



Zaka East Parliamentary by- election

14 May 2007

The country's biggest opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) boycotted the forthcoming Zaka East parliamentary election which will see the ruling ZANU PF contesting against the United Peoples' Party (UPP) and the little-known Zimbabwe Peoples' Democratic Party (ZPDP). By the close of proceedings at the nomination court for the by-election, which sat at the Zaka Rural District Council Offices at Jerera Growth Point on Friday 11 May 2007, both factions of the MDC had not filed nomination papers.

Livingstone Chineka, a retired soldier, will represent ZANU PF while Rameck Batirai and Nicholas Shanga will represent the ZPDP and the UPP respectively. The Zaka East parliamentary by-election will be held following the death of the incumbent Tinos Rusere and will be the first by-election to be held without the MDC contesting since its formation. The MDC has previously boycotted by-elections in Masvingo South and Seke in 2004. However, in both cases ZANU PF candidates went on to be elected unopposed.

The spokesperson for the MDC anti-senate faction, Nelson Chamisa had indicated that participating in this exercise was a futile exercise considering that parliament will be dissolved in early 2008. The ruling ZANU PF is tipped to retain this seat considering that it will be contesting against what is perceived to be weak opposition. The MDC was expected to offer stiff resistance especially considering its strong showing in 2005 when its candidate garnered 8462 votes against ZANU PF's 13 078.

ZESN also observed the voter registration and inspection exercise which ended on 10 May 2007. The exercise was peaceful and recorded some high numbers at some polling centers. At the close of the exercise some 241 people had inspected the voters' roll at Chinorumba Primary School. 43 had newly registered while 1 had transferred from another constituency. At Rusere Primary School by midday of the same day, 162 people had inspected the roll, while 8 were newly registered. Only 6 had transferred from other constituencies. Figures from Nhema Clinic and Madondo Primary School were not disclosed. However the inspection officers only said that 'a lot of people' had inspected the roll.

ZESN observers also reported that there was a significant interest in the youths to participate in the election as quite a significant number had registered as voters. Most people who attended the six ZESN workshops in the constituency advised that they had already inspected the roll. There were 283 participants at these workshops. Of these participants reported that he could not find his name on the roll although he had voted in 2005. He was however able to register as a voter. At least seven reported that they had seen names of their deceased relatives still on the roll. One of them

had died in 1996. They had not obtained death certificates for their deceased relatives and could therefore not have them removed from the roll.

Meanwhile ZESN also held six community workshops in the constituency during the inspection period. Participants at these workshops complained that the inspection period was too short while others expressed their lack of confidence in the ZEC's ability to run a free and fair poll. They suggested that the harmonised 2008 elections should be run and supervised by the African Union and/ or the United Nations. The inspection period was peaceful although there were complaints in Mutimwi and Zibwowa that traditional leaders were refusing to give youths letters confirming that they were resident in the constituency. Participants also complained that the ZEC officials were only meeting with traditional leaders who were then subsequently expected to pass on the information to their subjects. The ZEC officials, however, addressed participants at one of the ZESN workshops at Mutimwi and urged people to participate peacefully in the polls. Although there have been media reports on political violence in Zaka East ZESN observers have been unable to verify their authenticity. The constituency appeared calm and peaceful while participants at ZESN workshops did not report any incidents of overt or covert intimidation.

The Zaka East parliamentary by-election will be held on 9 June 2007.



PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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