



50/50 POLICY BRIEF ZIMBABWE

FEBRUARY 2020



2018 Zimbabwe Elections Observation.

Photo: Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network

Key facts

This policy brief sets out key issues and options for the increased representation of women in politics in Zimbabwe following the 2018 elections that witnessed a decline in women's political representation at national and local level. The issue is of critical importance given:

- The provisions of Article 17 of the Constitution for women's equal and effective representation in all areas of decision-making;
- The fact that the 30% quota for women at national level is expiring in 2023;
- The fact that there are presently no special measures in place for women at the local level.

These facts present both a threat and an opportunity to debate electoral systems and quotas, the experiences to date and how they can be enhanced to “step it up for gender equality” by 2030.

	Last election	Next elections	Electoral system	No of seats	No of women elected	% of women elected
Local government	2018	2023	FPTP	1959	274	14%
House of Assembly	2018	2023	MIXED	270	85	31%
Senate	2018	2023	PR	80	35	44%
Both houses				350	120	34%
Presidential elections	2018	2023		23	4	17%
Cabinet	2019			24	7	29%

Source: IPU data base, February 2020 and GL computations.

¹ 210 seats are elected via the constituency or FPTP system. 60 seats reserved for women are distributed among parties on a PR basis.

Constitutional provisions

At the level of principle, Section 56 on equality and non-discrimination states that:

- “All persons are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
- Women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.
- Every person has the right not to be treated in an unfairly discriminatory manner on such grounds as their nationality, race, colour, tribe, place of birth, ethnic or social origin, language, class, religious belief, political affiliation, opinion, custom, culture, sex, gender, marital status, age, pregnancy, disability or economic or social status.”

Section 67 states that every citizen has the right to make political choices freely, to join and to participate in the activities of political parties, to campaign freely, to stand as a candidate.

The Constitution (Section 17) provides for **affirmative action**. It aspires to: “full gender balance in Zimbabwean society particularly with regard to promoting the full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society on the basis of equality with men and to take legislative and other measures to ensure that both women and men are equally represented in all institutions and agencies of government at every level.” Section 17 further provides that “women should constitute at least half of members of all Commissions and other elected and appointed governmental bodies and that the State must take positive measures to rectify gender discrimination and imbalances resulting from past practices and

policies.” In elaborating on the rights for women, the constitution provides that “every woman has full and equal dignity of the person with men.”

Key institutions for the promotion of gender parity in elections: The Zimbabwe Constitution (Chapter 12) establishes five institutions in support of democracy. These are the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC); the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC); the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC); Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission. The ZEC and ZGC are particularly relevant to the promotion of gender parity in politics.

Electoral system and quotas

The electoral system and quotas for women are spelled out in the Constitution that also sets the broad parameters for the Electoral Law.

National assembly: Section 124 provides that “for the next two lives of the National Assembly (commencing in 2013), an additional sixty women shall be elected under a party-list system of proportional representation based on votes cast for political party candidates”. In essence this means that from 2013 to 2023, Zimbabwe will have a mixed system in the national assembly: 210 seats voted for on a constituency (First Past the Post of FPTP) basis and 60 seats distributed among parties on a Proportional Representation (PR) basis but reserved for women only. This provision is not extended to local government.

The Senate

Section 120 of the Constitution sets out the composition of the senate, summarised below:

Criteria	Number	Electoral system	Special provisions
Elected from provinces (10 candidates x 9 provinces)	60	PR	Male and female candidates are listed alternately, every list being headed by a female candidate.
Chiefs - 2 each from the 8 provinces excluding the metros (Harare and Bulawayo)	16	Elected by assembly of chiefs	
President and Deputy President of the National Council of Chiefs	2	Elected by chiefs	
Persons with disability	2	Appointed	
TOTAL	80		

Local government

Chapter 14 of the Constitution sets out the provisions for Provincial and Local Government. Section 265, setting out “general principles” mentions the “*democratic participation in government by all citizens and communities of Zimbabwe*” but does not specifically mention gender equality. Section 277 sets out “election to local authorities.” These are to take place concurrently with presidential and parliamentary elections, and “in the case of an election, other than a general election, to fill one or more casual vacancies, as soon as practicable after the vacancies have occurred.” Chapter 7 of the Constitution on Electoral Laws stipulates the provisions for PR seats in the national assembly and senate and related quotas for women as above, but makes no mention of local government.

