

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



2013 Harmonised Elections Preliminary Statement

01 August 2013 – Holiday Inn, Harare

Summary

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) as part of its comprehensive effort to observe the 2013 Harmonised elections deployed over 7,000 observers to every province and constituency in the country. Generally the environment was relatively calm and peaceful. Based on the empirical reports from our observers, regardless of the outcome, the credibility of the 2013 Harmonised Elections is seriously compromised by a systematic effort to disenfranchise an estimated million voters.

Before Election Day the voter registration process was systematically biased against urban voters. The voters' roll of 19 June as provided by the Office of the Registrar General clearly showed that urban voters had systematically been denied the opportunity to register to vote. A total of 99.97% of rural voters were registered while only 67.94% of urban voters were registered (see table 1).

Urban/Rural	Voters Roll 19 June 2013		2012 Census Estimate		Difference	Per cent Registered
Rural Wards	4,278,103	72.64%	4,279,336	64.33%	1,223	99.97%
Urban Wards	1,612,066	27.36%	2,372,522	35.67%	760,456	67.94%
Total	5,890,169		6,651,858		761,689	

Over 750,000 urban voters were missing on the voters' roll compared to rural voters. In contravention of the law, the final voters' roll was not made available in electronic format prior to Election Day. Thus there is no way to assess any bias on the final voters' roll.

On Election Day urban voters were further systematically disenfranchised. At 82% of urban polling stations many potential voters were turned away and not permitted to vote for reasons which include names not appearing on the voters' roll and turning up at the wrong ward for voting. This is in sharp contrast to rural areas where only 38% of polling stations turned away many potential voters. This served to disenfranchise thousands more of urban voters on Election Day.

These factors on their own fundamentally undermine the degree to which the results of the 2013 Harmonised election can be considered to reflect the will of the Zimbabwean people.

When compounded by the massive bias in the state media, the campaign of intimidation in rural areas, the lack of meaningful voter education, the rushed electoral process and the harassment of civil society leaving the credibility of these elections severely compromised. ZESN calls on the African Union, the Southern African Development Community to be objective in their evaluation of these elections and take into cognisance the pre-election issues that have a bearing on the ability of citizens to genuinely choose their government.

We reiterate that, it is not sufficient for elections to be peaceful. For elections to be credible they must offer all eligible citizens a reasonable opportunity to register to vote; to inform themselves

about the candidates; to vote on election day and for their votes to be properly counted. We are deeply concerned that for urban voters the first three principles have already been violated.

Methodology

As a non-partisan body, ZESN observes elections to ensure that Zimbabweans to freely exercise their right to vote and provide citizens with independent information on the process. As an umbrella network we do not support any political party, but rather we support the right of all eligible Zimbabweans to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

ZESN conducts its observation efforts in conformity with the Declaration of Global Principles for Citizen Election Observation and Monitoring which was launched at the United Nations on 03 April 2012¹ as well as the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation in the SADC Region (PEMMO).²

Our findings and recommendations are made in reference to: the laws of Zimbabwe; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections³ as well as other regional and African election standards.

We deployed over 7,000 observers comprising mobile observer teams, stationary polling station observers at specific polling stations, and constituency observers deployed to ZEC Constituency Centres to witness the collating of results. A special group of more than 700 observers were deployed to a sample of polling stations in every province and constituency of the country to provide national representative data in real time. This preliminary statement is based on the observations of this group of observers.

Setup of Polling Stations

95% of ZESN observers reported polling stations were open by 7:30 am with essentially all polling stations open by 9:00 am.

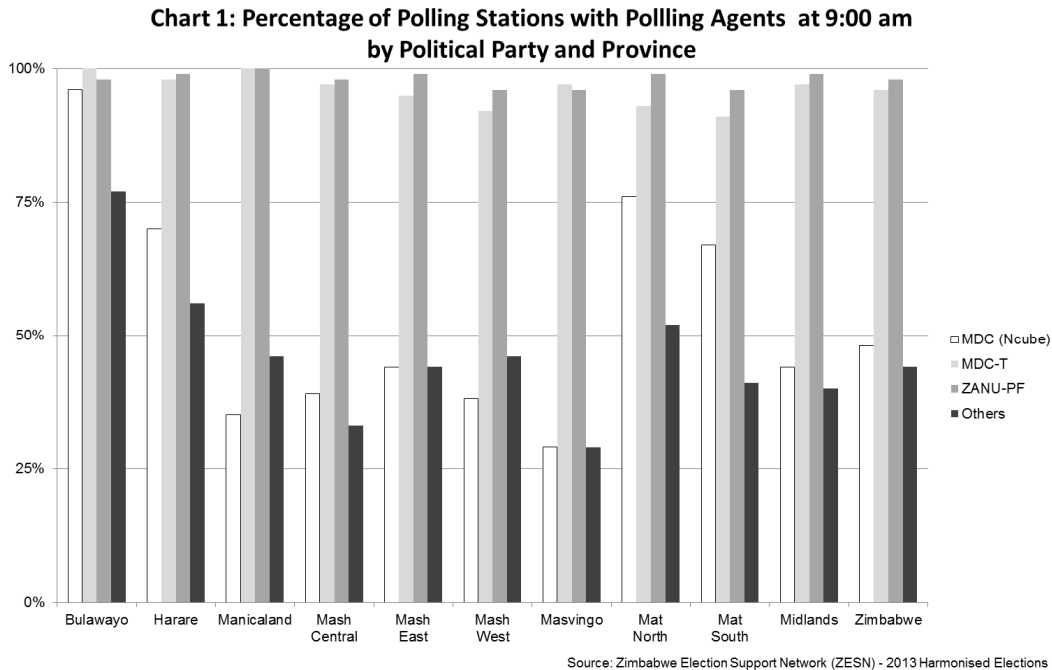
ZESN observers report that by 7:00 am, the official opening time, ballot boxes were at 100% of polling stations; ballot papers at 97% of polling stations; the ZEC official stamp at 94% of polling stations; indelible ink at 94% of polling stations; and the voters roll at 99% of polling stations.

