blessing Tandi	M	MDC-A	3394
	Moyo Wellington Jonah	M	ZANU-PF	493	Moyo Wellington Jonah	M	ZANU-PF	1435
	Nyathi Njabulo	M	MDC-A	7				
Mutare Ward 16	Sekai Cathrine Mukodza	F	CCC	1054	Sekai Cathrine Mukodza	M	MDC-A	6438
	Mudzimwa Webster	M	ZANU-PF	406	Gwenzi Lizzy	F	ZANU-PF	1801
	Madzokeres Tsverukai	M	MDC-A	9				
Rusape Town Council Ward 5	Manhuhwa Brighton	M	ZANU-PF	140	Chipfupa Julius	M	ZANU-PF	231
	Nyampigoti Munyaradzi	M	MDC-A	10				

	Sithole Lyton	M	CCC	221		Sithole Lyton	M	MDC-A	444
--	---------------	---	-----	-----	--	---------------	---	-------	-----

Conclusion

ZESN commends the voters who took time out to cast their vote during these by-elections to elect their preferred local authority candidates. While the pre-electoral and polling day political environment was relatively peaceful in all the eight wards, the political tensions that flared up in ward 7 of Chitungwiza Municipality marred an otherwise peaceful election.

Recommendations

ZESN recommends the following, based on its observations:

- There is a need for greater political literacy amongst citizens for them to make use of political and electoral rights afforded them by the Constitution. This would translate into improved turnout for local authority by-elections which in comparison with national assembly by-elections are regarded as less important.
- Political parties must continue to call on their supporters to engage those with divergent political interests peacefully as this will enhance the credibility of elections in Zimbabwe.
- There is a need for political party leaders and their supporters to respect the civil and political rights enshrined in the Constitution, in particular freedom of association.
- Political parties should ensure their agents arrive at their assigned polling stations on time and that they observe all polling processes so that they can authoritatively comment on the polling day processes.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

FOR COMMENTS AND FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT

Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)

Chairperson: +263 772 234 891

Monitoring and Observation Manager: +263 772 126 099

+263 (242) 791443, 798193, 791803, 250736

info@zesn.net or zesn2011@zesn.net

or visit www.zesn.org.zw

Twitter: @ZESN1

Facebook: Zimbabwe-Election-Support-Network (ZESN)