Situational Analysis of Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe

Padare/Enkundleni/Men's Forum on Gender

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Women constitute more than half the world's population[1]; that in itself places a glaring imperative that they be represented in a way that is commensurate with that statistic. The reality however is that their participation in electoral and governance processes is far from achieving that. Contrary to democratic and human rights expectation, the existing reality world over is that whilst some steps have been take in that direction especially in the third wave of democratisation of the 1990s, women still have no adequate political and public life representation. Zimbabwe is no exception after years of rapid expansion especially in terms of politically inclusive legislation, the growth seemed to reach a stagnation period. It is thus worth exploring the current state of women's political participation in Zimbabwe to understand the underlying factors, the gaps and possible entry points that may be recommended if change has to be effected efficiently and more sustainably.

This report provides a situational analysis of women's political participation in Zimbabwe. Padare/ Enkundleni is part of a consortium working on a regional scale over the period from 2019 to 2022 to contribute to the strengthening of the participation of women in democratic governance and politics at the local, national, sub-regional, and continental levels. This situational analysis of women's participation in politics (WPP) in Zimbabwe is part of this broader work. The report focuses on national level dynamics of WPP as well as local level dynamics in selected parts of Zimbabwe (Binga, Chipinge, Bulawayo and Harare). The methodology utilised for data gathering were, key informant interviews and group discussions as well as detailed literature review. This helped in creating insights into the current state of women's political participation in Zimbabwe. The study is located at the confluence of feminist political theories and draws from empirical evidence that showcase the current state of women's political participation. It appreciates that Zimbabwe has had a long and intricate relationship with patriarchy that dates from pre-colonial times and the colonial state imported some patriarchal values from western societies and blended them into the indigenous culture.

1.2 The quest for increased participation of women in politics

There is a myriad of fundamental reasons that seek to promote equality of political participation in Zimbabwe and beyond. Firstly, democracy in its truest sense cannot be achieved if there is

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[1] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS

not fair and representative political system. As such excluding women from political positions and processes is counter-democratic. Secondly, without meaningful participation of women in politics their aspirations, wishes and needs will never be satisfactorily met. Thirdly, the world has made considerable progress in dealing with most forms of discrimination in governance such as ethnicity, race, caste and religion. Gender has been the last enduring vestige amongst the forms of discrimination, and as such the world's attention is now focused on challenging discrimination in political participation. Zimbabwe has actively expressed its aspirations through being a signatory to various regional and international human rights protocols on gender equality related to political representation. A case in point is the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Declaration which aimed for at least 30% women in political decision-making by 2005, and 50% by 2015. Other international protocols that emphasise political involvement of women, to which Zimbabwe is a signatory are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Domestication of these regional and international protocols is fraught with challenges for example the SADC declaration of 50% by 2015 is far from being reached in 2020.

2.0 Historical overview of women's political participation

This section provides a short historical analysis of women and political participation in Zimbabwe. This helps frame the current situation in Zimbabwe within a context. To do so Zimbabwean history is conveniently characterized in terms of three major political epochs namely the pre-colonial, the colonial order and the current post-colonial era. This periodization is employed in this study in an effort to create a picture of Zimbabwe's historical relationship with patriarchy and consequently couch the understanding of the participation of women in politics. In traditional societies political positions were the preserve of men. Chieftaincy and other traditional leadership positions were based on hereditary system through sons (Matavire 2012). However, there is overwhelming evidence that women played a critical religio-political order of the day. Scholars like Ferreira et al (2005) argue at length that patriarchy is an import in Africa that imposed colonial rule reversed gains in political and social power that women enjoyed in the pre-colonial setting. In addition, many Zimbabwe ethnic societies ascribed positions of importance to women, some of these traditions can still be seen in the folk tales of strong wise women and also proverbs that assign some reasonable level of social power to women. Traditional religions in Zimbabwe recognized women as the spirit mediums through

whom the spirits and ancestors spoke to the people. Auret (1982) highlights how mediums played an important socio-political role among African communities. The greatest of these in Zimbabwe was Charwe who was possessed by the female spirit of Nehanda which had great political influence in the political order at Great Zimbabwe and the Mutapa state. Charwe possessed by the spirit of Nehanda is credited to have inspired the liberation movement.

