

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



Tongogara RDC Ward 6 By-Election Report



14 December 2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) expresses its deepest appreciation to the member organisations and volunteers who made observation of 14 December 2019 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. ZESN's assessment of the by-election 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 14 December 2019, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission held local authority by-elections in Tongogara Rural District Council Ward 6. The by-election was held in accordance with section 121A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13). The Tongogara Ward 6 by-election was conducted following the death of the previous councillor, Edward Chitera, who was elected on a ZANU-PF ticket during the July 31, 2018 harmonised elections.

On polling day ZESN deployed static observers to cover the 2 polling stations and ward collation centre that were set up for the by-election. One roving team was also deployed to monitor environment outside the polling stations.

Overall the campaigns by the electoral contestants were low key, mostly constituting meetings in the ward and door to door campaigns. Of the two electoral contestants ZANU –PF campaigns were more prominent. ZANU-PF won this by-election with a wide margin of 380 votes. The turnout for this by-election of 65%.

ZESN supported the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission’s voter education efforts by deploying a team of four voter educators who directly interacted with 1162 people and distributed 2000 flyers and put up 50 posters during the five days that the team was in the Ward.

Women’s participation in the Ward appeared largely confined to participating in the by-election as voters. While one of the two electoral participants was female, five of the six party agents were males.

Polling day operations were conducted in keeping with set procedures. The conduct of the ZEC polling officials was professional and they facilitated the work of both observers and polling agents. The displaying of the voters’ roll outside polling stations by ZEC contributed to the very low numbers of voters who were redirected to the other polling station.

Based on its observations, ZESN proffers the following recommendations:

- i. ZEC should amplify publicity about continuous voters' registration and the documents that are required for one to vote to possibly lower numbers of turned away people.
- ii. In the interest of promoting the participation of marginalised groups in electoral processes, political parties should deploy more women and youths as party election agents and electoral contestants.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE BY-ELECTIONS

In line with its mission to promote democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe, ZESN observed the Tongogara RDC Ward 6 local authority by-election that was held on 14 December 2019. The by-election was held in accordance with section 121A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13). The by-election was occasioned by the the death of the previous councillor, Edward Chitera, who was elected on a ZANU-PF ticket during the July 31, 2018 harmonised elections.

On polling day ZESN deployed static observers to cover the 2 polling stations and ward collation centre that were set up for the by-election. One roving team was also deployed to monitor environment outside the polling stations. ZESN also deployed observers who tracked political and electoral developments which occurred several days ahead of the by-election, these observers tracked and reported on the campaigns by the two electoral contestants.

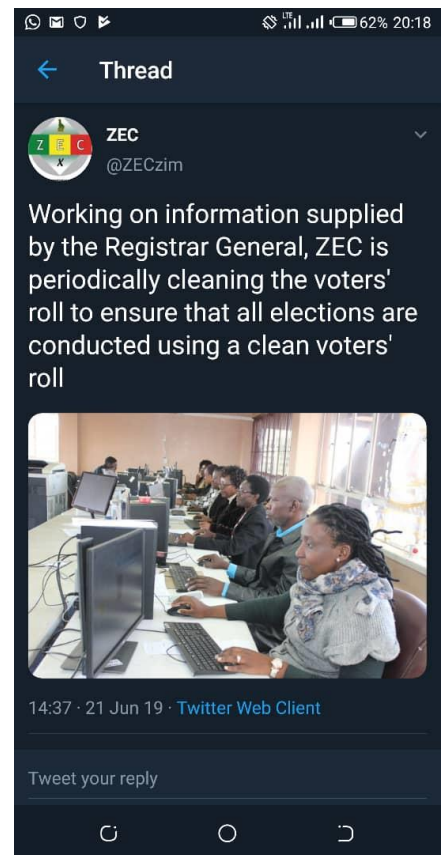
3. PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

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 ZESN observers 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 which, among other campaign methods, conducted a rally that was addressed by the party's political commissar and Shurugwi North and South Constituencies' Members of Parliament.

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 registration centres at its Provincial and District offices, remain open to, among other functions, 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 Ward, 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	617	612	↓ reduced by 5 persons

5. VOTER EDUCATION

ZESN was accredited by Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to conduct Voter Education that was scheduled for the 3rd to the 7th of December 2019. ZESN deployed a team of four voter educators and a supervisor who supported ZEC voter education efforts in the Ward. The ZESN team interacted with individuals, addressed people

present at various gatherings and distributed voter education flyers and posters throughout the Ward. The team distributed 2000 flyers and put up 50 posters. Below is a table that shows the profile of individuals that the ZESN team interacted with.

