

ZIMBABWE ELECTION
SUPPORT NETWORK



NYANGA RURAL DISTRICT
COUNCIL WARD 26 AND BIKITA
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL WARD
31 BY-ELECTIONS REPORT



Table of Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
2. ABOUT ZESN	4
3. BACKGROUND TO THE BY-ELECTIONS	4
4. OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY.....	4
5. POLITICAL PARTIES' PRIMARY ELECTIONS.....	5
6. NOMINATION COURT SITTING AND RESULTS	5
7. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS AND POLITICAL PARTIES' ACTIVITIES.....	6
7.1 Political environment.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7.2 Political Party Activities and Campaigns	6
7.3 ZEC's and Political Parties' Activities	6
7.4 Electoral Malpractices	7
8. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS.....	7
8.1 Opening and set up of polling stations.....	7
8.2 Political environment.....	7
8.3 Voting process and procedures	7
8.4 Party agents.....	8
8.4 Assisted voters	8
8.5 Voter turnout.....	8
8.6 Redirected and turned away voters	9
8.7 Women participation	9
8.8 Election Results	9
Analysis of the results	10
Conclusion	11
Recommendations	10

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) held two municipality by-elections on 13 July 2019 in Bikita Rural District Council (RDC) Ward 31 and Nyanga RDC Ward 26. The two local authority by-elections were held to fill council seats that were left vacant following the deaths of the Councillors who won the seats in the 2018 harmonized elections. ZANU-PF and the MDC Alliance contested in both by-elections while the NCA only contested in Bikita.

ZESN deployed Long Term Observers (LTOs) in both Wards to observe election-related developments from 29 May until immediately after the elections on 13 July 2019. The LTOs reported that the pre-election environment was peaceful, but there were reported cases of the politicized distribution of aid by ZANU-PF in both Wards. On the Election Day, ZESN managed to deploy Short Term Observers (STOs) to only two of the six polling stations in Bikita and three of the five polling stations in Nyanga.

The Election Day environment was largely peaceful in both Wards. However, ZESN observers confirmed reports of the clash between ZANU-PF and MDC Alliance supporters in Bikita (in Ward 31) which momentarily disrupted polling. ZESN observers reported that polling processes went on well throughout the day in both Wards.

At all polling stations where ZESN had observers in Bikita, the NCA did not have political party agents. Voter turnout for the by-elections was lower than that the turnout during the Harmonized elections. For instance 62% of registered voters cast their ballots in the Bikita RDC Ward 31 and 51% in the Nyanga RDC Ward 26 by-election. The voter turnout for the two Wards during the Harmonized Elections was 84,73% and 83.81% respectively.

The highest number of turned away voters was at Erin forest polling station in Nyanga where 13 voters had been turned away for not being on the voters' roll and producing the wrong identity documents as early as midday. Some of the 10 voters who were redirected to other polling stations argued that they had previously voted at the polling station they were being turned away from. There were no women candidates in both by-elections. However, women in Bikita actively participated as voters as evidenced by the fact that in an update given by ZEC as of 1600 hours on the election day, 68% of those who had voted were women.

Both by-elections were won by ZANU-PF. The party therefore retained the Bikita Ward 31 seat and won the Nyanga Ward 26 seat that was previously held by ZANU-PF. In Bikita, ZANU-PF won with 702 more votes than the second winning party MDC-A while in Nyanga it won with a margin of 161 votes. ZANU-PF got 29 more votes in Bikita than in the harmonised elections and 40 more votes in Nyanga. The MDC Alliance got 425 less votes in Bikita and 288 less votes in Nyanga between the by-elections and the 2018 harmonised elections.

Based on its observations, among other things, ZESN recommends the following:

- political parties should desist from partisan distribution of aid and there is need for the enforcement of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Candidates, and Other Stakeholders to deal with issues that include vote buying.
- there is need to maintain a peaceful political electoral environment and tolerance among political parties as well as the enforcement of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Candidates, and Other Stakeholders to deal with issues that include intolerance among political parties
- all political parties contesting in any election should comprehensively deploy agents; ZEC should find mechanisms to address high numbers of assisted voters, including intensifying voter education linked to the secrecy of the ballot to try and deal with suspicious cases of assisted voting.
- ZEC should intensify voter information to ensure the electorate is well informed about the requirements for one to vote; political parties and CSOs should emphasise to citizens the importance of by-elections, especially local authority by-elections and mobilise voters to participate.
- political parties and CSOs need to continue encouraging women to participate in elections and to make deliberate efforts to field and support female candidates in elections.