In colonial Rhodesia, white men dominated the political landscape and their female counterparts were largely excluded from politics. Amongst black women, the colonial government and African patriarchal systems created a context which largely excluded women from political spaces. This exclusion has continued in post-colonial period especially based on Christianity which was introduced during the colonial period. The colonial system through religious institutions and missionary activities such as Wesleyan Women's Groups and Zimbabwe Methodist Church women's Ruwadzano (fellowship) movement led to domestication of home (Schimdt 1992). The groups were built on the belief that a woman's place was in the home and thus sought to use Christian values to improve women (Ziyambi 1997). Schidmt (1992:145) concludes that, 'The Victorian ideal of virtuous wife, selfless mother, and tidy, industrious housekeeper was the goal for which all African women should be taught to strive.' The husband was inferior to the white master male who according to Ferreira is the top most referent of patriarchy. In Zimbabwe for the white man was the "Baas' meaning the big boss or master and below him was the "madam" which means the wife to the boss who had referent power as the boss's wife and also because of race, below them was the "*pikinini* baas" the son to the boss. White Caucasian women could vote whilst black women could not in colonial Zimbabwe, thus in terms of political participation they were a level above black women. The other defining dynamic related to women's political participation as we see it today can be traced to the churches that came during the colonial times. The church led by the missionaries who came on a civilizing mission also preached the God-ordained supremacy of men and Zimbabwe was converted into majority Christians. Christianity believes in male domination and privilege sanctioned by God. The church thus became an agent of gendered socialization whose impacts are still felt today. The work place; farms, mines, plantations and construction sites were masculine spaces, this meant income differentials, skills differentials and differences in exposure and knowledge about the world outside the household. This all has to be read together with requirement that in colonial time for one to run for office they had to own titled property.

In 1980 Zimbabwe attained independence after a protracted armed struggle in which women and men fought side by side. The expectation of equality in political participation in post-colonial Zimbabwe was high. Women had equally participated in the liberation struggle as soldiers, support staff to war efforts, war collaborators, undercover informers and most importantly they demonstrated an active political culture by voting in the watershed election that ushered the black majority rule in Zimbabwe. Thus it was legitimate to expect gender equality in participation in politics in post-colonial Zimbabwe. After independence, Alexander (1993:160) argues that 'the re-emergence of the traditional leadership was perhaps the most surprising development in rural politics after the war' in Zimbabwe thus questioning 'the extent to which patriarchal power was undermined during the war.' Patriarchy reasserted itself and became the de facto face of the new government. This is reflected in that although more than 50% of the votes which pushed ZANU PF party into office in 1980 came from women, this was not reflected in their actual representation by women in parliament. The patriarchal conception of women as mothers (to reproduce the nation) was further confirmed by the absence of women at the centre of the male politicians who negotiated for the 1987 Unity Accord (Vambe 1995). Table 1 below shows that in the House of Assembly from 1980 to 2005 there were little gains in the percentage share of women in parliament. By 2005 percentage of women had marginally increased to 16%. This is because of multiple factors which are discussed later in this paper. This historical analysis is important if we are to place this situational analysis within its proper context in which the exclusion of women is a historical product of patriarchy and colonization.

Table 1: Gendered Composition of Zimbabwe House of Assembly (1980-2005)

Elections and Appointments	Seats	Men	Women	% of women
1980-84	100	91	9	9
1985-1990	100	92	8	8
1990	150	133	17	11.3
1995	150	129	21	14
2000	150	136	14	9.3
2005	150	126	24	16

Table 2 shows the statistics of representation in the Senate from 1980 to 2005. It should be noted that between 1985 and 2005 elections Zimbabwe did not have a bicameral parliament. In 2005 the senate showed an increase in female participation. Chieftaincy and other traditional leadership positions were based on hereditary system through sons (Matavire 2012). This

system has largely continued in post-colonial Zimbabwe and as of 2018 there were five female chiefs out of a total of 286 chiefs.[2]

Table 2: Gendered composition of Senate in Zimbabwe (1980-2005)

Elections and Appointments	Seats	Men	Women	% of women
1980	40	37	3	7.5
1985	40	37	3	7.5
2005	66	42	24	36.36

It is clear that women have historically remained under represented across the political architecture in Zimbabwe. Table 3 below provides an overview of the state of female participation across different institutions. The period was when Zimbabwe was under a Government of National Unity negotiated between ZANU PF and the two MDC parties after the contested 2008 elections. Even under the GNU the status of women did not improve which shows that among the major political parties there is no difference in how women in leadership positions are viewed. The National Gender Policy launched in 2017 has a priority thematic area focusing on gender, politics and decision making yet women under representation in political participation has persisted.

Table 3: Females in political leadership in 2009

Position	Gender representation
Vice President	Joyce Mujuru
Deputy Prime minister	Thokozani Khupe
Deputy Speaker of parliament	Nomalanga Khumalo
President of Senate	Edna Madzongwe
Ministers	7 out of 38 (18%)
Deputy Ministers	3 out of 19 (2%)
Governors	2 out of 10 (20%)
Members of Parliament	34 out of 210 (16.1%)
Senators	23 out of 91 (37%)
JOMIC	3 out of 12 (25%)

3.0 Conceptual frameworks

This section seeks to define and delineate some underlying concepts that were important pillars in creating the framework of this study. The section also appreciates the possibility of multiple definitions and conceptualizations of certain theories that were used in framing this study and

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[2] https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/08/govts-urged-to-install-female-chiefs/

the consequent contestations associated with that and thus seeks to set some conceptual delimitations.