Category	Day 1:4/12/19		Day 2 :5/12/19		Day 3:6/12/19		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Elderly (36+)	56	185	56	106	108	212	723
Youth (18 - 35 years)	62	78	18	86	99	96	439
Total	118	263	74	192	207	308	1162

6. WOMEN'S AND 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. In Ward 6 one of the two electoral contestants was a female, however the trend in most of the by-elections has been that electoral contestants were mostly men even in instances where the seat was previously held by a female. ZESN reiterates its call for the participation of more women in elections, including as party agents.

7. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

Set up and opening of polling stations

In keeping with the law ballot booths were set up in a manner that ensured voters could mark their ballots in secrecy. The two polling stations were also opened on time and all the essential polling materials such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, indelible finger markers, voters' roll, the ZEC official stamp, were available at both polling stations.

Polling officials

Each of the two polling stations had six polling officers at the time of opening. At Zvamatenga polling station, four of the polling officials were female while three were female at China Gansu Tent polling station. Both Presiding Officer were female. The gender distribution of the polling officials is commendable as it is evidence of the promotion of the participation of women in elections administration.

Voting process and procedures

ZESN commends ZEC for administering the by-election well, following all polling procedures at both polling stations in accordance with the law. ZESN observers reported that procedures such as 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 and other key procedures were duly followed.

Further, observers also reported that all voters were required to present identification documents before voting with those having invalid identification being turned away. The Polling officials were also professional in their conduct and facilitated the work of both observers and party agents.

Party agents

In terms of the law, political parties and candidates can deploy one election agent inside the polling station and two additional agents within the vicinity of a polling station. It is commendable that both contesting parties; ZANU-PF and the MDC Alliance deployed their party agents to track the polling process at the two polling stations in the by-election. However, the gender and age distribution of party agents was of concern. Out of six polling agents at each of the two polling stations and ward collation Centre, five were male. None of the party agents was of the youthful age.

Assisted voters

A few voters had been assisted to vote on account of illiteracy. For instance, 18 voters were assisted to vote at Zvamatenga Primary School while 12 were assisted at China Gansu polling station. All assisted voters at China Gansu polling station brought their own confidante.

Turned away and redirected voters

Some people were turned away at both polling stations either because they were not registered voters or that they had not brought valid identification documents. 15 and 8 people were turned away at Zvamatenga and China Gansu polling stations, respectively. On the other hand there only three voters were redirected at China Gansu polling station while no voters were redirected at Zvamatenga. The low number of redirected voters can be attributed to the displaying of the voters' rolls outside polling stations prior to the Election Day, as voters were able to check their names on the voters roll and confirm the specific polling stations there were supposed to cast their vote.

Displaying of the voters' roll

Ahead of the Election Day, ZESN observers reported that the voters' rolls had been displayed outside the polling stations to allow voters to check their names. ZESN commends ZEC for continuing to implement this administrative reform and encourages the Commission to consistently do the same in future elections. This enables the easy identification of polling stations by voters thus reducing the number of redirected voters on Election Day.

Voter turnout

A 65% turnout was recorded in the by-election. In the harmonized elections, a higher turnout of 86.06% was recorded for Tongogara RDC Ward 6. Nevertheless ZESN commends the Ward 6 voters for turning up to vote in their numbers as the 65% turnout is relatively high.

8. BY-ELECTION RESULTS

The by-election was won by ZANU-PF with 396 votes while the MDC-Alliance received 16 votes. The table below presents the by-election results as well as the results for the Ward election in the 2018 harmonised elections.

2019 by-election				2018 harmonised elections			
Candidate	Party	Sex	Votes	Candidate	Party	Sex	Votes
Addmore Chitera	ZANU-PF	M	396	Edward Chitera	ZANU-PF	M	443
Marry Choga	MDC Alliance	F	16	Marry Choga	ZIPP	F	38
				Joshua Mborera	Independent	M	22
				Phillip Pheveni	MDC Alliance	M	20
Valid Votes Cast	398			Valid Votes Cast	523		
Votes Rejected	2			Votes Rejected	8		
Total Votes Cast	400			Total Votes Cast	531		
Voter Population	612			Voter Population	617		
Percentage Poll	65%			Percentage Poll	86.06%		

Analysis of by-election results

Votes received by ZANU-PF in the by-election decreased by 47 from the votes the party got in the harmonised elections in the same Ward. For the MDC Alliance, the votes also decreased by 22. ZANU-PF won this by-election with a wide margin of 380 votes between the winning and the losing candidates.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its observations, ZESN proffers the following recommendations:

- iii. ZEC should amplify publicity about continuous voters' registration and the documents that are required for one to vote to possibly lower numbers of turned away people.
- iv. In the interest of promoting the participation of marginalised groups in electoral processes, political parties should deploy more women and youths as party election agents and electoral contestants.

10. 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 and youth participate in elections as electoral contestants and party agents increases at all level including national elections and internal party elections.