The Zimbabwe Gender Policy (2017) comments that “the absence of a legislative framework for affirmative action to ensure attainment of gender quota systems for political parties and in *urban and rural* councils is a key hindrance to achievement of gender parity.”²

Political parties

There is no requirement in the Electoral Law for political parties to have gender quotas or any other gender provisions. However, the Electoral Code of Conduct prohibits political parties from discriminating “on the grounds of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class or religion in connection with an election or political party.”³

The Electoral Amendment Act 2018 has the following provisions with regard to women's participation in political parties: “Every political party and every candidate must: (a) Respect the right of women to communicate freely within parties and as candidates; and (b) Facilitate the full and equal participation of women in political activities; and (c) Ensure the free access of women to all public political meetings, marches, demonstrations, rallies and other public political events; and (d) take all reasonable steps to ensure that women are free to engage in political activities.”



The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union/Patriotic Front (ZANU/PF) Constitution does not refer to gender quotas but commits to putting structures in place in the politburo, provincial executive council, district executive committee, branch executive committee, principal officers

in the women's league (Secretary for Gender and Culture). Functions of the Secretary for Gender (Politburo) include “to ensure that the issues of gender balance and equity are addressed and incorporated in all economic and social spheres of the party and society; to ensure that Zimbabwe culture in its diversity is addressed by the Party in all spheres of life and activities; to liaise and coordinate with *Government agencies, community groups and Non-Governmental organisations responsible for gender and culture.*”⁴



Female councillors discussing the importance of the 50-50 with Leopold Boroma, Commonwealth Local Government Forum Project manager. Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

The main opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance Constitution commits to gender parity in all the organs of the party⁵. The Party's National Executive Committee and National Council shall have parity.⁶ The Constitution commits to a Gender and Children's Rights Committee. The National Assembly of Youth shall “promote the ideas of gender equity and equality in all facets of life and structures especially amongst the youth.”⁷

² Zimbabwe Gender Policy 2017 p21.

³ Electoral Act of Zimbabwe (2004), Section 160A.

⁴ Constitution of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front.

⁵ Constitution of the Movement for Democratic Change, Article 4.1.

⁶ Ibid Article 6.4.4.5.

⁷ Ibid Article 8.

Gender analysis of 2018 election manifestos

QUOTA	GENDER SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN MANIFESTOS	GENDER MAINSTREAMED IN MANIFESTOS
ZANU PF		
ZANU-PF pledge to ensure implementation of 50-50 representation in key public and private institutions and encourage local authorities to set up quotas for women in the allocation of residential, industrial and commercial space.	ZANU PF pledge to uplift the dignity of women in line with the Zimbabwean Constitution Section 80(1) which states that "every woman has full and equal dignity of the person with men and this includes equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities."	ZANU PF states that as part of development the party will promote equity, equality, gender balance and empowering women, youths, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
MDC-Alliance		
The MDC Alliance says that it will guarantee 50-50 representation at all levels of government and promote the proportional representation electoral system with a zebra style quota.	The manifesto mentions women's rights, Children's rights, rights of the disabled; gender responsive budgeting at national and local government.	The manifesto recognises the constitutional gender provisions and alludes to Agenda 2030 in a number of cross cutting areas.

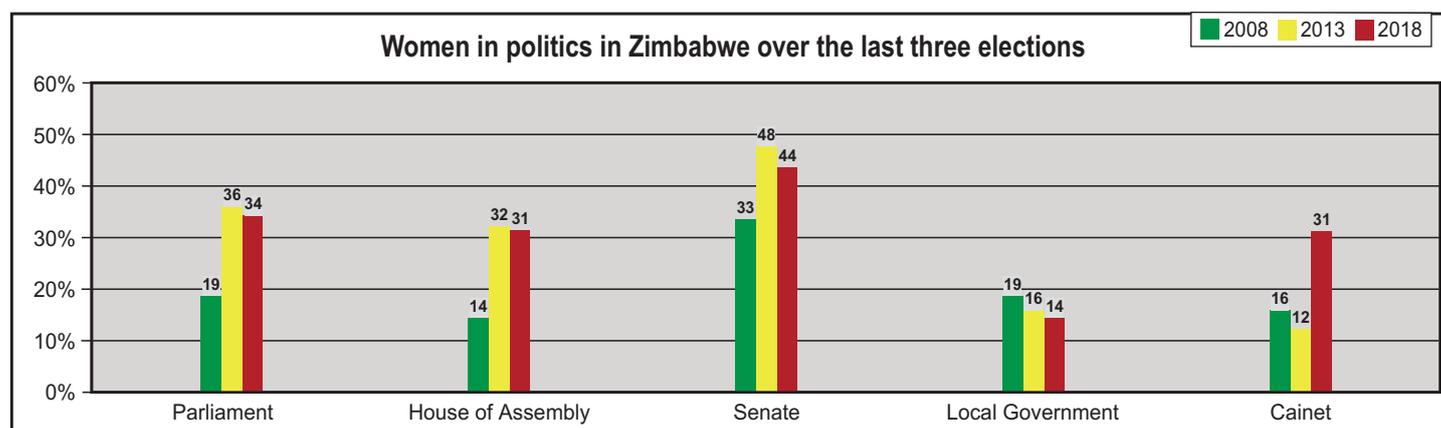
The table summarises the gender provisions taken voluntarily by political parties in the political manifestos of the two main political parties: (ZANU-PF)⁸ and MDC-Alliance⁹. The analysis shows that the main political parties have gender provisions in their manifestos. The MDC-Alliance and ZANU-PF commit to gender parity as per Section 17 of the Constitution. The two main parties refer to gender empowerment and women's rights in their election pledges.