2. ABOUT ZESN

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) was formed in the year 2000 and is a coalition of 36 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The major focus of the Network is to promote democratic processes in general and free and fair elections in particular. ZESN is the secretariat of the Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA) and is a member of The Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM). ZESN's election observation methodology is informed by the Constitution of Zimbabwe and electoral laws of the country. The Network is independent in its findings and conclusions. In addition, ZESN's assessment of the election is also guided by 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). The Network is also guided by the GNDEM's Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations, Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observers.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE BY-ELECTIONS

The Nyanga RDC Ward 26 by-election was necessitated by the death of MDC Alliance Councillor, Elias Mashumba, while the Bikita RDC Ward 31 seat fell vacant following the death of ZANU-PF Councillor, Patrick Marozhe, both in April.

4. OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY

ZESN deployed LTOs to observe electoral developments from 29 May until after the by-elections that were held on 13 July. Among other things, the LTOs observed the political environment, primary elections, Nomination court, and political parties' campaigns ahead of the election and election-related developments in the immediate post-elections period. On Election Day, ZESN managed to deploy STOs to only three of the six polling stations in the Nyanga Ward by-election and two of the six in the Bikita by-election as well as the Ward

Collation Centres for both by-elections.¹ This report presents ZESN’s observations as reported by the deployed observers.

5. POLITICAL PARTIES’ PRIMARY ELECTIONS

ZESN observers reported that the right and opportunity to be elected as well as the freedom of association were respected by the political parties which will be contesting the Bikita and Nyanga by-elections. For both by-elections, ZESN observers reported that MDC-Alliance and ZANU-PF held primary elections which successfully elected single candidates to represent the respective parties without any reported incidences of during the primary elections. In addition, ZESN did not receive any reports of people contesting the outcome of the two primary elections.

6. NOMINATION COURT SITTING AND RESULTS

The Nomination Courts sat on 31 May to consider applications of nominees for the by-elections. The Court venues were Nyanga Rural District Council Boardroom and Masvingo Magistrate Court. ZESN deployed observers to track the Nomination Court proceedings. Both courts opened and closed on time, 1000 hours and 1600 hours respectively. The procedures for assessing the nomination papers that were lodged with the courts were reported to have been fair and uniform for all the aspiring councilors.

The following individuals successfully lodged their papers with the Nomination Courts:

Name of By-election	Name of Political Party	Name of Candidate
Bikita RDC ward 31	MDC-Alliance	Moses Maposa
	NCA	Peter Mavenga
	ZANU-PF	Thomas Mataga
Nyanga RDC Ward 26	MDC-Alliance	Vincent Bopoto
	ZANU-PF	Bissel Mapeta

¹ In Nyanga, ZESN had observers at Erin Forest; Nyamupinga Shopping Centre tent; and Selbourne Primary School (ZESN did not have an observer at Mutarazi). In Bikita ZESN observers were based at Mandadzaka A and Chikaka Primary School (ZESN did not have observers at Mandadzaka B; Chikuku; Chivaka; Zeka; and Chishangu).

7. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS AND POLITICAL PARTIES' ACTIVITIES

7.1 Political Party Activities and Campaigns

Political parties that contested in the by-elections held rallies, used door-to-door visits, and had posters as part of their campaign methods.

In Nyanga, observers reported on two ZANU-PF rallies held on 6 July 2019 which were attended and addressed by, among others, ZANU-PF Member of Parliament, Omega Hungwe; ZANU-PF Member of Parliament for the constituency, Supa Mandiwanzira; and the candidate, Bissel Mapeta. Before the ZANU-PF rally started, MDC Alliance supporters moved around the venue in kombis distributing fliers for their candidate and later embarked on a door-to-door campaign on the same day. The MDC Alliance held its rally at the same venue the next day, 7 July. The rally was addressed by the party's provincial officials Mr Mutseyi and Mrs Kuodza.

In Bikita, on 6 July, the MDC Alliance held a rally at Mandadzaka Shopping Centre. Amongst some who addressed MDC Alliance rallies in the Ward were the party's National Chairperson, Thabitha Khumalo; National Organiser, Amos Chibaya; Deputy National Organiser, Happymore Chidziva, and the National youth Chairperson, Obey Sithole. On the same day, ZANU-PF supporters were gathered in their branches being given party regalia. ZANU-PF held a rally at Mandadzaka Shopping Centre on 10 July 2019 attended by Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare Deputy Minister, Lovemore Matuke; Minister of State and Provincial Affairs for Masvingo, Ezra Chadzamira; and former Minister of State for Masvingo Province, Josiah Hungwe.

