

**REPORT**  
**50-50 Technical Meeting**

**Country: Zimbabwe**

**Dates: 25-26 February 2020**

**Venue: Cresta Lodge Masasa Hotel**



**Honourable guests at the 50/50 technical meeting Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya**

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## **Executive summary**

This is a report on the 50/50 technical meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2020 at Cresta Lodge Masasa, Harare.

The participants of the workshop consisted of the Deputy Minister of Local Government and Public Works, officials from the Ministry of Justice, Zimbabwe Gender Commission, Women in Local Government Forum national executive committee members, Zimbabwe Local Government Association and Civil Society Organizations.

There were 35 participants in attendance, 26 women and 9 men, see **Annex B** for a detailed participants list. The workshop programme is attached as **Annex A**. In addition, at the end of the workshop, participants evaluated the proceedings and the evaluation is attached as **Annex C**.

## **Objectives of the 50/50 technical meeting**

Dr. Sheri Nyakudya, the Director of Ceremonies outlined the objectives of the workshop as follows:

- To gain consensus on the inclusion of local government.
- To debate possible combinations of electoral systems and Temporary Special Measures.
- To agree on the content and modalities for making a submission to parliament.
- To propose a lobbying and advocacy strategy linked to the submission.

## **Process and Activities**

The 2-day programme was characterized by presentations and discussion on the Constitutional Amendment Bill no 2 and possible options for Zimbabwe to take at both the national and local levels in order to lobby and advocate for temporary special measures. This meeting's ultimate objective was to build consensus on the submission of a position paper on increasing the participation and representation of women in local government through lobbying for Constitutional Amendments.

## **Welcome and Introductions**

The Director of Ceremonies, Sheri Nyakudya facilitated introductions of all participants, highlighting that the meeting was an important meeting as it sought to chart the way forward for the inclusion of local government in the Constitutional Amendment Bill. She stated that "we are not saying that we want to take over decision-making positions but we want to build awareness to women and girls that they can lead".

## **Remarks from the Zimbabwe Gender Commission**

Commissioner Obert Matshalaga gave the remarks on behalf of the Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC). He applauded the partnership between Gender Links and the ZGC stating that the strategic partnership sought to conduct dialogue and formulate strategies for increasing women's participation and representation in local government.



Matshalaga gave an overview of the Commission's work for the benefit of those who were not aware of the work of the ZGC as follows:

Obert Matshalaga, Commissioner, Zimbabwe Gender Commission giving remarks Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

- To monitor issues concerning gender equality and to ensure gender equality as provided for in the Constitution.
- To investigate possible violations of rights relating to gender equality.
- To receive and consider complaints from the public and to take such action in regard to the complaints as it considers appropriate.
- To conduct research into issues relating to gender and social justice and to recommend changes to laws and practices which lead to discrimination based on gender.
- To advise public and private institutions on steps to be taken to ensure gender equality.
- To recommend affirmative action programmes to achieve gender equality.
- To recommend prosecution for criminal violations of rights relating to gender.
- To secure appropriate redress where rights relating to gender have been violated; and
- To do everything necessary to promote gender equality.

Matshalaga stated that the constitutional provisions on gender were clear regarding gender equality. He gave reference to section 17 of the Constitution that states that “the state must promote the full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society on the basis of equality with men”. He highlighted that the Commission notes the low representation of women at the local level and this poses a significant challenge to the achievement of democracy and constitutionalism. Matshalaga stated that the decline of women’s representation at the local level over the last 3 elections from 19% in 2008 to 16% in 2013 and 14% in 2018 was worrying as it takes away the progress made towards increasing women’s representation.

Matshalaga lamented the absence of a sound legislative and electoral framework that supports gender parity in local government. While the Constitution of Zimbabwe introduced temporary special measures at the national level which expire in 2023, it did not provide for local government. The Constitutional Amendment Bill number 2 is proposing to extend these temporary special measures for women at the national level for another 10 years. “*The amendments proposals remain silent again on women in local government. This discussion, therefore, comes at an opportune time as it will prepare and facilitate ourselves to input into the ongoing consultative processes on the Constitutional Amendment Bill*”, said Matshalaga. He called for the alignment of relevant legislation in line with sections 17, 56 and 80 of the Constitution which affirm equal participation and representation in all sectors.