Analysis of party lists shows that neither ZANU/PF nor the MDC Alliance lived up to their manifesto commitments in the 2018 elections. In the National Assembly, 47 political parties fielded candidates; 20 of these did not field any women candidates

at all and two parties fielded only one woman each. Women comprised a mere 15% of candidates. 84 out of 210 Constituencies were contested by men only. This meant that for the PR quota seats, women would barely have featured in the 2018 elections.

Forty political parties fielded candidates for the Local Authority Elections. Of these, 12 fielded men only. Women constituted a mere 17% of the 6796 candidates. As the chances of all these women winning their seats were slim, the likelihood of women's representation slipping below the 2013 figure of 16% ran high even before the elections commenced.

Elections outcomes over the last three elections



Source: .

⁸ Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front Election Manifesto 2018. Unite, Fight Corruption, Develop, Re-engage, Create Jobs.

⁹ Movement for Democratic Change Alliance Political Manifesto: A Sustainable and Modernisation Agenda for Real Transformation (2018).

The graph tracks women's participation in politics in Zimbabwe over the last three elections. Following the adoption of the new Constitution in 2013, the proportion of women in the national assembly increased from 14% to 32% and in the Senate from 33% to 48%, resulting in an overall representation of 36% women.

The last Zimbabwe election took place on 30 July 2018: eight months after President Emmerson Mnangagwa took over from former President Robert Mugabe who had been in office for 38 years. In the 2018 elections, the proportion of women reduced to 44% in the senate; 31% in the national assembly. Overall, the level of women's political representation dropped to 34%. The expiry of the PR quota for women at national level in 2023 raises concerns that even the limited gains made at the national level will be lost. Furthermore, despite the provisions of Article 17, there is no quota for women at the local level. The proportion of women at this level has receded with each election - from 18% in 2008; to 16% in 2013 to 14% in 2018. In December 2019, the Parliament of Zimbabwe published the Constitutional Amendment No 2 Bill. Clause 11 proposes to *extend the party list women members by another two extra parliaments (from two to four parliaments)*. **The bill makes no reference to local government.**

Options for increasing women's representation

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) are engaged in stakeholder consultations on how best to increase women's representation at national and local level.

At the **National level**, ZEC observed that it would be too soon to remove the quota for women in the national assembly in 2023. It further observes that "Section 17 of the Constitution contains important provisions for gender equality," but argues that "It might not be easy however to have a constitutional amendment to extend section 124(b) should there still be need in 2023 and beyond." The ZEC says "It would be easier to have this in the Electoral Act. On the other hand, if 50% or more is achieved through the political parties' lists and eventually to the National Assembly, then there would be no need for the extension of the quota."¹⁰

The recent experience shows that women's political participation at the national level is still heavily dependent on the quota. The question for Zimbabwe is whether to extend more of the same, or look at other options. The ZEC has already alluded to the fact that it may not be possible to get a Constitutional amendment to extend the quota and that any changes may need to be in the Electoral Act. It is also apparent that political parties cannot be relied upon to honour their (voluntary) quotas.

The system of reserving seats for women on a PR basis in the national assembly has guaranteed the minimum 30% women but has not always favoured women's effective participation, as these seats are often regarded as the "token" women's seats. A better system is the zebra (one woman, one man) system in the senate: delivering gender parity without distinction in the way that women and men are elected.

