



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

Press Statement

**ZESN PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON THE MBERENGWA RDC WARD 15 & NYANGA RDC
WARD 27 LOCAL AUTHORITY BY-ELECTIONS**

09-October-2022- In line with its mission to promote democratic elections in Zimbabwe, ZESN observed local authority by-elections in the Mberengwa Rural District Council Ward 15 and Nyanga RDC Ward 27 local authority by-elections. The by-elections were held in accordance with Section 121 A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13) following the death of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) councillors Ravasingadi Zhou and Collins Matongo for Mberengwa Ward 15 and Nyanga Ward 27 respectively.

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 six (6), static observers, to selected polling stations and Ward Collation Centres as well as a roving team of three (3) observers.

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 governing the conduct of democratic elections.

This preliminary statement is based on reports received from the ZESN's observers.

Pre-election observations

Campaigns for the two (2) local authority by-elections officially commenced in August following the sitting of the Nomination Court on Friday 19 August 2022. ZESN observers reported that the political environment was generally peaceful and calm. Campaigns for the by-elections were mostly political rallies, door-to-door as well as the distribution of flyers and posters. There were no incidents of violence or intimidation that were reported in both wards. ZANU-PF held a rally at Ruzengwe Business Centre in Mberengwa which was addressed by former Minister of State Security Owen Ncube on the 6th of September to solicit support from the electorate and encourage them to vote peacefully. In the same ward, CCC distributed posters and flyers. In Nyanga Ward 27, ZANU-PF mostly used meetings in the villages whilst CCC used door-to-door campaigns.

Polling day political environment

The polling day political environment was generally peaceful with no instances of political tensions and violence being reported.

Set up and opening of polling stations

By 0620hrs 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 (07:00hrs) and all the polling stations had the essential polling materials. At five (5) of the six (6) polling stations where ZESN had static observers in both wards, the Presiding Officers were male. ZESN urges ZEC to ensure that there is equal or near equal gender representation when assigning presiding officers.

Political parties' agents

Both ZANU-PF and CCC deployed party agents to track the polling process at all the polling stations ZESN observed and visited by the roving team. ZESN commends the two political parties for the comprehensive deployment of party agents to monitor the voting process on polling day. This affords them an opportunity for first hand observation of the process, enabling them to authoritatively comment on all processes.

Voting process and procedures

Voting throughout all the polling stations that ZESN observed was done following the set procedures including adhering to the ZEC COVID-19 Policy which requires among other things not to permit anyone to enter the polling station without a mask and 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 people who were assisted to vote was relatively high in Mberengwa RDC Ward 15 which saw almost 10% (91) of the total people who voted (933) being assisted due to illiteracy and visual impairment while in Nyanga RDC Ward 27 fewer voters (23) were assisted.

Redirected and turned away voters

ZESN observed that there were relatively high numbers of redirected and turned-away voters. For example in Mberengwa Ward 15, 83 people were turned away while 23 people were turned away in Nyanga Ward 27. Some were turned away after their names could not be found in the voters' roll whilst others turned up to vote with unacceptable forms of identity documents such as a photocopy or torn green waiting pass.

Voter turnout

Both wards recorded a turnout above 50% with the highest turnout being of Mberengwa Ward 15 which recorded a turnout of 58.24% and Nyanga Ward 27 53.2%, which was relatively high as compared to turnout in the previous by-elections such as Bulilima RDC Wards 1 and 16 which recorded 50.8% and 50.3% respectively. Further, in Chitungwiza Ward

7, Mutare Ward 14 and 16, Rusape Ward 5, Pfura Ward 40, Kariba Ward 3, 4 and 8 local authority by-elections, none of the Wards recorded a turnout above 50%. The lowest being Ward 16 of Mutare Municipality which recorded a turnout of 11%. ZESN commends the people of Mberengwa and Nyanga for attaching importance to local authority elections through participation. ZESN observers reported that, most of the voters who were turning up to vote were predominantly women followed by elderly persons. The participation of youths in the by-elections was noticeably low.

By-elections results

ZANU-PF retained its seats in both wards. The tables below show the results of the by-elections.

Table 1. Mberengwa Rural District Council Ward 15 by-election results

2022 By-Elections				2018 Harmonized Elections			
Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes	Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Nkonzo Albenias	M	ZANU-PF	765	Zhou Ravasingadi	M	ZANU-PF	1062
Dongijena Conias	M	CCC	165	Dongijena Cornias	M	MDC-A	231
				Msindazi Zibusiso Ndabazewe	M	PRC	36
Valid Votes Cast			930	Valid Votes Cast			1329
Votes Rejected			3	Votes Rejected			33
Total Votes cast			933	Total Votes Cast			1362
Voter Population			1705	Voter Population			1587
Percentage Poll			58.24%	Percentage Poll			85.82%

In 2018, ZANU-PF represented by Zhou Ravasingadi had slightly above 79% of the total valid votes cast whilst Dongijena Conias of MDC-A had 17% of the valid votes cast. Msindazi Zibusiso of People Rainbow Coalition trailed behind with over 2.7% of the total valid votes. In comparison, in the 2022 by-elections, ZANU-PF represented by Nkonzo Albert had 82% (765 votes) whilst Dongijena Conias now under CCC, secured 17% of the total valid votes.

Despite the lower voter turnout of 58.24% in 2022 as compared to 85.82% in 2018, Dongijena (first under MDC-A and then CCC) remained stagnant at 17% whilst ZANU-PF increased its winning percentage by 3%.

Table 2. Nyanga Rural District Council Ward 27 by-election results

2022 BY-ELECTIONS				2018 Harmonized Elections			
Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes	Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Nyazenga Simon	M	ZANU-PF	376	Matongo Collins	M	ZANU-PF	389
Tichiwangani Artwell Taurai	M	CCC	123	Nyagope Martha	F	MDC-A	189
				Machokoto Melody Rutendo	F	Independent	198
Valid Votes Cast			499	Valid Votes Cast			776
Votes rejected			2	Votes Rejected			24
Total Votes cast			501	Total Votes Cast			800
Voter Population			942	Voter Population			932
Percentage Poll			53.2%	Percentage Poll			85.84%

Conclusion

ZESN commends the voters who took time out to cast their vote in peace in the two (2) by-elections to elect their preferred councillors.

Recommendations

On the basis of its observations, ZESN recommends the following:

- There is a need for greater political literacy amongst the youth 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.
- There is a need for ZEC and CSOs to provide continuous civic and voter education focusing on polling requirements to reduce instances of turned away and redirected voters.
- There is a need for voters to make use of the voters' rolls displayed outside polling stations to enable them to identify the polling stations where they are supposed to cast their vote to reduce instances of being turned away or redirected to other polling stations.

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