He concluded by encouraging all stakeholders to maintain a collective approach and speak with one voice in the advocacy and lobbying efforts towards increasing the participation of women in politics in local government.

### **Opening remarks from the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works**

The Deputy Minister for Local Government and Public Works, Honourable Marian Chombo officially opened the meeting. In her remarks, she stated her pleasure at officiating at the technical meeting. She highlighted the provisions of section 17 of the Constitution on gender balance. Chombo gave a breakdown of the statistics of the 2018 election that saw a decline in the proportion of female councillors from 16% in 2013 to 14% in 2018. Chombo highlighted that she was not surprised that the number of women had declined because only 17% of local



Marian Chombo, Honourable Deputy Minister of Local Government and Public Works officially opening the technical meeting Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

government elections contestants were women. In addition, the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system at local government put them at a disadvantage. In comparison to women's representation in parliament who have 31% representation of women, Chombo reiterated that *"It is a clear indication that there are still challenges and barriers to women's participation in local government"*. She also stated that some observer missions' assessment of women's participation in elections recognized the low representation of women. While applauding the Constitution for its provisions on promoting gender balance in all spheres of life, *"the reality is that women remain underrepresented in politics"*, she said. Chombo stated that *"the Constitution does not contain special measures for women's representation in local government which is fundamental as it drives social service delivery which has a high impact on women's livelihoods because of their*

*caregiving roles."* While highlighting some of the barriers to women's participation, Chombo acknowledged that the call for submissions by the Parliament of Zimbabwe to the Constitutional Amendment Bill number 2 was a window of opportunity to table the concerns of women in local government regards their participation and representation.

*"There is a lot that needs to be done from amending the Constitution and the Electoral Act to move the gender equality agenda"*, she said. She highlighted the need for gender equality clauses to be embedded in political parties' policies. She also urged the media to be gender-sensitive in their coverage of women during elections. Chombo stated that negative media publicity perpetuates stereotyping of women in politics.

In her concluding remarks, Chombo said the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works applauded the efforts by partners in reviving the Women in Local Government Forum. She said the Ministry expects the body to get the necessary support for implementing its activities. *"I hope that this meeting will come up with recommendations that will ensure increased women's participation and representation at the local level"*, she said.

### **Perspectives on electoral systems and gender quotas at the local level**

Colleen Lowe-Morna, the Chief Executive Officer of Gender Links gave the perspectives on electoral systems and gender quotas at the local level. She highlighted that this discussion was meant to pave way for the submission of a position paper to the Parliament of Zimbabwe on the inclusion of local government in the Constitutional Amendment Bill no 2. Her presentation discussed in depth the need to have temporary special measures for women in local government.

Lowe-Morna stated that Article 17 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe stipulates the need for gender equality in all decision-making bodies including parliament, government, and local government. Lowe-Morna also highlighted that the Constitution had a clause for a quota for women in parliament and none at the local government level. Lowe-Morna said it was imperative that temporary special measures are put in place at the local level. She argued that countries with quotas for increasing women's participation and representation were more likely to succeed in increasing the number of women in decision-making than where there were no quotas.

Lowe-Morna discussed in-depth the merits and disadvantages of various electoral systems. Key highlights were that in countries with the First Past the Post (FPTP) women tended to be few. However, the FPTP is strong on building accountability and people can identify with the person they voted for. Likewise, the PR system has its advantages as it gives smaller parties an opportunity to get seats. In countries where there are mixed electoral systems i.e. FPTP and proportional representation (PR), women tend to be on the increase. Lowe-Morna suggested options that Zimbabwe can possibly consider for local government i.e. **reserved seats** and **reserved candidacy**.