While a complete shift to PR and a legislated quota would be ideal for guaranteeing women's representation, this may not be possible in the short term. However, Zimbabwe already now has a mixed system at national level that could be built upon in an amendment to the electoral act. Zimbabwe could have a mixed PR and FPTP system at national level like the Lesotho national assembly with a 50/50 or 40/60 split between the two systems. The broader arguments around inclusion could be used to lobby for institutionalising a certain proportion of PR seats at the national level, *but not exclusively for women.*

Consistent with Section 17 of the Constitution, the quota for all parties could apply to *both the PR and the FPTP seats*. While the result would be guaranteed in the case of the PR or list seats, reserving candidacy in the FPTP seats would help to normalise women running for office. This, combined with rules that ensure a fair playing field would, over time, enhance women's confidence in participating in both systems.

At the **local level**, the tier of governance closest to the majority of women, elections are run solely on a FPTP basis. Section 124 of the Constitution (creating a mixed system at the national level) does not apply at the local level. Gender activists argue that this is inconsistent with Article 17 of the Constitution that provides for gender parity in all areas of decision-making.

¹⁰ ZEC, November, 2017.

The PR system is generally not popular at the local level where constituents prefer to be able to access and hold to account an individual councillor as opposed to a political party. There are precedents to mixed systems at the local level (for example in South Africa, where 60% of council seats are elected on the basis of wards or constituencies and 40% on a PR basis). This is an option Zimbabwe may wish to explore in the longer term, going a step further by including a 50/50 quota for women for both the PR and the FPTP seats. Such a solution is the same as the recommendation made for the national assembly and would bring the two systems in line.

In the short term, a legislated quota within the existing FPTP system is imperative if the backsliding is to be arrested. In 2016, representatives of the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, Justice and Parliamentary and Legal Affairs and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, went on a study visit to Mauritius to learn how the government there increased women's participation at the local level fourfold (from 6% to 28%) thanks to a gender neutral quota. With technical support from Gender Links and UN Women, they made a submission to parliament, followed up by the Women in Local Government Forum (WiLGF).

Recommendations of the Zimbabwe local government Study Visit to Mauritius:¹¹

1. That the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works approach the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission with a view to include a gender neutral clause¹² in the Electoral Act. The percentage required by the Constitution is 50% but it may be prudent to attain this incrementally.

2. That the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works request ZEC to consider the registration of political parties as part of its function to ensure that the gender quota system is adhered to.

The Mauritius example offers hope that significant increases in women's representation in local government can be achieved in a purely FPTP system, provided that this is accompanied by the necessary degree of political will, advocacy and capacity building. It would be a worthy starting point.

Other factors

Electoral laws

Freedom of association: The Electoral Act Section 3 (b) states that every citizen has the right to participate in government directly or through freely chosen representatives, and is entitled, without distinction on the ground of race, ethnicity, **gender**, language, political or religious belief, education, physical appearance or disability or economic or social condition, to stand for office and cast a vote freely. The Electoral Act does make provision for independent candidates. The gender provisions of the Electoral Act were strengthened ahead of the 2018 elections. Gender discrimination in elections has not yet been grounds for legal contestation of any aspect of elections.

Mainstreaming gender in electoral laws and practices:

The Zimbabwe Electoral Amendment Act 2018 includes the following key provisions for promoting gender equality in elections:

- Ensuring that gender is mainstreamed into electoral processes;
- Ensuring that at least half the assessors in the Electoral Court are women;
- Providing adequate, accurate, gender sensitive and unbiased voter education;
- Addressing any other factor that has a bearing on gender equality and elections, or in the conduct of the polling at the election;
- Including one person nominated by the Minister responsible for Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises in the election observer accreditation committee.
- Mainstreaming gender in political party practices (see political parties).



¹¹ Zimbabwe Ministry of local government position paper after Mauritius Study Visit, June 2015.
¹² The Mauritius Local Government Act (2013) states that 30% of all candidates must be either men or women.

Campaign finance

The Electoral Act sets out prescribed areas in which election finance is permissible. These are: purchasing voters rolls; the expenses of printing, the expenses of advertising, and the expenses of publishing, issuing and distributing, addresses and notices; stationery, messages, postage, telegrams, telefacsimiles, electronic mails and the use of telephones; public meetings and hiring of halls or premises therefor; one chief election agent for the candidate and no more; a number of election agents within the constituency concerned not exceeding such number as may be prescribed; a number of clerks not exceeding such number as may be prescribed and the same number of messengers; miscellaneous expenses not exceeding in the whole such sum as may be prescribed, and not being expenses incurred in respect of any matter or in any manner constituting an offence under this Act or any other law, or in respect of any matter or thing payment for which is prohibited by this Act or any other law; personal expenses; the supply to unpaid helpers of the candidate of a reasonable amount of fuel for the purpose of bringing voters to and returning them from the polling station.¹³

Most of these expenses should be funded by political parties. However, where resources are constrained, they are most likely to be focused on the candidates thought to have the greatest chance of winning. This is invariably men. Furthermore to the extent that individuals fund campaigns, men have greater access to resources than women. Funding rules are also frequently breached, especially in poor rural areas where candidates are known to provide food and other “incentives” to voters. The Zimbabwe Gender Policy (2017) cites “lack of resources” as a major impediment to women's political participation.



