



Statement on the Ruhaama County MP By-election

For Immediate Release – 11th January 2018

Introduction

Ruhaama County went to the polls today – January 11, 2018, to elect a Member of Parliament. The election followed the death of the area MP – William Bejukiye Zinkuratire from NRM.

To track the day's activities, CCEDU deployed a team of mobile observers who sampled eight (8) out of the eleven (11) Sub Counties that comprise Ruhaama County. CCEDU's sample included: Itojo, Ruhaama, Ntungamo TC, Rukoni West, Rwikiniro, Kitwe, Kafunjo and Nyakyeera sub counties.

Preliminary findings of the observation team were:

Opening of the Poll:

While the Electoral Commission dispatched polling materials from their office as early as 4:30am, CCEDU observed delays in arrival of the material at the polling stations and subsequent delay in the commencement of polling. Some polling stations received polling material as late as 8.07am. Kashenyi CoU Primary School, Nyakibobo and Bukora, polling stations received polling material at 7.27am, 7.37am and 8.07am respectively. CCEDU observed delivery of material at some polling stations without the presence of a polling constable to secure them.

At some polling stations such as Kashenyi CoU Primary School, the presiding officers were not at the polling stations at the time of delivery of polling material. As such, material was received by polling assistants.

Polling Process:

Due to the late arrival of polling material, voting at a number of polling stations such as Bukora Primary School in Itojo Sub County started as late 8.50am.

CCEDU observed with satisfaction that polling officials generally conducted the process in accordance with the electoral law and the guidelines provided by the Electoral Commission.

Closing of the Polls:

Most polling stations closed right on time (4:00pm) because there were no voters in the queue.

Voter Turnout:

CCEDU noted with concern very low voter turnout at all polling stations visited. For instance by 12.00pm a total of 78 out of 526 registered voters had turned up at Ruhaama Primary School; and at 2.00pm a total of 183 out of 741 registered voters had turned up at Nyakagando Muslim Primary School polling station.

From the interactions that the observers had with some people from the community, it was noted that the main reason for low voter turnout was voter fatigue. ***“We voted in 2016. After the death of our MP we again voted during the party primaries. We are again expected to vote... you get tired”*** A lady at Ruhaama Primary School said.

The other reason noted for the low voter turnout was confidence lost in elections. “*We are fed up! People are out there, very many – but have you seen them coming? We vote for our candidate but government takes the last say on whom they want...*” A lady at Ruhaama Primary School said.

Candidate Agents:

CCEDU observed the presence of candidate agents for all the candidates at almost all the polling stations visited. The agents were allowed to undertake their responsibilities freely. CCEDU also noted that most of the candidate agents at the stations visited were female.

Security:

Whereas polling constables were absent at some stations at commencement of polling, CCEDU observed their presence during the rest of the polling process at all stations visited. They were observed to execute their duties as prescribed by the law.

The election was conducted in a generally calm atmosphere with no reports of serious security breaches.

Incidents:

There were reports of gross ballot stuffing that led to a halt of polling at Nyakibaare polling station in Rukoni East Sub County. The number of ticked ballot papers in the box did not tally with the number of voters ticked in the voter register. The Electoral Commission later ordered a fresh start of polling. CCEDU received similar reports of ballot stuffing at polling stations in Kyamwasha, Kahoko primary school, Nyamabaare and Mushunga in Rukoni East sub county.

CCEDU received reports of clashes between supporters of Independent candidate, Eng. Jackson Mubangizi and NRM’s Kahima Moses Mugabe at Kahoko primary school polling station in Rukoni East Sub County.

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