Recommendations were that:

1. Clause 11 should read in part that *"Temporary special measures should be included for both the national and local levels until such a time gender parity is achieved"*.
2. Amend section 124 to *"two hundred and ten members elected by secret ballot from the two hundred and ten constituencies into which Zimbabwe is divided and ensure that all political parties shall field, train and support equal numbers of women and men"*.
3. In terms of the possible electoral system to consider, participants were of the view that Zimbabwe assumes the Mauritius model that stipulates each party is required field not less than one-third of either sex. However, in the case of Zimbabwe, it should stipulate that each party should field 50% of either sex. This was a more favourable electoral system as it guarantees equality.

### **Discussion around electoral systems and quotas**

Participants had a discussion on the electoral systems and quotas based on the presentation by Lowe-Morna. One of the arguments that were postulated was that there was no full implementation of the 50/50 principle as per Constitutional requirements.

The Women's Rights Movement led by the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe are against the amendment and have taken a position that there is no need for section 124 of the Constitution but rather implored government to implement section 17. They argued that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission must have the power to make electoral laws that ensure there is parity. They are running advocacy efforts under the #donttouchmyconstitution hashtag.

Another school of thought was of the view that the quota should remain and also push for temporary special measures at the local level. The basis of their argument was that the amendment was being driven by devolution, a concept that sought to regularize the functions of local government and separate powers between local and provincial levels. They were of the view that the amendment was a good opportunity for improving women's participation. There was, however, a need for enabling legislation that ensures gender equality like the Gender Act.

The Ministry of Justice advised that it was important for amendments to be in the Constitution so that relevant legislation can be made or reviewed congruent to the Constitution. The basis was that once issues were included in the Constitution, it would be mandatory for authorities and everyone else to comply.

The discussion also saw the 2 main political parties i.e. the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC Alliance) air their views on the issue of temporary special measures. Angeline Masuku from ZANU-PF was of the view that there was a need for the 60 proportional seats to be maintained.

However, she alluded that this needed to be cascaded to the local government. She questioned why women were denying themselves the opportunity to lead. She denounced the Pull Her Down Syndrome and urged young women to be part of governance processes. Likewise the MDC-Alliance representative, Maggie Ngwenya shared the same sentiments as her counterpart from ZANU-PF. She maintained the need to keep the 60 proportional representation seats and also have more women contesting the 210 parliamentary seats. Regarding the local government, she highlighted that there was a need for political will from all political parties to agree on the methodology for the inclusion of women at the local level.

The technical meeting concluded with partners convening various group work on messaging, lobbying and advocacy for the 50/50 and discussion around the Constitutional Amendment. These discussions culminated in Gender Links in partnership with the Women in Local Government Forum proposing to submit a position to parliament with recommendations for the inclusion of temporary special measures at the local level.

Colleen Lowe-Morna thanked all participants for their contributions which helped to shape the submission being made by Gender Links and the Women in Local Government Forum. She invited all partners to make contributions to the submission in order to strengthen the paper.

### **Women in Local Government meeting**

Following the technical meeting, Gender Links met with the Women in Local Government Forum (WLGf) national executive committee to discuss and review the position paper to be submitted to Parliament on the inclusion of local government in the Constitution. The meeting also focused on developing a work plan for WLGf which will govern the activities for WLGf for the coming year. The work plan focuses primarily on the lobbying and advocacy efforts around the inclusion of temporary special measures for women in local government.



Women in Local Government Forum members reviewing the position paper on the Constitutional Amendment Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

The meeting prepared the Women in Local Government Forum for the impending public debates on the Constitutional Amendment set for April 2020. A review of the position paper was done. The major highlights were that WLGf thought it prudent that since the paper seeks to address the plight of women in local government, the paper should focus on local government with minimal reference to the national context. Overall WLGf national executive committee managed to make amendments to the draft position paper. They also developed a work plan which included lobbying and advocacy messages. The advocacy messaging will run by the theme: **"Let's go 50/50 in local government. Yes, we can"**. The corresponding hashtag for social media campaigns is **#letsGo5050localgovt**.