Ruwa Local Board 50-50 campaign.

Photo: Oscar Tsvuura

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC's) Gender Baseline Survey states that:

“Zimbabwe's Political Parties Finance Act currently does not have a provision on campaign financing that would increase the participation of women and the youth, for example, as candidates, nor does the Act stipulate how the internal functioning of political parties should be transparent, democratic and gender-responsive. The participation of women as key office bearers in the political parties is minimal and the issues of gender were never raised in the ZEC-political parties' consultative forums held in the run-up to the 2018 elections. The electoral regulations, codes and guidelines, and the law that governs the financing of political parties, are two areas for legal and policy reforms moving forward.”¹⁴

Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWIE)

Section 133 G of the Electoral Act states that political parties and candidates (a) shall take all appropriate measures to prevent politically-motivated violence and any electoral malpractices before, during and after the election period; and (b) shall in the case of an office-bearer of a political party, take effective steps to discipline all members of the party who engage in politically-motivated violence or who commit any electoral malpractice before, during or after the election period; and (c) whenever called upon to do so by the Commission, shall publicly undertake to abide by the code of conduct for political parties and candidates set out in the Fourth Schedule.

Section 160A of the Electoral Act, the **Electoral Code of Conduct** for political parties and candidates states that: “the purpose of this Code is to promote conditions that are conducive to free and fair elections and a climate of tolerance in which electioneering activity may take place without fear or coercion, intimidation or reprisals.” General principles include:

- All political parties and their members and supporters, and all candidates and their supporters, must promote conditions conducive to free, fair and democratic elections conducted through a secret ballot in a climate of democratic tolerance in which political activity may take place without fear of intimidation or reprisals.
- All political parties and their members and supporters, and all candidates and their

¹³ Zimbabwe Election Act section 93.

¹⁴ Voice, Choice and Access to Information: Baseline Study on Gender Equity in the Electoral Process in Zimbabwe by The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) 2017.

supporters, must accept that others have the right to present their political principles and ideas in a peaceful environment without intimidation or fear of reprisal, and must respect that right.

Prohibited conduct includes use of violence, or threaten violence or incite or encourage the use of violence, against anyone on account of his or her political opinions or membership or support of a political party or participation in the election; intimidate, or incite or encourage the intimidation, of anyone on account of his or her political opinions or membership or support of a political party or act in a way that may provoke violence or intimidation; use violence or threats or illegal pressure to force a voter to refrain from voting or to vote for a candidate or political party against his or her will; force a voter to reveal the identity of the candidate voted for or take reprisals against a person because of the way in which he or she has voted or is believed to have voted.

While gender violence is implicit in these provisions, there is no specific provision for gender violence, including sexual harassment in the electoral law. Gender violence against women in elections in Zimbabwe has been a feature in every election since 2000, and it is a frequent experience for women whether they are politically active or not.¹⁵ In 2018, a record 23 candidates vied for the presidency, four of these women. These were: Melbah Dzapasi (#1980 freedom movement Zimbabwe); Thokozani Khupe (MDC-T); Violet

Mariyacha (Untied Democratic Movement) and former Vice President Joice Mujuru. The two best known candidates, Mujuru and Khupe were variously referred to as a “witch” and “hure” (meaning prostitute” in Shona on social media. According to the Zimbabwe Gender Policy 2017, Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWIE) is a major deterrent to potential candidates.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), established under Section 238 of the Constitution, implements the provisions of the Constitution on elections and the Electoral Laws. As provided in the Constitution, the ZEC comprises a Chairperson and eight other members. The Chair must be a judge or qualified to hold office as a judge and is appointed by the President after consultation with the Judicial Service Commission. The other members are appointed by the President from a list of not fewer than twelve nominees supplied by the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders as designated in the Zimbabwe constitution.

While Section 238 does not require the ZEC to be gender balanced, Section 17 provides that “women should constitute at least half of members of all Commissions.” Presently on the eight commissioners, three (38%) are female. The chair, High Court Judge Priscilla Chigumba, is a woman.