3.1 Intersectional approaches to women's political participation

This situational report utilises Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality theory and Patricia Collins (1990) matrix of domination. Intersectionality Theory argues that different forms of social inequality, oppression and discrimination interact and overlap in multidimensional ways. Intersectionality in this way can be used to analyse how social and cultural categories intertwine. In our analysis we view societal knowledge as being located within an individual's specific geographic and social location thus context matters when understanding various barriers to participation in governance systems. Transcending these diverse intersectionalities is important in creating our understanding of various dimensions of marginality and vulnerability of women who get into the domain of politics. The Matrix of Domination forces us to confront two key truths: that oppression is created by privilege and that we all occupy some statuses of privilege, regardless of our statuses as oppressed. Providing a framework for understanding oppression as an outcome of privilege forces us to examine the role that individual actors and institutions play in both creating oppression and benefiting from it. Related to that is also the framework by Goetz and Hassim (2003) on women's political effectiveness in exploring the gaps in women's inclusion in politics and their influence in formal arenas and institutions. The framework considers the gendered nature of state formation (and what roles women played such in Zimbabwe war of liberation); looks at role of women (in politics), and how their interests are interpreted and negotiated (post- post-independence) and; analysis of the quantity and the quality of women's inclusion and participation in politics in formal institutions, civil society and informal spaces. We also utilise the Gender Responsive Governance framework to make recommendations for legal, structural, and institutional reforms.

3.2 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is another key concept equally central to this study. It is closely related to the concepts of gender and power and thus it was made central in analysing women's participation in politics. According to Connell (1990:54) the term 'patriarchy defines historically produced situations in gender relations where men's domination is institutionalized. That is to say, men's overall social supremacy is embedded in face-to-face settings such as the family and the

workplace, generated by the functioning of the economy, reproduced over time by the normal operation of schools, media, and churches. Dobash and Dobash (1979) define patriarchy in terms of two elements: structure and ideology. The structural aspect manifesting in the hierarchical organization of social institutions and relations relegating selected individuals, groups, or classes to positions of power, privilege, and leadership and others to some form of enduring subservience. The arrangement advantages others not on the basis of meritocracy or ability to lead but by socially ascribed status that endures over time. The ideology bit supports a hierarchical order, that is backed up by socio-cultural and religious rationalisations. Bunch (1999) concludes that the most enduring enemies of woman's dignity and security are cultural forces aimed at preserving male dominance and female subjugation – often in the name of venerable tradition.

The notion of patriarchy in this study takes into cognisance of the situated realities of women vis-à-vis complex African gender politics. Hence the notion of patriarchy and its universality as espoused in Western Radical Feminist theory is also limited in this context. In this case, African patriarchy is viewed in a differentiated way and in conjunction with other oppressive mechanisms (intersectionality) such as racism, neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, socio-economic exclusion, gerontocracy and religious fundamentalism. Therefore, it is important to re-historicise African women's lives to be able to also how contemporary process of masculine neo-liberal development in Zimbabwe, celebration of militarised and hyper-masculinities, long-established patriarchal traditions, re-invention of the so called African cultures, anti-Westernisation rhetoric and legacies of colonialism all collude to discriminate against women in Zimbabwe. Mungwini (2007), aptly noted that whole move towards cultural conservatism and traditionalism, for instance through traditional leadership institutions in Zimbabwe, is inevitably privileging the male figures and hence strengthening the patriarchal hold on women.

4.0 Methodological approach

This study is based on a qualitative research design that sought to provide nuances and ensure multiple voices of women and men are heard. The qualitative fieldwork was based on telephone and on line interviewing techniques to respond to the limited nature of fieldwork due to COVID 19 crisis and restrictions. This has changed the scope of qualitative research and has led to innovative use of technologies to enhance interaction with research respondents. Whilst the research had initially focused on Binga, Chipinge, Bulawayo and Harare, it had to improvise

and expand to target respondents with access to on line spaces who were not necessarily in the selected research areas. Literature review was utilised to enhance the localised issues around women's political participation in the selected districts. Key informants from the four areas were targeted to ensure that the research had access to the localised dynamics of women's political participation. Whilst there were some unique localised nuances, the research largely showed that women across Zimbabwe face similar challenges and have similar experiences though their responses to the challenges differed especially between rural and urban areas as well as age groups. The following was conducted in the study:

- Key informant interviews with respondents from UNFPA, Batanai: Women Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence, TIZ, UZ, NUST, Padare, lawyers and female politicians.
- Interviews with ordinary men and women including WhatsApp group discussions with male and female university students; men (15) and women (10).
- Systematic analysis of documents related to women's participation in politics. In total 150 documents and over 40 newspaper reports were consulted and some of them are cited in this research. This also included collection of quantitative data on women's participation.
- Legal and institutional review of the gendered dimensions of the electoral system in Zimbabwe.
- Limited cyber ethnography for a week to examine cyber violence against female politicians and those in key decision making positions.