By 9:00 am, MDC-Tsvangirai had polling agents at 96% of polling stations and ZANU-PF at 98% of polling stations. MDC (Ncube), however, had polling agents at only 48% of polling stations (predominantly Bulawayo, Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and Harare). All other political parties combined had polling agents at 46% of polling stations.

¹ see <http://www.gndem.org/declaration-of-global-principles>

² see <http://www.eisa.org.za/EISA/publications/pemmo.htm>

³ see http://www.idasa.org/our_products/resources/output/sadc_principles_and_guidelines/



Across the country, polling stations averaged nine ZEC staff with on average six female ZEC staff in urban polling stations and five in rural polling stations.

At 83% of polling stations police officers were stationed inside polling stations despite the fact they are allowed to be inside polling stations at the invitation of the presiding officer.

ZESN observers reported that 98% of polling stations were set up so that voters could mark their ballot in secret. However, 12% of polling stations were not easily accessible, including for people with disabilities. This problem was equally prevalent in urban and rural wards.

At 100% of polling stations the ballot box was shown to be empty before they were sealed. However, at 8% of polling stations an accounting of ballot papers was not done as part of the setup procedures.

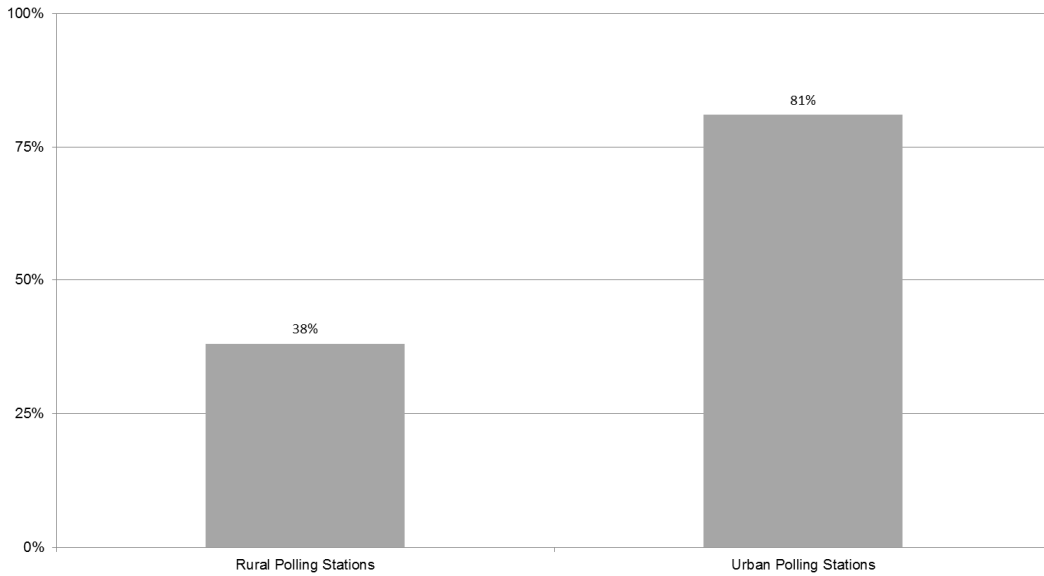
Voting

ZESN observers report at 99% of polling stations voters' fingers were checked for indelible ink before a person was permitted to vote and at 100% of polling stations names were checked against the voters roll before a person was permitted to vote.

At 99% of polling stations ballot papers were stamped with the ZEC stamp when being issued and at 99% of polling stations voters had their fingers marked with indelible ink.

At 49% of polling stations ZESN observers reported 25 or more potential voters being turned away and not permitted to vote. The main reasons why people were turned away included that they were not on the voters' roll even though they had voted in previous elections, they were in the wrong wards and some had registration slips and names were not appearing on the voters' roll. However, this problem was much more prevalent in urban than rural areas. While at 39% of rural polling stations ZESN observers reported more than 25 potential voters being turned away and not permitted to vote, at 82% of urban polling stations more than 25 potential voters were turned away and not permitted to vote.