In compliance with the Electoral Amendment Act 2018 that commits to **gender mainstreaming in electoral processes**, ZEC has taken a number of steps including:

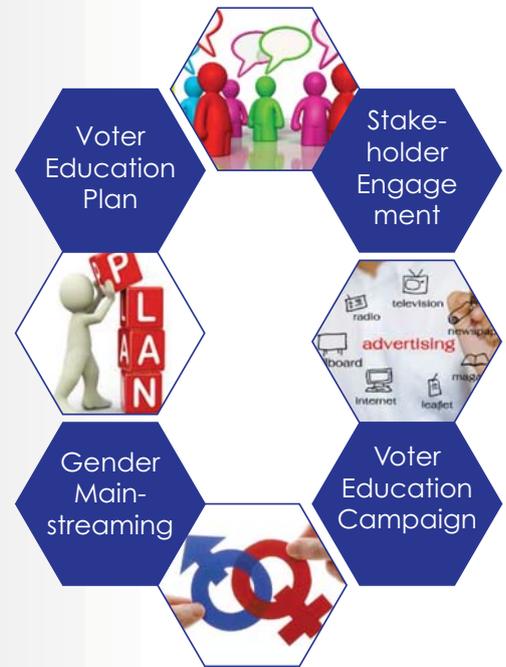
- Developing a gender policy that is due for adoption in October 2019.
- Appointing a gender focal person in the head offices and in each of the ten provincial offices.
- Inclusivity as a core value of the ZEC strategic document 2020-2024. Gender stands alone and cuts across other areas of inclusion such as disability and youth.
- Conducting a Gender Baseline Study ahead of the 2018 elections to assess the gender dimensions of citizens' participation in the electoral process. ZEC mounted several specific gender initiatives based on these findings. For example, ZEC took several measures to ensure that women were not disenfranchised as voters or discriminated against in standing as candidates. The use of affidavits was introduced to prove residence during the voter registration exercise, so that women could register. Nomination courts were instructed not to insist on marriage certificates for women candidates, unless women wanted to be nominated using their married name. Institutionalizing such measures in its regulations and guidelines is important to ensure that such procedures are not 'one-off' actions.¹⁶
- Offering gender training to ZEC staff, commissioners and partners.
- Mainstreaming gender in the ZEC 2018 Harmonised Elections report. Registrants are recorded by age group and gender. Election results in all their different categories are also broken down by gender. The report provides a clear explanation of the PR seats reserved for women in the National Assembly, and the “zebra” system applied to the PR senate seats.



¹⁵ IDASA (An African Democracy Institute), the International Center for Transitional Justice [ICTJ] and the Research and Advocacy Unit [RAU] (2010) Preying on the “Weaker” Sex: Political Violence against Women in Zimbabwe.

¹⁶ Voice, Choice and Access to Information: Baseline Study on Gender Equity in the Electoral Process in Zimbabwe by The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) 2017 2.

The ZEC has been working closely with another statutory body, the **Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC)** on issues of women's political participation. The ZGC is tasked with "making recommendations on the removal of barriers to the attainment of full gender equality."¹⁷ The ZGC is conducting a series of stakeholder consultations on legislative and policy measures required to increase and sustain women's political participation. This included hosting a study visit to Zimbabwe by gender and election experts from three SADC countries with diverse electoral systems and quotas (Mauritius, First Past the Post and gender neutral quota at the local level; Namibia, PR system and legislated quota at the local level and motion in parliament to legislate a quota at the national level and Lesotho, mixed electoral system and quota at local and national level). The study visit shared comparative experience on electoral laws and quotas in June 2019 with the support of UN Women and Gender Links, a regional NGO with a branch in Zimbabwe.



Voter enrolment and education

Quick facts:

GENDER IN ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN ZIMBABWE

The Gender Equality Baseline Survey (GEBS) was commissioned by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) within the framework of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Capacity Building Project (ZIM-ECO 2016-2020). The survey sought to collect data on gender dimensions of citizens' participation in the electoral process, looking specifically at women's participation in comparison with men in voter registration, voter education and participation in elections as candidates and voters. The report was supported through the Joint Programme for Gender Equality (JPGE) funded by the Embassy of Sweden, and ZIM-ECO funded by the European Union.