The use of these multiple data collection techniques allowed for triangulation of data. Triangulation was useful in increasing the size of the sample and verifying data from multiple sources. The research thus yielded both a quantitative and qualitative situational analysis that provides a grounded understanding of women's political participation in Zimbabwe.

5.0 Findings and Discussion

5.1 State of women's political participation

On one hand, constitutionally, it is imperative to have political participation, firstly, as a human right, and secondly Zimbabwe is a constitutional democracy supporting gender equality. Political participation is conceived as multifaceted. For instance, writing on the emerging trends in women's political participation in the late 1990s Aili Mari Trip (1999) spoke female political representation and participation in the presidium, parliament and women's political

party formation. The Southern African Development Community Declaration on Gender and Development of 1997 and the Protocol on Gender and Development 2008 speak of political participation in terms of equal representation of men and women politics and decision-making positions at all levels such as in Cabinet; Parliament, Council, Management of the Public Services, Chief Executive Officers and Boards of State-Owned Enterprises/Parastatals as well as the Private sector. Equal participation of both women and men in political decision-making provides a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society, and may as such enhance the legitimacy of political processes by making them more democratic and responsive to the concerns and perspectives of all segments of society (Mlambo et.al 2019). In Zimbabwe, women do participate in political processes, but there presence in these spaces is quite There is always the danger in assuming that the mere presence of women in representative positions guarantees female participation.[3] Women still largely occupy inferior positions because it is believed by both men and women that women lack the capacity to lead. Yet, the doctrines of democratic governance and human rights are premised on the notion of equal participation by all citizens in any country (Hamandishe 2018). The "exclusion of women from decision-making bodies limits the possibilities for entrenching the principles of democracy in a society, hindering economic development and discouraging the achievement of gender equality (RAU 2016). However, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission acknowledged that even with efforts to promote gender equality and inclusion, the representation of women in competitive politics has remained marginal.[4]

5.1.1 Presidency and cabinet

Since independence glaring gender inequalities are permanent features of the presidium and cabinet of the country. The fact that no woman has held the position of president or prime minister clearly shows the unequal gender politics of the Zimbabwean political system. Male domination of the leadership (both civilian and military) structure during the Second Chimurenga explains the lack of women at the apex of the post-colonial government. Just after independence, the government's Marxist-Leninist politics to build a post- independent state based on equality did not extend to gender equality. This was reflected by the presence of one minister (Joyce Mujuru) and one deputy minister (Victoria Chitepo) in the 1980 cabinet. However, for some feminists such as Everjoice Win (2004), Mujuru represented patriarchal

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[3] https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2017/09/22/raising-women-participation-politics-issues-consider/
[4] See ZEC Gender and Inclusion Policy (2020-2024).

interests and promoted femocracy. Contrary to her counterparts Dongo and Mahofa, Mujuru was accorded some sort of respectability (based on her marriage to the late General Mujuru), so her presence in the male dominated political spaces should also be conceived in terms of her privileged identity. After the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) following a Global Political Agreement in September 2008, two women made it into the presidium, Joyce Mujuru (vice president) and Thokozani Khupe (deputy prime minister). However, the overall trajectory did not change as women were still underrepresented.

In 2013, even after the adoption of the new Constitution only four women out of a total of 29 were appointed cabinet ministers. Post July 2018 elections, Table 4 below outlines how women fared in the presidency and cabinet in Zimbabwe. The modest gains by women include having a female Minister of Defence, Security and War Veterans (Oppah Muchinguri) for the first time and also having a woman as the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation (Kirsty Coventry). The overall picture however provides continuities with the past male domination of the cabinet. The cabinet itself is against the provisions of the 2013 Constitution in Section 104 (4) which states that: 'In appointing Ministers and Deputy Ministers, the President must be guided by considerations of regional and gender balance.' Women have progressively been excluded and in this instance the president was restricted with the need to repay male comrades especially in the military that had been instrumental in his ascendancy to power. It is only in ministers of provinces and ministers of state in offices of vice presidents that there was equal numbers of males and females. This is a significant improvement in women's participation because post November 2017 coup, only 3 women had been appointed as provincial governors. Also to note is that, for the first time in history, a woman, Sekesai Nzenza was appointed minister for Industry and Commerce in the November 2019 cabinet reshuffle.

