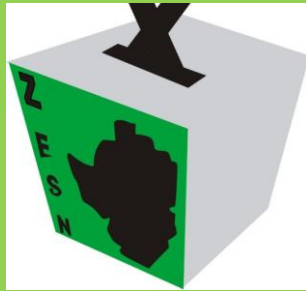


# ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



*CHIREDDZI RDC WARD 12  
By-Election Report*

*26 October 2019*



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the member organisations and volunteers who made observation of 26 October 2019 Chiredzi RDC Ward 12 by-election possible. The ZESN Members assisted in the recruitment and training of the volunteers who were deployed to the Polling Stations and Ward Collation Centre.

ZESN observers objectively reported on the processes and conducted themselves professionally throughout the Election Day. Their assessment of the by-elections was informed by the Electoral Laws of Zimbabwe and 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 Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). ZESN observation was also guided by the GNDEM's Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations, and the Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observers.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 26 October 2019, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) conducted a local authority by-election in Ward 12 of Chiredzi Rural District Council. The by-election was held in accordance with section 121A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13). The by-election was occasioned by the resignation of the previous councillor; Cllr Andrew Ndebele of the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) party who was elected in the July 31 2018 harmonised elections.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), as part of its observation of electoral processes, deployed static observers to comprehensively cover the two polling stations and collation centre for the Ward.

In general, the political environment ahead of the Chiredzi Ward 12 by-election was peaceful. The observers' resident in the ward confirmed that the campaigns by the electoral contestants were low key, mostly constituting meetings in the ward and door to door campaigns. Nevertheless the most visible campaigns were by ZANU-PF party which held more meetings and even put up posters.

The voting population for the ward did not change significantly between 2018 and 2019. The number of registered voters for the Ward decreased by three from 268 in 2018 to 265 during the 2019 by-election.

ZESN observer reports indicate that polling station set-up, polling and counting procedures were executed in line with electoral procedures. The contesting political parties managed to comprehensively deploy party agents but however none of the parties fielded female candidates.

ZANU-PF won the Chiredzi Rural District Council by-election, having received 159 votes. The party received 11 more votes than it did during the 2018 Harmonised elections.

ZESN proffers the following recommendations for consideration by the ZEC and political parties.

**Recommendations**

- I. Civil society organisations should provide continues to support civic and voter education initiatives emphasising, among other things, the importance of voting in by-elections.
- II. ZEC should do more to inform the electorate about the displaying of the voters' roll and encourage them to check their names before Election Day.
- III. Political parties should do more to encourage the participation of women as electoral candidates.

## 2. BACKGROUND TO THE BY-ELECTIONS

### Introduction

In line with its mission to promote democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe, ZESN observed local authority by-election in Ward 12 of Chiredzi Rural District Council. The by-election was held in accordance with section 121A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13). The by-election was occasioned by the resignation of the previous councillor; Cllr Andrew Ndebele of the ZANU–PF party who was elected in the July 31 2018 harmonised elections.

The Nomination Court sat on Wednesday 25 September 2019 to consider applications from prospective candidates to fill the local authority seat vacancy. At the close of nomination, two candidates were dully nominated; Mazhata John of the MDC Alliance and Rukanda Arnold of ZANU–PF.

ZESN deployed static observers to comprehensively cover the two polling stations and collation centre for the Ward. The observers tracked political and electoral developments which occurred weeks ahead of the by-election.

## 3. PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

Election campaigns in Zimbabwe are regulated by a Code of Conduct for Political Parties as contained in the Fourth schedule of the Electoral Act. Reports from the observers deployed to the ward indicated that the campaign period was largely peaceful. However the observers reported that the ruling party distributed 50 kgs of rice per farm, during the campaign period. The timing of the distribution of food is rather suspicious as it was done at a time when the aspiring councillors were soliciting for votes.

Overall the campaigns by the electoral contestants were low key, mostly constituting meetings in the ward and door to door campaigns. Nevertheless the most visible campaigns were by ZANU–PF party which held more meetings and even put up

posters, albeit the poster were of the president of the party and not the contesting candidate.



The ruling party campaign poster in use during the Chiredzi RDC Ward 12 by-election



A sample of the 50kg bag of rice that was distributed during the by-election

#### 4. VOTER REGISTRATION

Voter registration is provided for in Section 17A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13). In keeping with the requirement to provide voter registration continuously, ZEC established registration centres at its Provincial and District offices to facilitate continuous registration by voters. In addition to continuous voter registration, ZEC was ceased with the task of cleaning the voters' roll using the information obtained from the Registrar General.

These two processes account for the slight changes in the 2018 and 2019 registration figures for Chiredzi RDC Ward 12. Specifically the number of registered voters for the Ward dropped from 268 in 2018 to 265 for the 2019 by-election.

## 5. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND ELECTIONS

Active participation of women, youth, civil society organizations, and people with disabilities, special needs groups and marginalized groups in the electoral process constitutes a critical element for the deepening of democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe. ZESN continues to observe that a significant number of women participate in electoral processes as voters, election agents, polling officers and citizen observers. However there is a significant gap when it comes to participation as electoral contestants. In spite of the repeated calls by ZESN in the previous by-elections for political parties to ensure the participation of women as candidates in by-elections, none of the contesting political parties fielded female candidates.

## 6. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

### ▪ **Political environment**

The pre-election, as well as Election Day, environment was reported to be peaceful. No incidents were observed and reported.

### ▪ **Displaying of the voters' roll outside polling stations**

It is commendable that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission displayed the voters' roll outside polling stations three days before polling day. This helps minimise chances of voters turning up to vote when their names are not on the voters' roll or turning up at the wrong polling station as they can check their names before election day.

