

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



*Tsholotsho RDC Ward 16 and 20
and Wedza RDC Ward 4
By-Elections Report*



Photo credit: ZEC

09 November 2019

Table of Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. BACKGROUND TO THE BY-ELECTIONS.....	5
3. PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT.....	5
4. VOTER REGISTRATION	6
5. WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION AND ELECTIONS	7
6. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS	7
7. BY-ELECTION RESULTS.....	9
8. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	12
9. CONCLUSION	12

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) expresses its deepest appreciation to the member organisations and volunteers who made observation of 9 November 2019 by-elections possible. The ZESN Members assisted in the recruitment and training of the volunteers who were deployed to the Polling Stations and Ward Collation Centres.

ZESN observers objectively reported on the processes and conducted themselves professionally throughout the Election Day. ZESN's 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 9 November 2019, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission held local authority by-elections in three Rural District Councils names; Tsholotsho Ward 16 and Ward 20, and Wedza Ward 4.

The by-elections were held in accordance with section 121A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13). The Tsholotsho by-elections were conducted following the expulsion of former ZANU-PF Councillors, Ngwenya Patrick Hlakaza for Ward 16 and Gideon Ndlovu for Ward 20, who were accused of embezzling Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) funds. On the other hand, the Wedza RDC Ward 4 seat fell vacant following the death of former ZANU-PF Councillor, Alderman Samson Makamba. ZANU-PF and the MDC Alliance are the two political parties that fielded candidates to contests in all the three by-elections.

On polling day ZESN deployed static observers to cover 8 of the 13 polling stations that were set up for the three local authority by-elections. ZESN also deployed observers who tracked political and electoral developments which occurred several days ahead of the by-elections.

Overall, the campaigns by the electoral contestants were low key, mostly constituting meetings in the ward and door to door campaigns. ZANU-PF won all the three by-elections with huge margins, namely 92% (Wedza Ward 4), 80% (Tsholotsho Ward 16) and 95% (Tsholotsho Ward 20) share of the votes cast respectively. Regrettably none of the contesting political parties fielded any female candidates in the three by-elections.

The voter population in the three wards changed slightly between 2018 and 2019 as follows Ward 4 Wedza reduced by 4 people, Ward 16 Tsholotsho reduced by 10 persons, and Ward 20 Tsholotsho reduced by 7 people.

On election day, polling stations set up and opening, voting, counting and results collation procedures were all adhered to in accordance with laid down procedures.

The turnout for the three by-elections was lower than that of the 2018 harmonized elections for the same wards. Tsholotsho RDC Ward 20 recorded a 60% turnout while Ward 16 had a 55% turnout. The turnout in the Wedza RDC Ward 4 by-election was 62%.

Based on its observations, ZESN proffers the following recommendations:

- I. Civil society organisations should continue supporting civic and voter education initiatives, emphasising the importance of voting in by-elections and the correct identification documents that are used on polling day.
- II. Political parties should do review their internal policies and procedures to ensure that they support participation of women as electoral contestants.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE BY-ELECTIONS

In line with its mission to promote democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe, ZESN observed the 9 November 2019 local authority by-elections that were held in three Rural District Councils names; Tsholotsho Ward 16 and Ward 20, and Wedza Ward 4.

The by-elections were held in accordance with section 121A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13). The Tsholotsho by-elections were conducted following the expulsion of former ZANU-PF Councillors, Ngwenya Patrick Hlakaza for Ward 16 and Gideon Ndlovu for Ward 20, who were accused of embezzling Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) funds. On the other hand, The Wedza RDC Ward 4 seat fell vacant following the death of former ZANU-PF Councillor, Alderman Samson Makamba. ZANU-PF and the MDC Alliance are the two political parties that fielded candidates to contests in all the three by-elections.

On polling day ZESN deployed static observers to cover 8 of the 13 polling stations that were set up for the three local authority by-elections. ZESN also deployed observers who tracked political and electoral developments which occurred several days ahead of the by-election.