MEDIA EXPOSURE BY SEX



More women (28.9%) than men (17.3%) have no exposure to any form of media at least once a week

• Men (12.4%) are three times more likely than women (4.5%) to be exposed to some form of media each week

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON POLITICS & GOVERNMENT



Radio and friends are the two main sources for information about politics and government

• Women's access to and use of radio as a source for information about politics and government is lower than that of men

INFORMATION PEOPLE WANT TO RECEIVE

INFORMATION ON VOTER REGISTRATION and HOW TO VOTE are the two 'most useful' types of election-related information that women and men want to receive

CITIZEN'S PERCEPTION OF ZEC'S INDEPENDENCE

Proportion of women (57%) and men (39%) who think that ZEC is an independent body

57%

Women

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODY (EMB)

A larger proportion of women (47.1%) and youth (47.3%) compared to men (32.6%) do not know that ZEC is responsible for voter registration in Zimbabwe

PREFERRED LANGUAGE OF ELECTION INFORMATION

Women and men want to receive election-related information in their indigenous languages

The ZEC has the primary responsibility for voter enrolment and education. Ahead of the 2018 elections, the ZEC conducted a study: *Voice, Choice and Access to Information: Baseline Study on Gender Equity in the Electoral Process in Zimbabwe*¹⁸. The research examines whether there are gender gaps in women's and men's participation in the electoral processes, and in their access to election-related information that helps them to exercise their rights as informed citizens. It further looks at the various barriers to citizens' participation in elections and electoral processes; and assesses whether women and men are willing to vote for women as candidates at the national and local government levels. Key findings included:

- A larger proportion of women (28.9%) than men (17.3%) have no exposure to any form of media at least once a week.
- Men (12.4%) are three times more likely than women (4.5%) to be exposed to some form of media each week.
- A larger proportion of women (47%) than men (33%) had not heard of the ZEC.
- Women are four times more likely than men to be assisted as voters.
- A larger proportion of women candidates (74%) than men (64%) said they were not interested in participating in elections for fear of violence.

¹⁷ Zimbabwe Gender Commission Act.

¹⁸ UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through the Joint Programme for Gender Equality (JPGE) funded by the Embassy of Sweden supported the study.

- 64% women and 59% men said they would vote for a woman presidential candidate.
- Over 80% women and men said they would vote for women parliamentary candidates and councillors. Reasons cited included representation; loyalty; “peace loving” and “knowing community needs.”
- Among the recommendations of the report is a study of the effect of GBV on women's participation in elections.

The Electoral Act states that the Commission shall (a) provide adequate, accurate and unbiased voter education; and (b) ensure that voter education provided by other persons is adequate and not misleading or biased in favour of any political party; and (c) ensure compliance by others allowed to conduct voter education. The Act emphasises that these must be Zimbabwe nationals and entities; that foreign funding must be channelled through the Commission and all voter education materials vetted by the Commission¹⁹. The Zimbabwe Electoral Amendment Act 2018 obliges ZEC to spearhead: “adequate, accurate, gender sensitive and unbiased voter education.”



In response to the findings in the gender baseline study that a larger proportion of women than men, the ZEC and Zimbabwean Women's Rights Organisations (WRO) mounted a spirited campaign encouraging women to register as voters and exercise their democratic rights. In the 2018 elections, The ZEC had a poster outside its offices highlighting the fact that women constituted 54% of the registered voters, and 52% of the population of Zimbabwe.

Civil society

Both ZEC and the ZGC work closely with civil society organisations on gender and elections issues. Zimbabwe has active Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) that have been at the forefront of the 50/50 campaign. The Women's National Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) coordinated a vigorous campaign ahead of the 2018 elections.

WiPSU works at policy level and supports women parliamentarians. The recently established Women's Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE) seeks to “provide women with theoretical and practical training that empower them to run for public office.”²⁰ Gender Links Zimbabwe (GLZ) has worked for over a decade on promoting women's equal and effective participation in local government through the Centres of Excellence in Gender and Local Government. GLZ supports the Women in Local Government Forum (WiLGF), comprising councillors and women in local government administration.

In March 2018, the Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus in partnership with civil society launched the Women's Manifesto with five priority areas: women and economic development, women and social services, transport and infrastructure, access to justice and equal benefit of the law and women's representation in governance. Women from all walks of life converged to share their issues and concerns. An extension of the quota at national level beyond 2023 became the major focus, with WiLGF calling for the quota to be extended to local government.

In May 2018, Zimbabwean women from all walks of life got the chance to meet President Emmerson Mnangagwa on challenges they face at a meeting hosted by WCoZ. Women's representation in politics especially in local government took centre stage. President Mnangagwa reiterated the government's commitment to the African Union Charter which requires that member states have equal representation of women across the board. One measure of political commitment to gender parity at the top most level is the fact that women's representation in cabinet (presently 29%) was the only area of political decision-making to increase in 2018.

¹⁹ This provision was the subject of an unsuccessful court appeal by Veritas.
²⁰ WALPE information brochure, 2019.