Table 4: Gender analysis of presidency and cabinet in 2020

Position	Number	Number of Women	Percentage of Women
President	1	0	0
Vice Presidents	2	0	0
Cabinet Ministers	21	5	24
Ministers of State	4	1	25
Ministers of State for Provincial Affairs	10	5	50
Deputy Ministers	18	4	22

Sources: https://www.parlzim.gov.zw/about-parliament/who-s-who;
https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2019/11/15/cabinet-reshuffle-fails-to-impress/

5.1.2 Judiciary

The judiciary in Zimbabwe has a long history of male dominance and some of the most seminal court rulings have been detrimental to women's fight for equality. Such rulings include the infamous Magaya vs Magaya case (1999) in which the court's decision upheld customary law in inheritance.[5] This seminal court case and judgement has shaped the debate on gender and the law in Zimbabwe because of its far reaching implications in the recognition of customary law which places women at a disadvantage not only in inheritance but across social, economic and political spaces in Zimbabwe. Table 5 below outlines the state of women's participation in the top echelons of Zimbabwe's justice system. It reflects the situation evident across other sectors. What is encouraging however is that 40% of the Supreme Court judges are women with one of the female judges now the Deputy Chief Justice.

Table 5: Women in the judiciary in Zimbabwe

	Number	Number of Women	Percentage of Women
Supreme Court	15	6	40
High Court	29[6]	10	34.5

5.1.3 Legislature

5.1.3.1 Parliament

The under-representation of women in senate, parliament and local government structures is a persistent feature of the politics of post-colonial Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is ranked number 27 out of 188 countries on the Inter-parliamentary Union's World classification of women in parliament and number 4 among SADC countries. Table 5 below illustrates the historical trends. Zimbabwe's March 2008 harmonised elections represented another setback for greater women's representation. Although the proportion of female candidates contesting the elections rose significantly, the proportion of elected female candidates was still significantly lower compared to all other Southern African countries (WLSA 2009). It was only the GNU that saw Nomalnga Khumalo becoming deputy speaker of Parliament and Edna Madzongwe as president of the Senate. The 2013 Constitution was a watershed in Zimbabwean politics, as it created a legal discourse on equal political participation. Following its adoption, 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 34% women. In actual fact, a total of 123 women were sworn into Zimbabwe's parliament (85 MPs and 38 members of Senate).

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[5] https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/hhrj13&div=11&id=&page=
[6] https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/judiciary-takes-pride-in-celebrating-women

Table 5: Historical percentages of female members of parliament

Year	% of Female MPs
1980	9
1985	8
1990	11.3
1995	14
2000	9.3
2005	16
2008	16.1
2013	34[7]
2018	31

Sources: FAO 2017; https://www.parlzim.gov.zw/about-parliament/publications/history-of-women-parlamentarians; Maphosa et al (2015)

However, the gains made in 2013 were reversed in 2018 as shown earlier. The results of the 2018 election indicated that of the 210 parliamentary seats, only 26 went to women (Batamaucho 2018). In the 2018 elections, women's representation reduced to 31%. The percentage only grew to 31% because of the quota system. This means the actual percentage of elected women in 2018 was 12.3%. The percentage of elected women continues to decrease as political parties are relegating more women towards the 60% quota. The quota system has thus had the negative net effect of reduction in women elected to parliament. The women elected through the quota however do not have a constituency and face problems if they want to engage communities as elected parliamentarians see them as a threat. This has seen the women being call 'BACOSSI[8] MPs' (cheap or of no value). At the same time, male dominance as chairpersons of parliamentary committees was retained as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: List of parliamentary committees' chairs in 2018

Ministry	Name	Gender
Transport	D Garwe	Male
Defence	L Mayihlome	Male
Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development	D Molokele	Male
Public Accounts	Tendai Biti	Male
Environment	C Chinanzvavana	Female
Mines	Temba Mliswa	Male

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[7] For 2013 and 2018 the percentage includes the 60 quota for women mandated by the constitution.
[8] Maphosa et al. (2015:149) argues that, 'BACCOSI stands for Basic Commodity Supply Side Intervention...It was a programme that was initiated by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe at the height of economic meltdown in 2007-2009 where citizens were given groceries at a very low price to enable them to survive.'