Political party candidates also had posters around the Wards as part of their campaign methods.

7.2 ZEC's and Political Parties' Activities

It is commendable that on 4 June in Nyanga, ZEC met with ZANU-PF and MDC Alliance members, including the contesting candidates, and discussed the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Candidates, and other Stakeholders. Among other things, ZEC explained to political parties conditions that would lead to the disqualification of a candidate. Another such meeting was held on 2 July with the same stakeholders in attendance. Party

agents for the Nyanga by-election were trained by ZEC on 9 and 10 July. ZEC also briefed political party agents on their roles at the polling stations in Bikita.

7.3 Electoral Malpractices

There was alleged politicisation of aid in Nyanga Ward 26. Mealie meal was reportedly distributed on partisan grounds by ZANU-PF on 3 July and, at a rally, a senior party official allegedly said that for one to get maize they would have to vote for ZANU-PF come Election Day. Reports of the partisan distribution of food commodities such as rice and maize were also received from Bikita Ward 31.

8. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

8.1 Opening and set up of polling stations

At polling stations where ZESN had observers, all polling stations were reported to have opened on time with procedures duly adhered to. All the materials needed for polling such as ballot boxes; indelible ink; the stamp to mark ballot papers; and ballot papers were reported to be available and polling stations were designed to ensure that voters could mark their ballots in secrecy.

8.2 Political environment

The political environment during the by-elections was largely peaceful in both Wards with no incidents of peace-disturbing electoral malpractices reported. However, ZESN observers later confirmed news of an incident in Ward 31 of Bikita RDC where ZANU-PF and MDC-A supporters clashed.² Despite this incident, voting proceeded without problems after the intervention of the police. ZESN condemns the alleged clash of parties as it is in violation of the principles for democratic elections.

8.3 Voting process and procedures

Voting proceeded smoothly at all polling stations with procedures such as showing ballot boxes to be empty, checking voters' names against the voters' roll, checking voters' fingers for indelible ink and applying the ink being duly followed. Observers also reported

² ZEC confirmed on Twitter reports of the intimidation of supporters of a particular political party by another but did not specify the parties involved. The police was called to intervene.

that all voters were required to present identification documents before voting with those presenting defaced or invalid identification being turned away.

8.4 Party agents

Political parties and candidates contesting in an election can deploy up to three polling agents on Election Day, one inside the polling station and two outside the polling station. ZANU-PF and the MDC-A deployed party agents at all polling stations where ZESN had observers. However, ZESN observers reported that the NCA did not deploy polling agents at Chikaka and Mandadzaka Primary Schools where they were stationed in Bikita. ZESN commends the political parties that deployed agents and continues to urge all political parties to comprehensively deploy agents so that they can monitor polling processes.

8.4 Assisted voters

Two polling stations observed in Bikita, Chikaka and Mandadzaka Primary Schools had already recorded high figures of 19 and 20 assisted voters respectively by midday. This trend did not change given the fact that, by end of polling, over a hundred voters had been assisted to vote at all the polling stations in the Bikita by-election. These included 12 visually impaired voters).³ Most voters were assisted on account of illiteracy. While it would be expected that a number of voters would need assistance in rural areas because of illiteracy and old age, ZESN is concerned about the high figures given the history of elections in Zimbabwe where literate people have feigned illiteracy just to make sure they are assisted to vote and prove they would have voted for a certain political party.

8.5 Voter turnout

Voter turnout was not satisfactorily high for both by-elections. A total of 62% of registered voters cast their ballots in the Bikita RDC Ward 31 by-election yet in the harmonised elections the percentage poll was 84.73%. Turnout was lower at 51% in the Nyanga RDC Ward 26 by-election which was also lower than the 83.81% percentage poll for the same Ward in the harmonised elections. Political parties and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) need to comprehensively educate voters about the importance of elections and mobilise them to participate in by-elections, especially local authority by-elections which continue to consistently record low turnout figures.

