



ESR Statement on the observation of the Mutoko North and Chegutu East Ward1 6 By-election

25 November 2018- The Election Situation Room (ESR) members were observing the Mutoko North Constituency and Chegutu East Ward 16 by-elections that took place on the 24th November 2018.

For the Mutoko North by-election, the results are as follows:

Name of candidate	Political Party	Votes received
Rambidzai Nyabote	ZANU PF	11 141
Boniface Mushore	MDC Alliance	1329
Edison Mugona	NCA	94

In respect of the Chegutu Ward 16 election,

Name of candidate	Political party	Votes received
Mutandinda Simunyu Obert	ZANU PF	326
Muchenje Noel Tichaona	MDC Alliance	89
Mapfurira Patricia	NCA	13

A number of observations were made:

Political environment

ESR members that observed the two by-elections noted that the political environment was peaceful with isolated incidents of partisan distribution of food and agricultural inputs, defacing of candidates' posters and hate speech during campaigns were noted.

Voter Turnout

There was a decrease in the number of voters that turned out during this by-election in comparison with the 31 July 2018 harmonized elections. In Mutoko North Constituency in July 2018 a total of 20 053 voters turned out and during the by-election 12 564 voters turned showing a decrease of 37.3% in the voter turnout.

Youth participation

It was noted that there was voter apathy by young persons in both by-elections. The queues were mostly dominated by the elderly and middle aged voters. ZEC, political parties, CSOs in particular youth organizations and CBOs need to continue to engage and encourage young people to participate in electoral processes including voting.

Issues noted in the communities

Both communities are struggling with similar issues including poor service delivery characterised by poor road networks, medical centres that are not easily accessible, children walk long distances to schools and lack of access to clean water. The issues highlighted need to be addressed as these are basic human rights that are enshrined in our Constitution which need to be upheld. Mutoko North Constituency being the source of black granite, worryingly this does not translate to the development observed in the community.

Location of Polling stations

ESR member observers noted with concern that some polling stations were located in isolated spaces without ablution facilities which posed health dangers for the polling officials and the voters. Some of the tents were located a short distance away from a business centres which could have been ideal location for the polling stations. ZESN observers reported of a polling station which was just by the gate of one homestead and does not provide neutrality.

Disability inclusion

The ESR noted and commends the ZEC for the continual focus on inclusive electoral processes through the use of height adjusted polling booths and polling station that are accessible for persons with disabilities(PWDs). Observers also noted priority treatment that was provided to PWDs that saw them being assisted quickly and efficiently.

Women Participation

We note the regression that saw mostly male candidates in the by-elections. This saw male candidates' contesting for a seat that was previously a seat won by a female candidate in Mutoko North. As such women continue to be relegated to the periphery as voters and not capable holders of political office.

Recommendations

We recommend that ZEC addresses issues related to location of polling stations and voter education that targets young people. Civil society organizations need to engage and encourage young people to participate in electoral processes. Chapter 12 Commissions need to look into reports of alleged partisan distribution of food and inputs, tearing down of posters and hate speech to ensure sustainable peace in the communities.

Communities need to benefit from their natural resources and the poverty in Mutoko North constituency does not correlate with the wealth from that area evidenced by the presence of abundant black granite. Schools, health centres and other social amenities do not show

evidence from benefitting from this natural resource which is also exported. The community beneficiation is line with the recently approved devolution processes which are underway on the national agenda.

Women Participation

Women continue to participate as voters as evidenced in the high turnout as voters. However, the ESR is concerned with the absence of women participation as candidates' as noted in the Mutoko North by-election. The Mutoko North seat had been won by a women during the 30th July 2018 harmonized elections and as such a female candidate should have contested for this seat across the political divide. As such we observe a regression in women in leadership participation

Location of polling stations

Polling stations need to be located in areas were ablution facilities are available and in areas that uphold neutrality of the election processes.

About the ESR

The Election Situation Room provides a platform for effective citizen monitoring and domestic observation of electoral processes, where key stakeholders and the general public can feed information and receive timely updates on key electoral processes. To achieve this, more than 40 organizations drawn from across the country and from different sectors have come together under the banner of the Election Situation Room. It has a Steering Committee that provide guidance and leadership to the ESR. These organizations have accredited observers, monitors, peace ambassadors who are community based. The ESR has a call Centre where members of the public are calling to report any incidents observed.

For more information, contact the Election Situation Room on the following details:

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