Finance	F Mhona	Male
Energy	G Gabbuza	Male
Justice	D Mataranyika	Male
Media,	P Sibanda	Male
Health and Child Care	Ruth Labode	Female
Foreign Affairs	Kindness Paradza	Male
Agriculture	Mayor Justice Wadyejena	Male
Local Government	Miriam Chikukwa	Female
Women	C Madiwa	Female
Education	Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga	Female
Youth	M Tongofa	Male
ICT	Charlton Hwende	Male
Industry	Joshua Sacco	Male

As shown above, Parliamentary Portfolio Committees still reflect gender inequalities. In 2016 RAU had already noted that there were few women chairing these committees, and, of the 20 parliamentary committees, the largest representation of women was unsurprisingly on the Portfolio Committee on Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development. Even in 2018 women remained poorly represented on the Defence, Home Affairs and Security, Media, Information and Broadcasting Services, and Industry and Commerce. The gendered division of labour in the private sphere is also portrayed in the public sphere were women are relegated to seemingly 'feminine' committees.

5.1.3.2 Senate

The Senate has been in existence between 1980-1989 and from 2005. The Senate is made up of 80 senators (6 elected from each of the 10 provinces; 16 chiefs, elected by the provincial assemblies of the Chiefs from the 8 rural provinces; and two elected to represent people with disabilities). In 2009, there were 31% of females in Senate, with 20% being elected (WLSA 2009). The current female representation in Senate is 43.75%, which is still far from meeting the 50/50 gender representation threshold. This is mainly because political parties are failing to equally nominate men and women to the Senate. In terms of intersectionality, representation of people with disabilities in decision and policy making bodies including Parliament, Senate and Cabinet is also extremely low. Only 2 senators represent PWDs in both the Upper and Lower houses (ZEC 2019).

5.1.4 Local government

WiPSU (2018) noted that there is a distinct pattern of reduced number of women in the past 3 elections i.e. in 2008, out of the 740 council seats that were contested, 373 women were elected (19%). In 2013 from a total of 899 candidates 323 women won (16.2%) and in 2018, 1 176 candidates contested and 261 women won (13.3%) (ibid). This means that local government political landscape equally shows masculine and patriarchal tendencies. Men continue to dominate. In 2018 elections, 1156 women (17%), and 5538 men (83%) contested in local government elections (Table 7). A gender analysis of the results showed that representation of women in local government declined from 16% to 14% in the July 2018 elections in Zimbabwe (Gender Links 2018). In terms of geographical distribution, Bulawayo province had the highest percentage of female councillors (28%); followed by Matabeleland South (19%), Matabeleland North (18%), Mashonaland West and Midlands (17%), Manicaland (15%) Harare (14%). The remaining 3 provinces are below 14% with Mashonaland East (13%), Masvingo (10%) and Mashonaland Central province a paltry 6% and, only one local authority (Chipinge Town Council) managed to reach the 50-50 parity target (ibid).

Table 7: 2018 Election participation of women in local government

	No. of women nominated	Total nominated	No. of women	Total elected	Percentage
Local government	1 176	5 620	261	1958	13.3%

Few women become engaged in 'hard' issues such as finance, policy making and this tends to limit the personal growth of women in council, as the 'hard' issues are often seen as the stepping stones to national leadership (ibid). Harare Residents Trust (2013) also reported that Harare City Council has an imbalance in terms of women's representation at senior managerial level and at policy making level.[9] This not only results in gender blind social policies, but also limits the ability of female citizens to demand accountability, justice and equity in service delivery from mostly men who are not privy to their gendered realities. Relegating women to feminine roles in politics has been also a prominent feature of the national political framework because feminine spaces are not centers of power.

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[9] Harare residents trust, 2013. Analysis into the participation of women in local authorities in the 2013 elections

5.1.5 Public service

Ideally, public institutions should be conduits through which gender justice in participation and decision making by citizens should be achieved. The analysis of women in political spaces in both historical and contemporary times shows how misogyny has continued in various leadership spheres. Like other spaces discussed earlier, public institutions continue to be mostly dominated by men, whilst the presence of women is usually morally scrutinized. In 2020 for example women only make up less than 20% of permanent secretaries in ministries. Table 8 below highlights how under Emmerson Mnangagwa there has been an attempt to increase the number of women in key leadership positions. These appointments from 2018 however were negated by the continued imbalance in appointment for other key positions in commissions and permanent secretaries.