Gender Analysis of elections: Several women's rights organisations are members of the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) that represents domestic observers during elections. The ZESN produced a consolidated set of recommendations on the 2018 elections. Gender is mainstreamed into these recommendations. For example the recommendations include:



- The need to develop strong legal [...] mechanisms to encourage and support the adoption of women as candidates so as to ensure gender parity in political and decision-making positions in line with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (SADC PF EOM).
- Several recommendations relate to quotas for women. The AU and Commonwealth recommended moving from reserved PR seats to reserved candidacy seats for women in the FPTP elections similar to Uganda. The Commonwealth Observer Group recommended that the quotas prescribed for women under Section 124 of the 2013 Constitution should be negotiated by the new parliament before its expiration in 2023. The ZESN recommended that Zimbabwe “Institute appropriate provisions in electoral law that makes it mandatory for parties to observe quotas for women.”

In May 2019, the ZGC convened a “**Great Debate**” to reflect on the outcomes of the 2018 elections. This brought together representatives of the Chapter 12 institutions; civil society; political party representatives and other key gender and elections stakeholders. This debate examined several scenarios around electoral systems and quotas to ensure that Zimbabwe rises above minimum standards in 2023.

The role of the media

The 2015 Gender and Media Progress Study measured the proportion of women sources in the media overall, as well as in the political topic category. In Zimbabwe, women comprised 24% of sources overall and 14% of women political sources. Thus, although women constitute over 50% of the population, they only comprise 14% of

sources in the political topic category. The study finds that:

- The views of women candidates are often not profiled or trivialised.
- Male spokespersons of political parties dominate.
- The views of women voters are seldom canvassed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The 2013 Zimbabwe Constitution broke new ground by introducing new electoral systems and statutory gender quotas for increasing women's political participation at the national but not local level. The expiry of these clauses in 2023 shows that the time period is too soon to remove the affirmative action provisions as women's representation has not increased beyond the statutory requirements. This is an opportunity to revisit the immediate issue of Temporary Special Measures, as well as the medium to longer term structural gender inequality issues that underpin women's low representation. Key recommendations include:

Electoral systems and quotas: This is an opportunity for the ministries of gender, justice, constitutional

bodies, the law reform commission and those involved in legislative reform to:

- Review the arrangements at national level, where reserved PR seats have not succeeded in increasing women's representation beyond minimum requirements. Zimbabwe may wish to consider adopting a mixed system with a 50% quota across the board;
- Ensure that local government is included in any new arrangements with provisions appropriate to that level of governance; and begin to address some of the underlying structural causes of inequality that are resulting in women's participation failing to break beyond the minimum standards set by quotas.
- Review of the Electoral Act and embed gender quotas within it (both national and local). Amend-

ment of the Electoral Act to include a provision that obligates political parties to submit 50 percent male and 50 percent female candidates at both national and local government level in accordance with Section 17 of the constitution.

- Review provisions of the Electoral Act that are potentially discriminatory against women.

Electoral laws

Political Party Finance Act and Regulations (Public funding of political parties which can be regulated in such a way as to encourage parties to address women's political empowerment). Laws against VAWE and GBV in politics need to be strengthened.

Political parties: The Electoral Act should require that all parties adopt the agreed quotas and that these are practiced within party structures. In particular, the law should require that parties' field equal numbers of women candidates in FPTP seats; provide equal financial, mentorship and other support to women candidates; as well as ensure the safety and security of women candidates. Adoption of quotas guaranteeing women's participation within political parties internal decision-making structures

Election Management Body: The ZEC should:

- Work together with other constitutional bodies, especially the ZGC, to advocate the necessary legislative reform to improve electoral systems and TSM for women's political participation.

- Develop and adopt a gender policy that governs its own internal practices, the development of gender aware voter education materials and regulations for the conduct of elections.
- Ensure safety and security of all candidates and voters, especially women
- Undertake voter and civic education programmes aimed specifically at women.
- Look at all elections - parliament, local authorities, presidential etc
- Revising how gender is addressed in elections for impact - youth, PLWD, elderly.

Civil society organisations

These should be supported to gear up their watchdog and advocacy role through, among others:

- Establishment of fundraising networks and organisations for women candidates which can provide important seed funds to women in the early stages of seeking the party nomination.
- Monitoring electoral processes from a gender perspective; conducting gender audits of elections and widely publicising the findings.
- Lobbying for electoral reform.
- Building the capacity of women candidates to campaign as well as be effective leaders in office.
- Concerted, well-coordinated 50/50 campaigns at national and local level that lead to a paradigm shift in patriarchal power dynamics that are at the core of women's exclusion.

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