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

There were 2 polling stations in the ward and ZESN managed to deploy observers at both polling stations. ZESN observers reported that both polling stations opened on time with all essential polling materials including ballot boxes, ballot papers, indelible finger markers, voters' roll, the ZEC official stamp, available.

### ▪ **Voting process and procedures**

ZESN observers had reported that voting went well, with all polling procedures duly followed.

### ▪ **Party agents**



It is commendable that election agents for both parties were present at both polling stations. This affords political parties first hand observation of the polling process and assists parties to raise credible objections whenever they have them as well as appraising themselves of the extent to which the conduct of the by-election adheres to set procedure and guidelines.

- **Assisted voters**

Overall, the number of assisted voters in the by-election was not high. Only two were assisted to vote at Farm 26 Church polling station while seven were assisted at Zhou Primary School polling station. Some of the assisted voters were visually impaired while the others were elderly voters. Voting by persons needing assistance was handled in accordance with the law. For instance, at Zhou Primary School polling station where the highest number of assisted voters was recorded, six of the seven assisted brought their own person to help them. The other person did not and in that instance, two polling officials and a police officer witnessed the Presiding Officer assisting the voter.

- **Turned away and redirected voters**

The ZESN observer based at Zhou Primary School polling station observed seven voters who were turned away. Three of them did not have the appropriate identification documents and four were not on the voters' roll. The ZESN observer at Farm 26 Church did not witness any voters being turned away at that polling station. There were however five voters who were redirected at Farm 26 Church polling station. This was despite the displaying of the voters' roll outside the polling stations three days before polling, as already noted.

- **Voter turnout**

Though higher than recorded in some by-elections, the turnout in the by-election was unsatisfactory. The 60.75% overall turnout was lower than 89.93% recorded for the same Ward in the 2018 harmonised elections.

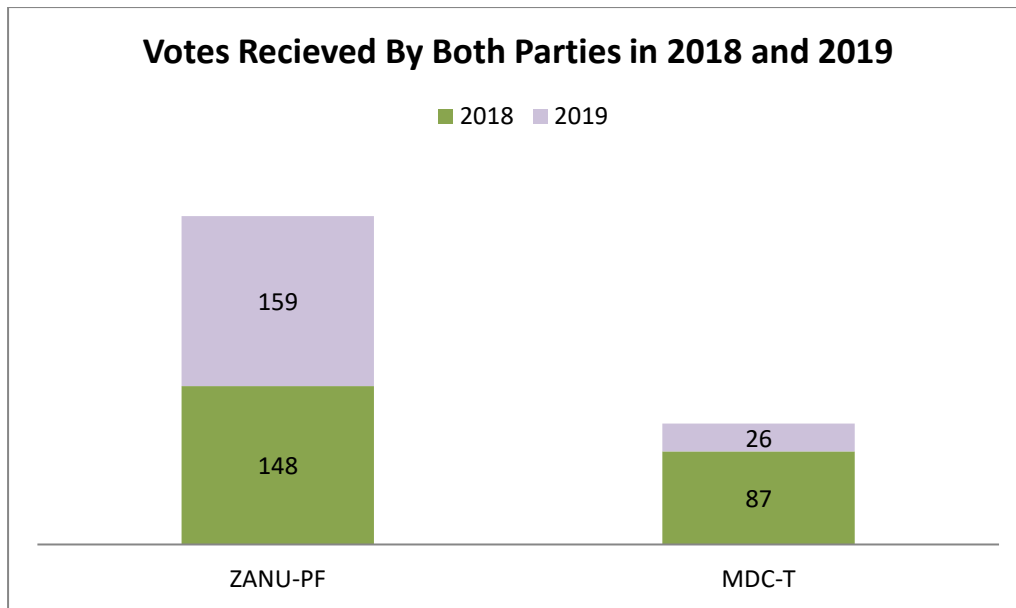
## 7. BY-ELECTION RESULTS

ZESN observers witnessed the collation and tabulation of results at both the polling station and at ward collation centre. The by-election was won by ZANUPF. The results of the by-election are presented in the table below.

2019 by-election				2018 harmonised elections			
Candidate	Party	Sex	Votes	Candidate	Party	Sex	Votes
Rukanda Arnold	ZANU-PF	M	159	Ndebele Andrew	ZANU-PF	M	148
Mazhata John	MDC Alliance	M	26	Mazhata John	MDC Alliance	M	87
Valid votes cast			159	Valid votes cast			235
Rejected votes			2	Rejected votes			6
Total votes cast			161	Total votes cast			241
Voter population			265	Voter population			268
Percentage poll			60.75%	Percentage poll			89.93%

### Analysis of the results

The total number of votes cast decreased by 80 between the 2018 harmonised elections and the by-election. Votes received by ZANU-PF in the by-election increased by 11 from the votes it got for the Ward in the harmonised elections. By contrast, the MDC's votes decreased by 61.



## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Civil society organisations should provide continues to support civic and voter education initiatives emphasising, among other things, the importance of voting in by-elections.
- II. ZEC should do more to inform the electorate about the displaying of the voters' roll and encourage them to check their names before Election Day.
- III. Political parties should do more to encourage the participation of women as electoral candidates.

## 9. CONCLUSION

ZESN commends political parties and their supporters for campaigning peacefully but however urges political parties to do more to ensure that the number of women participating in elections as electoral contestants increases. The electorate in Chiredzi Ward 12 are also commended for turning out to vote in large numbers resulting in the high turnout that was recorded.