³ This was revealed by a ZEC official later on the election day on Twitter

8.6 Redirected and turned away voters

Some polling stations recorded considerably high numbers of turned away voters. For example, as early as midday, 13 voters had been turned away at Erin forest polling station in Nyanga for not being on the voters' roll and producing the wrong identity documents. Others were turned away for not being registered though they had turned 18 after the 2018 harmonised elections. Some significant numbers of redirected voters were also recorded. For example some of the 10 voters who were redirected to other polling stations at Selbourne in Nyanga voted at that same polling station in the harmonised elections. This is testament of the need for intensive voter information efforts by ZEC. ZEC should also focus on educating people and widely publicise the continuous voters' registration process for the benefit of first time voters in any election.

8.7 Women participation

ZESN is concerned that there were no women candidates in both by-elections. ZESN has been calling for the improved participation of women, particularly as candidates in elections. However, ZESN commends women in Bikita for their active participation, albeit only as voters. In its update as of 1600 hours, ZEC reported that 68% of those who had voted were women.

8.8 Election Results

The tables below show the results of both by-elections which were won by ZANU-PF. The tables also give a comparison of the results with those of the 2018 harmonised elections.

Table showing Nyanga RDC Ward 26 Harmonised Elections and By-election Results

By-election results				2018 harmonised elections results			
Candidate	Party	Sex	Votes received	Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes received
Bisset Mapeta	ZANU-PF	M	397	Bisset Mapeta	M	ZANU-PF	351
Vincent Bopoto	MDC-A	M	236	Mashamba Ellias	M	MDC-A	524
				Tongoona Violah	F	Independent	137
Valid Votes Cast	631			Valid Votes Cast	1012		
Votes Rejected	7			Votes Rejected	39		
Total Votes Cast	638			Total Votes Cast	1051		

Voter Population	1238		Voter Population	1254
Percentage Poll	51.53%		Percentage Poll	83.81%

Source: ZEC

Table showing Bikita RDC Ward 31 Harmonised Elections and By-election Results

By-election results				2018 harmonised elections results			
Candidate	Party	Sex	Votes received	Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes received
Thomas Mataga	ZANU-PF	M	1112	Severino Patrick Marozhe	M	ZANU-PF	1083
Moses Maposa	MDC-A	M	410	Moses Maposa	M	MDC-A	835
Peter Mavenga	NCA	M	23	Chokuda Chireshe	M	independent	177
Valid Votes Cast	1535			Valid Votes Cast	2095		
Votes Rejected	16			Votes Rejected	25		
Total Votes Cast	1551			Total Votes Cast	2120		
Voter Population	2480			Voter Population	2502		
Percentage Poll	62.54%			Percentage Poll	84.73%		

Source: ZEC

Analysis of the results

ZANU-PF retained the seat previously held by its Councillor in Bikita Ward 31. In Nyanga Ward 26, the MDC-Alliance failed to retain the seat, which was won by ZANU-PF. In Bikita, ZANU-PF won with 702 more votes than the second winning party MDC-A while in Nyanga it won with a margin of 161 votes. In Bikita, ZANU-PF got 29 more votes than in the last elections and 40 more votes in Nyanga. The MDC-A got 425 less votes in Bikita and 288 less votes in Nyanga between the 2018 harmonised elections and the by-elections.

9. Recommendations

- **Vote buying:** Political parties should desist from partisan distribution of aid as it negatively affects the extent to which elections are democratic. There is need for the enforcement of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Candidates, and Other Stakeholders to deal with issues that include vote buying.
- **Intolerance amongst political parties:** There is need to maintain a peaceful political electoral environment and tolerance among political parties. There is also need for the enforcement of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Candidates, and Other Stakeholders to deal with issues that include intolerance among political parties.

- Political party agents: All political parties contesting in any election should comprehensively deploy agents.
- Assisted voting: ZEC should find mechanisms to address high numbers of assisted voters, including intensifying voter education linked to the secrecy of the ballot to try and deal with suspicious cases of assisted voting.
- Turned away voters: ZEC should intensify voter information to ensure the electorate is well informed about the requirements for one to vote.
- Voter turnout: Political parties and CSOs should emphasise to citizens the importance of by-elections, especially local authority by-elections and mobilise voters to participate.
- Women participation: Political parties and CSOs need to continue encouraging women to participate in elections. Political parties need to make deliberate efforts to field and support female candidates in elections.

10. Conclusion

Ward by-elections are critical given the service delivery mandate of local authorities. It is important that they be held democratically leading to elected representatives in whom residents have confidence. By-elections also present an opportunity for the implementation of electoral reforms that are needed to improve the credibility of electoral processes in Zimbabwe.