



**Zimbabwe Election
Support Network** ■
Promoting Democratic
Elections in Zimbabwe

Press Statement

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON THE 8 MARCH 2025 BY-ELECTION IN CHEGUTU WARD 3 AND NORTON WARD 3

10-March-2025 - The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) observed local authority by-elections held on 9 March 2025 in Chegutu Rural District Council (RDC) Ward 3 and Norton Town Council Ward 3. Both seats fell vacant following the deaths of the Councillors on 13 December 2024 and 2 January 2025.

Legal Framework

The by-elections were held in terms of 121A of the Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13), which provides for filling vacancies arising in councils. The Nomination Court held sittings for purposes of receiving nominations of candidates for election as Councillors for the vacant Wards on Thursday 6 February 2025. Tsomondo Wilson Charamba of ZANU-PF and two (2) Independent candidates, Paradzai Preston Tanatswa and Munyeveri Walter were successfully nominated as candidates for the Norton Town Council Ward 3, while, Independent candidates Sibanda Tawanda and Murombedzi Stabile and Makofi Mahwinhei of ZANU-PF were duly nominated for Chegutu Rural District Council, paving way for a by-election.

Although Munyeveri Walter was nominated as a candidate for the Norton by-election, his nomination was rendered invalid by a ruling of the High Court in the early hours of the day of the by-election 8 March 2025, due to the deliberate provision of false information regarding his residential address.

In line with Section 52A (2) of the Electoral Act on Publication of details re ballot papers, a total of 2 850 ballot papers were printed for Ward 3 of Chegutu Rural District Council while 2 550 ballot papers were printed for Ward 3 of Norton Town Council by-elections. The figures included a contingency of 6.74% for Ward 3 of Chegutu Rural District Council and 7.45% for Ward 3 of Norton Town Council.

Observation Methodology

ZESN deployed nine (9) static observers to observe polling day procedures, covering polling station set-up, opening, voting, counting, and results announcement in both wards. Five (5) observers were assigned to all five (5) polling stations in Chegutu RDC Ward 3, while four (4) observers were deployed to four (4) of the polling stations in Norton Town Council Ward 3.

This preliminary statement is based on reports from accredited ZESN observers. The findings and recommendations presented here are grounded on Zimbabwe's electoral laws, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Principles and Guidelines Governing the Conduct of Democratic Elections, and other regional and African election standards and principles.

Pre-election Observations

ZESN observers reported that the campaign period was relatively peaceful, with no incidents of violence or disruption. The environment allowed electoral contestants from all political parties and candidates to canvass for votes without hindrance. Local Government and Public Works Minister who is also ZANU-PF's chairman for Mashonaland East Daniel Garwe and ZANU-PF Mashonaland West chairperson Mary Mliswa, attended the final rally held at Karina Open Space inside Ward 3 in Norton.

Set up and opening of polling stations

Prior to the opening of polling stations, voters' rolls were displayed outside, allowing the electorate to verify their names. ZESN observers reported that at the polling stations they observed in Chegutu polling opened on time at 7 a.m., with all necessary materials, such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, indelible ink markers, voters' rolls, and ZEC official stamps. In Chegutu, voting was delayed by four (4) hours to enable ZEC to print fresh ballot papers following the disqualification of one of the candidates through a High Court ruling. Voting commenced from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. in line with Section 53 of the Electoral Act on Hours polling stations to be open which stipulates that; *“(1) A polling station shall be open continuously from 7.00 a.m to 7.00 p.m. on a polling day : Provided that if for good cause the constituency elections officer determines that it is not possible to open a polling station at 7.00 a.m., he or she shall fix such later opening time as will enable him or her to keep polling station open for at least twelve hours continuously on a polling day.”*

Political parties' agents

ZESN observers noted that the contestants made adequate efforts in deploying agents to monitor the electoral processes. In Chegutu RDC, all the candidates had agents present at all polling stations observed by ZESN. Similarly, in Norton Ward 3, both candidates performed well in terms of agent deployment, ensuring proper monitoring of the electoral process.

Polling officials, Voting process and procedures

ZESN observers reported that polling procedures were adhered to, in full compliance with the law. This included verifying voters' names against the voters roll and inspecting their fingers for ink before permitting them to cast their vote. On average, each polling station was staffed by six (6) polling officers.

Assisted Voters

The number of assisted voters was generally low in both wards. In Chegutu RDC Ward 3, a total of 56 voters out of 1,187 required assistance, with the highest number recorded at Musinami Clinic A polling station, where 16 out of 219 voters needed assistance. Similarly, at Musinami Clinic B polling station, 11 out of 185 voters required assistance. In Norton Ward 3, the number of assisted voters was also low, with 31 voters out of a total of 319 requiring assistance at the observed polling stations. Assisted voting was due to illiteracy and visual impairment and was primarily carried out by polling officials in the presence of the police, in accordance with Section 59 of the Electoral Act, which outlines the procedures for voting by illiterate persons or those with disabilities.

Redirected and turned away voters

In Chegutu, the number of redirected voters was relatively low, with the highest number recorded at Chishoshe Primary School, where four (4) voters were redirected to other polling stations. In Norton, the highest number of redirected voters was recorded at Govans Shopping Centre Tent, where three (3) voters were redirected.

By-Election Results

In Chegutu RDC Ward 3, Independent candidate Tawanda Sibanda was officially declared the winner by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), securing 613 votes. ZANU PF's Makofi Mahwinei followed with 472 votes, while Independent candidate Stabile Murombedzi received 88 votes. In Norton Ward 3, ZEC announced Tsomondo Charamba of ZANU-PF as the winner with 233 votes, edging out Independent candidate Paradzayi Tanatswa, who garnered 222 votes.

Voter turnout was notably low, with less than 50% of registered voters participating. In Chegutu RDC Ward 3, voter turnout stood at 44.5%, while in Norton Ward 3, it was recorded at 19.17%.

Conclusion and Recommendations

ZESN acknowledges the contestants for conducting their campaigns peacefully.

- However, given the low voter turnout, ZESN urges all Zimbabweans to actively engage in the electoral and governance processes to foster inclusivity and strengthen the quality and accountability of governance.
- Political parties and candidates should engage the electorate on political literacy, in particular participation in local authority elections to ensure community representation, influence local policies, and improve public services and governance.
- The electoral dispute resolution process should be reviewed to ensure timely court adjudication, to avoid delays that could disenfranchise voters.

FOR COMMENTS AND FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT

zesn2011@zesn.net, info@zesn.net
Facebook: Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)
X handle: @ZESN1