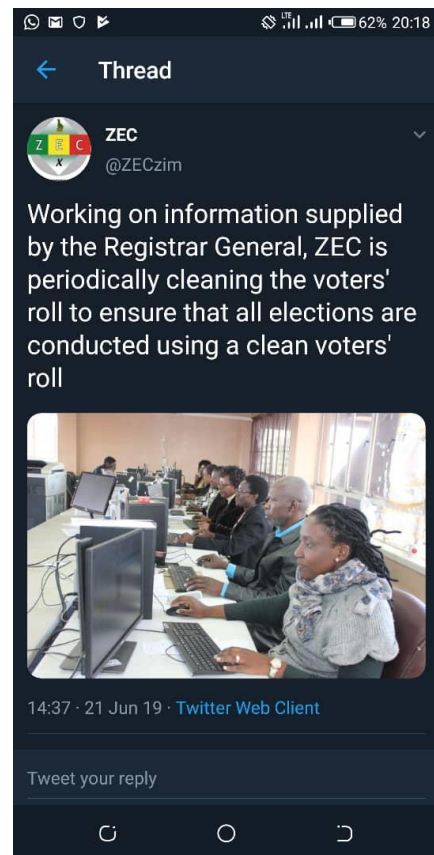
3. PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

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 three by-elections indicated that both the campaign period and polling day was peaceful.

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.

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 is ceased with the task of cleaning the voters' roll using the information obtained from the Registrar General. The two processes account for the slight changes in the 2018 and 2019 voter population for the three wards where by-elections were conducted as illustrated in the table below.



Picture above shows the update from ZEC on the ongoing cleaning the voters' exercise.

Voter Registration Figures	2018	2019	Direction of change
Ward 4 Wedza RDC	1537	1533	↓ reduced by 4 persons
Ward 16 Tsholotsho RDC	1412	1402	↓ reduced by 10 persons
Ward 20 Tsholotsho RDC	739	732	↓ reduced by 7 persons

5. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND ELECTIONS

Active participation of women, youth, people with disabilities and civil society organizations 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. None of the contesting political parties fielded any female candidates in the three by-elections.

6. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

Set up and opening of polling stations

Voting started on time at all polling stations where ZESN had observers in the three by-elections. ZESN observers reported that all essential materials for polling were available at the time of opening. These include ballot boxes, ballot papers, ZEC stamp, indelible marking pens, and biometric voters' rolls. Polling stations were set up in a manner that ensured that voters could mark their ballots in secrecy. This is commendable as it guarantees the internationally recognised principle of the secrecy of the ballot in democratic elections. On average, each polling station had six polling officers.

Voting process and procedures

ZESN observers reported that throughout the day, all polling processes were duly followed in line with the law at all polling stations where they were stationed in the three by-elections. Such procedures include showing ballot boxes to be empty, checking voters' names against the voters' roll, examining voters' fingers for indelible ink and applying the ink, issuance of a stamped ballot papers, among others.

Party agents

Political parties' election agents for both contesting parties were reported to be present from the time of opening right through to closing and observed the counting process at all polling stations where ZESN had observers. This is commendable as it affords parties the opportunity to do primary observation of polling processes.

Assisted voters

The numbers of assisted voters were generally low in the by-elections. By end of polling, the highest reported by ZESN observers was about 29 voters who were assisted to vote at Shaba Primary School polling station in Tsholotsho RDC Ward 16, followed by about 19 at Tongogara Primary School in Wedza. At Sydney Malunga Primary School polling station in Tsholotsho Ward 20, nine voters were assisted and the ZESN observer stationed at Sedgewick Farm polling station in the same Ward did not witness any voter being assisted to vote. Most of the assisted voters were assisted on account of illiteracy and visual impairment. In line with the law, assisted voters were allowed to be assisted by persons of their own choice while those who did not have such people were assisted by the Presiding Officer in the company of other polling officers and the police.

Turned away and redirected voters

Some people were turned away in the by-elections. The highest number was about 20 reported by the ZESN observer who was stationed at Nata Primary School polling station in Tsholotsho Ward 16. For Wedza, about eight people were turned away at Tongogara Primary School polling station. In Tsholotsho Ward 20, about two people were turned away at Sydney Malunga Primary polling station. The reasons given for the turned away voters include people bringing inappropriate ID documents such as birth certificates, photocopies of IDs and drivers' licences. Others were not registered to vote and were therefore turned away.

The voters' roll was displayed outside polling stations ahead of the Election Day in all the three Wards to enable voters to check their names in advance. This is

commendable as it enables the easy identification of polling stations by voters ahead of the polling day and could have contributed to a decrease in the numbers of redirected voters. For example, ZESN observers reported on two voters who were redirected; one from Tongogara Primary School to Magamba Primary School polling station in Wedza RDC Ward 4 and the other from Dogwe Primary School to Mathula Secondary School polling station. ZESN observers did not witness any voters being redirected at Magamba Primary School in Wedza and Sedgewick Farm polling station and Sydney Malunga Primary polling station in Tsholotsho Ward 20.