Table 8: Selected prominent appointments in 2018

Name	Position and Institution	Gender
Priscilla Chigumba	Chairperson, Zimbabwe Electoral Commission	Female
Selo Masole Nare	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission	
Kglema Motlanthe	Chairperson, Special Commission on Post-election violence commission	Male
Vincent Hungwe	Chairperson, Civil Service Commission	Male
Elizabeth Gwaunza	Commissioner, Justice Service Commission	Female
Vimbai Nyemba	Chairperson, Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe	Female
Clemence Masango	Registrar General	Male
David Murangari	Mineral Marketing Corporation of Zimbabwe	Male
Loice Matanda-Moyo	Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission	Female

Adapted from WCoZ (2019)

As shown above, ZEC has a female chairperson, and it also has four female Commissioners. However, there are other gender nuances that reflect female underrepresentation in management and over-representation in office administration. For instance, only 34% and 24% of women are senior and junior managers respectively.[10] This is Amongst the senior officers 3 (12%) are females yet 53% of office administrators are women. Table 9 below illustrated board appointments.

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[10] ZEC Gender and Inclusion Policy (2020-2024).

Table 9: Selected board appointments post November 2017

Name	Women	Men
Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe	4	4`
Minerals Marketing Corporation of Zimbabwe	3	4
Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC)	2	5
Zimbabwe Mining Development Company (ZMDC)	1	6
Hwange Colliery	2	4
Health Services Board	3	3
Permanent Secretaries in the Ministries	8	12

Adapted from WCoZ (2019)

Beyond the political space, women continue to be underrepresented within other spheres. In 2013, the Ministry of Women's Affairs Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD p8) highlighted that although the space for the involvement of women in peace building and conflict resolution has been provided, the participation of women in peace negotiations is low as demonstrated by the following:

- In the processes leading to the Global Political Agreement (GPA) of 2008 that formed the Inclusive Government in Zimbabwe, there was only one woman in the formal negotiation process.

- Zimbabwe is one of the few countries in the world where the number of female peacekeepers from the police force nearly meets the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations' recommendation of at least 20% female representation, however women's representation on these missions nonetheless still remains low.

- On average women constitute only 25% representation in senior positions in the Police force -an institution with an important role to play in peace building and conflict prevention and management.

It has been observed that contestation for power and relevancy made men more visible, and, although there were, and are, women at the top table, many had to take a back seat, during, for example, the Constitution Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) process, and the GNU negotiations (RAU 2016).

5.1.6 Traditional leadership

Equally disappointing is that the traditional governance institutions remain highly patriarchal and exclusionary for women. In Zimbabwe at present there are only five female traditional

leaders.[11] Despite years of feminist activism, the established custom that abhors female authority in community decision making is still entrenched (Mupfeka 2008). Traditional leaders are instrumental in everyday life in the communal areas where the majority of Zimbabweans still reside. Research has indicated that traditional leaders are also instrumental in rural politics given their sway and have been used successfully by ZANU PF over the years to ensure rural dominance (WCoZ 2019). It is therefore critical that such influential people be supportive of women politicians yet the institution of traditional leadership is patriarchal in nature. Women candidates also complain that traditional chiefs tend to be inhibitive of their political ambitions (WCoZ 2019).

5.1.7 Private sector

Women are also limited regarding the roles they play in key economic decision making entities. For instance, the boards of Zimbabwe Stock Exchange listed companies have 403 directors and only 72 (18%) are women.[12]. This directly relates to political representation because the private sector has emerged as an important space for gaining resources for political campaigning. In noting the importance of funding in elections, Sachikonye concludes that,

> In sum, the fortunes of parties are, by and large, determined by the amount of resources at their disposal. Their capacity to sponsor election candidates and organise effective campaigns is largely determined by access to such resources. The same relates to their capacity to run a party secretariat and to pay party workers regular salaries. Similarly, the capability to advertise in the press depends on whether they have the requisite financial resources. The smaller parties clearly lack such resources (Sachikonye 2006: 34).

Access to corporate funders is thus an important source to run an electoral party and women led parties in Zimbabwe have had serious challenges in attracting this. The small number of women in managerial positions is one explanation regarding how women find it difficult to garner corporate sponsorship.

5.1.8 Political parties

Constitutionally, the realization of equitable participation of women in politics is through political parties. Political parties are the gatekeepers to women's political participation in the

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[11] https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/08/govts-urged-to-install-female-chiefs/
[12] https://www.techzim.co.zw/2018/06/how-many-women-lead-zimbabwes-leading-companies/

public sphere as elected officials, however, there is no much support for gender issues within any political party in Zimbabwe (RAU 2016). The political framework in the country has for a long time been patriarchal and violent. Political parties have largely been operating outside the Zimbabwean Constitution. Even ZEC admitted that in 2018 elections political parties failed to actively encourage or support women's representation as candidates such that by the time political parties submitted names to the Nomination Court, the pool of candidates was heavily gender-biased in favour of men. For example, political parties did not follow the provisions of Section 17 of the 2013 which calls for equal participation of men and women in all spheres including politics. Sakhile Sifelani- Ngoma made the following detailed observations before the elections in July 2018:

