



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

**Press Statement**

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**ZESN SITUATIONAL STATEMENT ON THE 22 OCTOBER 2022 LOCAL AUTHORITY BY-  
ELECTIONS**

**22 October 2022** - The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) has deployed 15 static observers and four (4) mobile observers in six (6) Local Authority by-elections which are; Buhera Rural District Council (RDC) Ward 24; Guruve RDC Ward 4; Insiza RDC Ward 4; Matobo RDC Ward 2; Takawira (RDC) Ward 6 and Mutare Municipality Ward 18. The vacancies arose following the death of Councillors Saimon Chingwidze (ZANU-PF) of Ward 24 Buhera RDC; Tom Moyo (ZANU-PF) of Ward 2 Matobo RDC, Kudakwashe Chisango (MDC-A) of Ward 18 Mutare Municipality; Lencio Kafungura (ZANU-PF) of Ward 4 Guruve RDC, Johanes Kohli (ZANU-PF) of Takawira Ward 6 RDC and Lawrence Maphosa (ZANU-PF) of Insiza Ward 4 RDC.

The Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the Citizen Coalition for Change (CCC), the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) are contesting in the by-elections.

ZESN is observing the by-elections in line with its mandate to assess the extent to which standards of holding democratic elections as espoused by the Constitution, the Electoral Act, and other regional and international principles, governing the conduct of elections. This situational statement is based on reports received from ZESN observers.

**Nomination Court**

The Nomination Court sat on the 7th, 20th and 21st of September 2022 to consider nominations for by-elections in Buhera RDC, Mutare Municipality, Insiza, Guruve, Takawira and Matobo. For Buhera RDC ward 5, Muzamba Joram (CCC), Ernest Muzokomba (ZANU-PF) were duly nominated, whilst for the Guruve RDC Ward 4 by-election, Chiguma Stephen (ZANU-PF) and Kudyahakudadirwe Wonder Francis (CCC) were successfully nominated as candidates. In Insiza Ward 4, Daniel Dube (ZANU-PF) and Augustine Gumede (CCC) were nominated as candidates. In Mutare Municipality Ward 18, the Nomination Court approved the candidature of Loveness Chiwashira (ZANU-PF), Nyasha Machekeche (NCA) and Blessing Murindashaka (CCC). For the Matobo ward 2 by-election, Sindiso Ngwenya (CCC), Liberty Nyirongo (ZAPU), and Fadreck Siwela (ZANU-PF) and in Takawira RDC - Netsai Dzingira (ZANU-PF) and Amosi Marevegwa (CCC) were duly nominated as candidates for the by-elections.

## **Political environment and incidents**

As of midday, the political environment in some wards was reported to be peaceful, while a few incidents were observed and reported by the observers. For example, at 0800hrs, at Sikhamaswe polling station in Matobo Ward 2, ZANU-PF members allegedly mounted a desk with ZANU-PF regalia and banners on exhibition less than 300 metres away from the polling station. A few youths were reportedly manning the desk and after voting some people were allegedly passing through the desk. After one hour, ZEC mobile supervisor officials and officers of the ZRP intervened and dismissed the grouping outside the polling station area and also removed a ZANU-PF poster which was within the polling station area.

At Tudi Primary School, Matobo, the situation was reportedly tense as people were slowly gathering in groups away from the polling station after voting. However, as at midday, there was no incident of violence or rowdy behaviour reported.

At Zvakare Primary School, Buhera it was reported that at around 1030hrs, one of the ZEC officials was called to the Ward Collation Centre by his superiors after his impartiality had been questioned on allegations that he is an activist for the CCC party.

ZESN observed more ZRP details or officers to maintain law and order because of rife tensions at Sinkamaswe and Tudi Primary School in Matobo as well as at Gambiza Primary School in Takawira Ward 6 following clashes between ZANU-PF and CCC party supporters yesterday and today. ZESN commends the usual support from the ZRP to maintain peace and order.

## **Displaying of the voters' roll**

ZESN observers have reported that ZEC posted the voters' roll outside all the seventeen (17) polling stations established in all six (6) wards. This is commendable as it enables the easy identification of polling stations by voters. However, at Nyamauru Primary School as well as at Joshua Dube in Mutare Municipality Ward 18, some people faced challenges with respect to identifying their names in the voters' roll as it was not in alphabetical order.

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

Polling stations were set up in accordance with the requirements of the law to ensure that voters mark their ballots in secrecy. ZESN observers have reported that essential voting materials such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, ZEC stamps, indelible marking pens, and biometric voters' rolls were present at all polling stations. Furthermore, observers reported that all the polling stations opened on time and had started processing voters by 7:15 am. Most of the polling stations were reported to be easily accessible to everyone, including people with physical disabilities.

## **Polling officials**

Each of the polling stations was manned by an average of eight (8) polling officers at the time of opening. Eleven (11) out of the 17 polling stations which ZESN observed had male presiding officers and six (6) female presiding officers.

### **Adherence to COVID-19 protocols**

In light of the COVID-19 protocols, voters and all other stakeholders, including observers and election officials who entered polling stations, had their masks on and no one was allowed to enter the polling station without a mask. Voters also had their hands sanitized or washed at almost every polling station with running water. All visitors to the polling stations were also required to register their names and contact details, presumably for COVID-19 tracing.

### **Assisted, Turned Away, and Redirected Voters**

The number of people who were assisted to vote was relatively low across all the wards. The highest number of assisted voters was recorded at Zvakare Primary School in Ward 24 Buhera, which, by midday had 24 assisted voters. At Mukwenya Primary School in Guruve Ward 4, 16 out of the 187 people who voted had been assisted by mid-day.

Some people were turned away at various polling stations after they turned up to vote without proper identification details or their names not being found on the voter's roll. As of mid-day, the highest number of turned away voters had been at Dry Paddock in Matobo Ward 2 and Guruve where 11 people had been turned away. At Chimufombo Primary School in Guruve, those turned away, or could not be found on the voters' roll.

The number of redirected numbers was particularly high at centres where there were more than one polling station for instance in Mutare Municipality Ward 18 at Joshua Dube Primary School A as well as at Dry Paddock in Matobo Ward 2. However, most of the redirected voters were not being recorded and were simply directed to the other nearby polling station.

### **Party agents**

Contesting parties deployed party agents comprehensively. CCC and ZANU-PF which had candidates in all the six (6) wards, had agents at all polling stations where ZESN had observers. NCA and ZAPU also deployed party agents in the wards in which they were contesting. The teams of political party agents from across the board comprised both females and males.

### **Voter turnout**

Voter turnout was significantly lower across all polling stations. In Mutare, voter turnout was significantly lower. As of midday, only 52 voters out of 735 had cast their vote at Joshua Dube Primary School A in Ward 18 Mutare. The highest turnout was recorded at Dry-paddock Primary School B which, by midday, had recorded 228 voters out of 512 registered at that polling station.

### **Conclusion**

Polling is still ongoing and ZESN encourages all registered voters in Buhera RDC Ward 24; Guruve RDC Ward 4; Insiza RDC Ward 4; Matobo RDC Ward 2; Takawira (RDC) Ward 6 and Mutare Municipality Ward 18 to go out and exercise their right to vote in peace.

The Network will continue to share updates via its social platforms as the polling progresses.//ENDS

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**FOR COMMENTS AND FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT**

ZESN Chairperson: +263772234891

ZESN Acting Executive Director: +263772219462

zesn2011@zesn.net, [info@zesn.net](mailto:info@zesn.net)

Facebook: Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)

Twitter handle:@ZESN1