Turnout

Consistent with observations in preceding by-elections, voter turnout was lower than the turnout for the Harmonised Elections which was 82, 5%. Tsholotsho RDC Ward 20 recorded a 60% turnout while Ward 16 had a 55% turnout. The turnout in the Wedza RDC Ward 4 by-election was 62%.

7. BY-ELECTION RESULTS

ZANU-PF won all the all the three by-elections. The results of the by-elections are presented in the tables below.

a. Wedza RDC Ward 4 by-election

2019 by-election				2018 harmonized elections			
Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes	Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Manjeya Shorai	M	ZANU-PF	875	Makamba Goni Samson	M	ZANU-PF	1121
Taderera Vincent	M	MDC Alliance	65	Chirere John	F	MDC Alliance	189
Valid votes cast	940			Valid votes cast	1310		
Votes rejected	7			Votes rejected	12		
Total votes cast	947			Total votes cast	1322		

Voter population	1533	Voter population	1537
Percentage Poll	62%	Percentage poll	86.01%

b. Tsholotsho RDC Ward 16

2019 by-election				2018 harmonised elections			
Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes	Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes
Moyo Isaac	M	ZANU-PF	623	Ngwenya Patrick Hlakaza	M	ZANU-PF	837
Ncube Soul	M	MDC Alliance	147	Ndlovu Zenzo	M	MDC Alliance	135
				Ncube Soul	M	MDC-T	76
				Khumalo Bukhosi	M	ZAPU	34
Valid votes cast			770	Valid votes cast			1082
Votes rejected			7	Votes rejected			35
Total votes cast			777	Total votes cast			1117
Voter population			1402	Voter population			1412
Percentage Poll			55%	Percentage poll			79.11%

c. Tsholotsho RDC Ward 20

2019 by-election				2018 harmonized elections			
Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes				
Mkandhla	M	ZANU-	414	Won uncontested			
				Winner: Gideon Ndlovu (ZANU-PF)			

Tshoni		PF	
Khupe Mazithulela	M	MDC Alliance	21
Valid votes cast	435		
Votes rejected	6		
Total votes cast	441		
Voter population	732		
Percentage poll	60%		

Analysis of by-election results

ZANU-PF won all three by-elections that were held on 9 November 2019. The table below provides comments on the results for the by-election.

By-election Name	Comments
Ward 4 Wedza RDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overall, total votes cast decreased by 375. ▪ Votes received by ZANU-PF in the by-election decreased by 246 from 1121 ▪ While votes received by the MDC Alliance decreased by 124 votes. ▪ The margin between the votes received by the ZANU-PF candidate and the MDC Alliance candidate in the 2019 by-election is 810 votes.
Ward 16 Tsholotsho RDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Total votes cast decreased by 340. ▪ Votes received by ZANU-PF in the by-election decreased by 214 when compared by what the party received during the 2018 harmonised elections. ▪ For the MDC Alliance, the votes increased by 12. ▪ The margin between the votes received by the ZANU-PF candidate and the MDC Alliance candidate in the 2019 by-election is 476 votes.
Ward 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During the 2018 harmonised elections, Ward 20 of Tsholotsho RDC was uncontested. ▪ The margin between the votes received by the ZANU-PF

Tsholotsho RDC	candidate and the MDC Alliance candidate in the by-election is 393 votes.

The margins with which ZANU-PF won all the three by-elections indicates that the Wards are located in Constituencies which can be regarded as ZANU-PF strongholds. ZANU-PF's share of the votes cast during the by-elections was 92% (Wedza Ward 4), 80% (Tsholotsho Ward 16) and 95% (Tsholotsho Ward 20) respectively.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its observations, ZESN proffers the following recommendations:

- I. Civil society organisations should continue supporting civic and voter education initiatives, emphasising the importance of voting in by-elections and the correct identification documents that are used on polling day.
- II. Political parties should do review their internal policies and procedures to ensure that they support participation of women as electoral contestants.

9. CONCLUSION

The relatively low turnout during the by-elections is worrying, nevertheless 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 at all level including national elections and internal party elections.