### **Way forward**

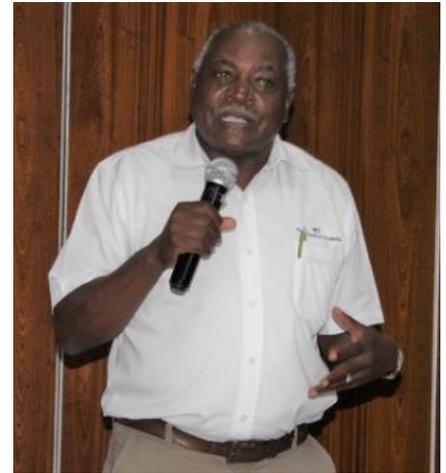
Participants realized the need to finalize the review of the draft position paper before submission to the Parliament of Zimbabwe. WLGf also agreed to participate in the public debates for the Constitutional amendment.

### **Outputs**

1. Draft position paper.
2. Draft WLGF work plan.

### **Conclusion**

The Zimbabwe Local Government Association president Guy Mutasa thanked all the participants for conducting a successful meeting. He reiterated that the factoring in of local government will help to address gender inequality issues. He stated that he was a firm supporter of gender equality, who has a great appreciation for the work that is being done to advance gender equality.



Guy Mutasa, Zimbabwe Local Government Association President giving closing remarks Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

**Annex A: Programme**

DAY/TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO
<b>Tuesday 25 February 2020: Cresta Lodge Masasa</b>		
<b>Director of Ceremonies</b>		Zimbabwe Gender Commission
08:30 - 09:00	Registration	Gender Links
09:00 - 09:30	Welcome remarks and objectives	Zimbabwe Gender Commission /Gender Links
09:30 - 09:45	Remarks by the Chairperson of the Gender Commission- to include overview of 50/50	Zimbabwe Gender Commission
09:45 - 10:30	Official Opening Ministry of Local Government and Public Works	Honorable Deputy Minister, M. Chombo
10:30 - 11:00	Perspectives on electoral systems and gender quotas at the local level	Gender Links Chief Executive Officer, Colleen Lowe-Morna
<b>11:00 - 11:30</b>	<b>TEA</b>	<b>All</b>
11:00 - 12:15	Opportunities for legislative and policy reform for local government vis-à-vis the Constitutional Amendment Bill	Panel Discussion; ZANU PF Women's League; MDC Women's Assembly; ZEC; WIPUSU; WALPE
12:15 - 12:45	Plenary Discussions	All
12:45 - 13:00	Way forward on agreed options	Gender Links
<b>13:00 - 14:00</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>All</b>



