



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

Press Statement

**ZESN SITUATIONAL STATEMENT ON THE WARD 6 MUTASA SOUTH RURAL DISTRICT
COUNCIL LOCAL AUTHORITY BY-ELECTIONS**

17 December 2022-The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) has deployed four (4) static observers and four (4) mobile observers to observe local authority by-elections in Ward 6 of Mutasa South Rural District Council (RDC). Section 121 A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13) provides for the filling of vacancies that arise in councils. A vacancy arose in Ward 6 of Mutasa South RDC following the death of Councillor Stephen Kavhuru who secured victory on the MDC-Alliance ticket in 2018.

Nomination Court

The Nomination Court sat on Thursday 17 November 2022 at the offices of the Chief Executive Officer for Mutasa Rural District Council to receive and consider nominations of candidates. Nyamururu Babrah of the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) and Barara Regina of the Zimbabwe African National Unity Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) were duly nominated as candidates for the local authority by-election.

Political environment

As of midday, the political environment in the respective Ward was reported to be tranquil with no incidents of violence, harassment or intimidation have been observed and reported during the polling process so far.

Displaying of the voters' roll

ZESN observers reported that at all the four (4) polling stations in Ward 6 of Mutasa South RDC the voters' rolls were posted outside to ensure that voters easily identify their names before polling.

Set up and opening of polling stations

By 7 am, all polling stations had been opened and polling commenced immediately after. ZESN observers confirmed that the polling stations set up complied with the legal provisions on ensuring secrecy of the ballot. Essential voting materials such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, ZEC stamps and indelible marking were reported to be present at all polling stations.

COVID-19 Protocols

At all the four (4) polling stations in Ward 6 of Mutasa South RDC, COVID-19 protocols have been relaxed with seldom wearing of masks and mandatory sanitization of hands.

Polling officials

Each of the polling stations was manned by an average of seven polling officers at the time of opening. At all the four (4) polling stations observed, the gender disparity of Presiding officers was balanced.

Voting process and procedures

At all polling stations, ZESN observers reported that voting is proceeding well, with all polling procedures being duly followed in accordance with the law.

Party agents

ZANU-PF and CCC have comprehensively deployed an average of two of their party agents at each polling station to track the polling process at all the polling stations where their candidates are contesting in the by-election.

Assisted voters

Section 59 of the Electoral Act on **voting by illiterate or physically handicapped voters** provides that: *(1) Upon request by a voter who is illiterate or physically handicapped and cannot vote in the way set out in Section 57, a Presiding Officer shall- (a) permit any other person, selected by the voter, to assist the voter in exercising his or her vote; or (b) in the absence of a person selected by the voter, assist the voter in exercising his or her vote in the presence of two other electoral officers or employees of the Commission and a police officer on duty.*

In line with the set laws, some voters had been assisted to vote on account of illiteracy and visual impairment as of midday. For instance, about nine (9) voters had been assisted to vote at Madziro Village Tent Polling Station, by 11:00 hours and about twenty-three (23) had been assisted at St Columbus Primary School Polling Station around the same time.

Turned away and redirected voters

A number of people were turned away either because they could not produce valid identification documents or their names were not on the voters' roll. As of 11:00 hours, about twenty (20) and eighteen (18) people had been turned away at Gatsi Primary School Polling Station and at Bvuma Business Centre Tent respectively for not presenting Identification Document (ID) card, showing up at wrong polling station and others were not in the voter's roll.

Incidents

At Bvuma Business Centre Tent, one voter was reprimanded and turned away by the Presiding officer for chanting a political party slogan. This is in violation of Section 147 (1) **(c) on prohibition of certain activities in vicinity of polling stations** "without derogation

from any other provision of this Act or any other enactment, no person shall, within three hundred metres of any polling station on any polling day- utter slogans”.

Voter turnout

ZESN observers have reported that around 11:00 a.m most of the voters who were turning up to vote were females.

Conclusion

Section 53 of the Electoral Act **on hours Polling Stations to be open** provides that a polling station shall open continuously from 7.00 a.m to 7.00 p.m on a polling day. As voting continues until 7.00 p.m hours in the evening, ZESN encourages registered voters to go out and cast their ballot in peace given the fact that local authority elections are equally important since they accord voters the opportunity to choose leaders of their choice who will responsible for service delivery in their areas.

ZESN will continue to observe and issue updates as well as a report of the by-election with its recommendations. ///ENDS

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