Chart 2: Percentage of Polling Stations where Many Voters were Turned Away and Not Permitted to Vote

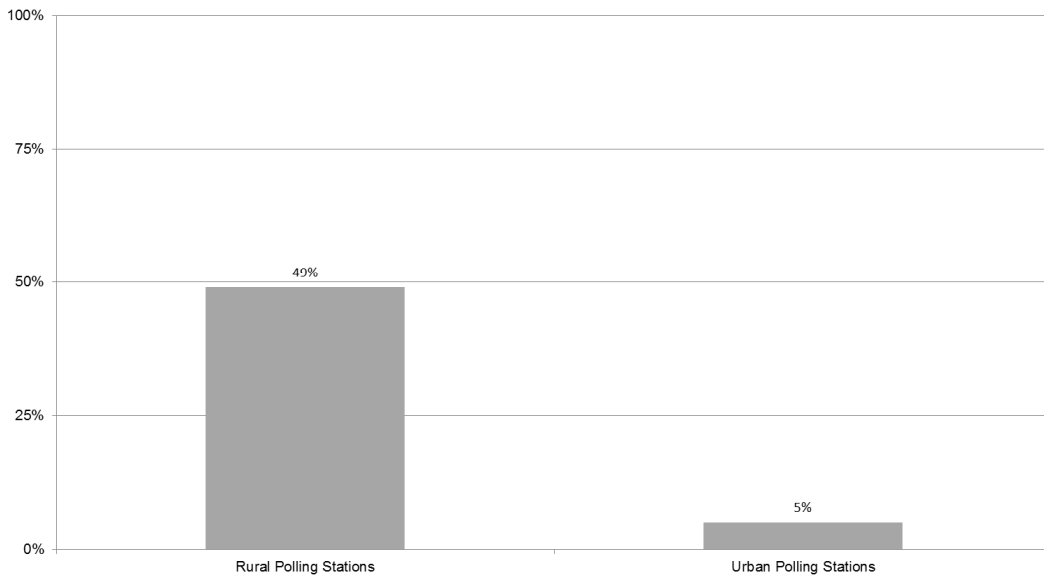


Source: Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) - 2013 Harmonised Elections

In contrast, at 89% of polling stations only five or fewer people were improperly allowed to vote.

At 38% of polling stations 25 or more people were assisted to vote. There was a sharp contrast between urban and rural polling stations. At 49% of rural polling stations more than 25 people were assisted to vote as opposed to only 5% of urban polling stations.

Chart 3: Percentage of Polling Stations where Many Voters were Assisted to Vote



Source: Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) - 2013 Harmonised Elections

However, at 88% of polling stations assisted voters were allowed to be assisted by a person of their choice.

At 98% of polling stations ZESN observers did not witness any campaigning within 200 metres of the polling station. At 96% of polling stations there were no unauthorised persons in the polling station during voting. At 98% of polling stations there were no incidents of intimidation or harassment of voters. At 99% of polling stations no one attempted to disrupt the voting process.

At 91% of polling stations disabled persons, the elderly and pregnant/nursing women were allowed to go to the front of the queue.

At 82% of polling stations no one was in the queue at 7pm when voting was scheduled to end and at just 6% of polling stations there were 25 or more people in the queue. At 89% of polling stations everyone in the queue at closing time was permitted to vote.

Counting

At 98% of polling stations ZESN observers report no one attempted to intimidate or influence election officials during counting nor did anyone attempt to disrupt the counting process.

At 99% of polling stations where ZANU-PF polling agents were present they signed the V-11 results form. MDC-T polling agents signed the V-11 results form at 97% of polling stations at which they were present. At 97% of polling stations where MDC (Ncube) polling agents were present and at 84% of polling agents from all other parties signed the V-11 results form.

At 90% of polling stations all polling agents present were given a copy of the V-11 results form and at 97% of polling stations the official results were posted outside.

ZESN is continuing with the observation of the entire process, collation, tabulation and verification of the election results. We urge ZEC to handle the results management in a transparent and timely manner.

Based on our assessment so far, although the pre-election period was calm and peaceful, there are many other critical factors that can undermine the credibility of the entire electoral process. The preparations were inadequate, voter registration and voters' roll was flawed, voter education was limited and the special voting was chaotic. Polling day processes were smooth and no major incidents were reported.

We urge observers and all stakeholders to look below the surface as there are some grave issues that have arisen. All is not well.

About ZESN

ZESN was established in 2000. It is a coalition of 31 non-governmental organisations formed to co-ordinate activities pertaining to elections. The major focus of the Network is to promote democratic processes in general and free and fair elections in particular. ZESN has observed every election and by-election in Zimbabwe since the 2000 parliamentary elections.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT

Dr. SolmonZwana ZESN Chair at [+263774198938](tel:+263774198938)

RindaiChipfunde-Vava ZESN National Director - [+263 771692039](tel:+263771692039) / [+263712415902](tel:+263712415902)

Ellen Dingani, ZESN Media and Communications Manager on [+263 771692029](tel:+263771692029) to schedule media interviews with the Chairperson or Director

zesn@africaonline.co.zw / info@zesn.org.zw / zesninfo2013@gmail.com or visit www.zesn.org.zw