**Annex B: Participant list**

**GENDER LINKS ZIMBABWE: 50/50 TECHNICAL MEETING  
25-26 FEBRUARY 2020  
CRESTA LODGE MASASA, HARARE**

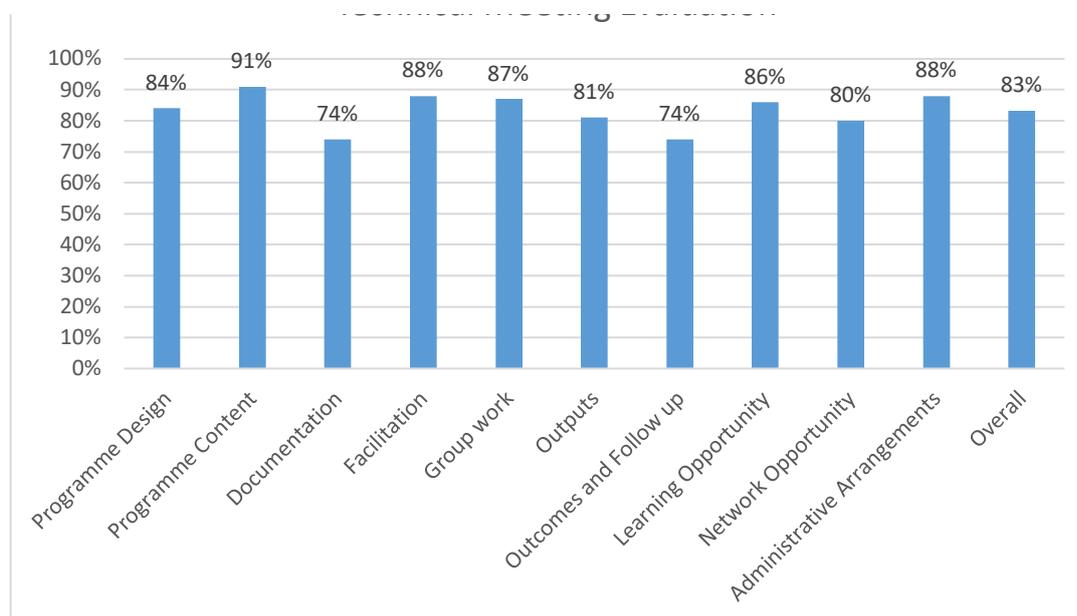
<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>-18</b>	<b>18-25</b>	<b>26-40</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>51-60</b>	<b>60+</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Cellphone</b>
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Mutasa Mutasa G	M							Zilga	President	<a href="mailto:garymutasa15@gmail.com">garymutasa15@gmail.com</a>	
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Name	Sex	- 18	18 - 25	26- 40	41- 50	51- 60	60 +	Organization	Designation	Email	Cellphone
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#### Attendance by sex

<b>Female</b>	26	82.8%
<b>Male</b>	9	17.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Annex C: Evaluation



On the last day of the proceedings, participants were asked to evaluate the meeting. Results in Figure 1, shows that overall, 83% of the participants were satisfied with the workshop with participants' level of satisfaction ranging from a low of 74% on documentation and outcomes and follow up to a high of 91% on programme content. 80% of participants saw the meeting as an opportunity to network. 81% were satisfied with the outputs. 84% of participants were satisfied with the programme design. 86% saw the meeting as a learning opportunity. 87% were satisfied with the group work. 88% liked the facilitation and administrative arrangements.

### **COMMENTS**

#### **1. Which session did you find most useful? Why?**

- Perspectives on electoral systems and gender quotas at the local level.
- Group work on advocacy and lobbying. There was a wide variety of contributions.
- Opportunities for legislative and policy reform for local government vis-a-vis the constitutional amendment bill and electoral systems and quotas. These sessions were an eye-opener.
- 50/50 session. It encouraged women not to be looked down upon in leadership positions.
- Presentation on perspectives on electoral systems and gender quotas at the local level. It was very graphic and detailed.

#### **2. Which session did you find least useful? Why?**

- None.

#### **3. How did the workshop contribute to learning and or sharing??**

- The workshop improved my awareness of equality issues in the Constitution. There was an exchange of great ideas.

- This workshop contributed to my learning as I participated and shared ideas for us to come out with a position paper on having temporary special measures for local government.
- We can now come up with a position paper to submit to parliament.
- Group work revealed a lot of issues that are being lobbied for by other organizations in attaining 50/50.
- Learning about the various electoral systems used to elect political candidates is something that I will share with others.
- Looking at the electoral systems in other countries and comparing them was a great learning outcome.

#### **4. How will you apply what you have gained from this engagement?**

- Lobby for gender equality in partnership with various stakeholders.
- Advocate for the increase in the number of women administrators.
- Cascade the message to all relevant groups.
- By lobbying and participating in local and international events.
- To mobilize women so that we will know how important it is to have women in top decision making positions.
- By encouraging my fellow women to vie for political positions.
- Educate and disseminate information to other women to lobby for the inclusion of women.
- In formulating policies.

#### **5. Any other comments?**

- More engagement meetings are needed with all different players in the field of gender so we talk with one voice.
- A job well done.
- To achieve 50/50 representation in all sectors we need capacity building in a radical manner and approach.
- Keep up the good work. God bless
- A very constructive workshop. Much appreciated.
- There is a need for continuous engagement with all leaders for gender issues to be properly managed.
- Thank you so much for your support. We learned a lot.