> In the National Assembly, 47 political parties fielded candidates, and 20 of these did not field women candidates and two parties fielded only one woman each. A total of 84 out of 210 constituencies will be contested by men only, adding that in local authority elections, 40 political parties fielded candidates, 12 of which fielded men only. Of the local authority candidates, 17% are women and 83% are men out of 6 796 candidates. We are deeply concerned that at this point it appears that the only women that will be in Parliament are the 91 that are required by law. This brazen disregard for the basic tenets of democracy is deplorable 38 years after independence (WiPSU 2018).[13]

Again, of the 17% women contesting the 2018 local government elections, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU-PF) and MDC Alliance contributed 4% each (slightly over half of the women contesting). The People's Rainbow Coalition (PRC) fielded 2% with smaller parties accounting for the balance (Gender Links 2018). Clearly then political parties generally have no culture of constitutionalism but rather uphold patriarchal values and norms. Although political parties are governed by their own internal rules and procedures, these cannot supersede constitutional provisions on gender parity and equal political opportunities. Patriarchy remains widespread, and there seems to be a deliberate reluctance by political parties to appreciate the need for affirmative measures towards gender parity. Women are also given positions that are non-threatening within political parties (RAU 2016). In the 2008 elections the opposition MDC fielded 9 women in rural constituencies where it was not strong whereas ZANU-PF fielded 10 in urban areas where they did not have support.[14] Political parties thus tend to field women in constituencies that they have little chance to win. The situation is

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[13] https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/09/female-representation-in-local-authorities-dips/
[14] https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2008/02/28/women-surpass-30-quota/

compounded by the lack of specific legislation to compel political parties to comply with gender parity constitutional provisions in drawing up party list creates a gap for promotion of equal access to leadership and decision making by women.[15] There is no legal framework which imposes demands or requirements on the political party formation process (ZEC 2019) hence there are difficulties in resolving conflicts, enforcing the code of conduct and a general lack of accountability on the part of political actors. Again, 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 (ZEC 2017).

Political party manifestos are either silent on gender or integrate gender in a tokenist fashion. Table 10 below is a summary of a gender analysis of political party manifestos by Gender Links. However, Gender Links (2018) indicated that none of the political parties' specified how this will be achieved, especially at the local level, or what will happen when the current clause at national level expires in the 2023 elections hence the manifestos seemed more designed to solicit votes from women than to give them a say at the decision making table.

Table10: Gender in political party manifestos

Party	Quota	Gender Specific References in Manifestos	Gender Mainstreamed in Manifestos
MDC-Alliance	The MDC Alliance will guarantee 50-50 representation at all levels of government. Adopting the ZEBRA proportional representation electoral system.	Talks about women's rights, Children's rights, Rights of the disabled. It also alludes to a very important sector of gender responsive budgeting at national and local government.	The manifesto has cross cutting gender issues. Which recognize the constitutional gender provisions and alludes to the Agenda 2030.
ZANU PF	ZANU-PF pledge to ensure implementation of the 50-50 representation in key public and private institutions and encourage local authorities to set up quota for women in the allocation of residential, industrial and commercial space.	ZANU-PF pledges to uplift the dignity of women in line with the Zimbabwean Constitutional 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 mentions that as a development area they envisage to promote equity, equality, gender balance and empowering women, youths, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. They also pledge to uphold and fully apply

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[15] ZEC Gender and Inclusion Policy 2010-2024

			the rule of law, equality before the law and equal access to opportunities for all people in Zimbabwe regardless of race, tribe, gender or religion. ZANU PF highlights the importance of water and sanitation.
MDC-T	No mention of a quota but state that they shall" Legislate and put policies to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women. They also endeavour to ensure gender parity in decision-making positions, especially in the executive arm of government.	Special scheme for promotion of women and youth housing ownership. In addition they also state that they will empower women through 50/50 in educational, employment and promotional processes.	Mention of critical sectors that are of importance to include health, youth empowerment, water and sanitation.

Extracted from Gender Links (2018: 4)

But, it is also imperative to go beyond dominant political parties in the gender analysis. Women also have political ambitions. Grace Mugabe, just before the Coup, had assumed a direct role in the affairs of ZANU PF and even contributed to the expulsion of some of the longest serving party members. Some women have also formed and led political parties. One such case is Joyce Mujuru. After being expelled from ZANU PF, Joice Mujuru went on to set up her own political party, Zimbabwe People First (ZimPF) and later People's Rainbow Coalition. Thokozani Khupe has also led MDC-T. Women such as Linda Masarira and Fadzayi Mahere have also participated in elections as independent candidates.

5.1.9 Other roles played by women in politics

Women also participate as voters in elections. ZEC (2017) indicated that there is no wide gender gap in women's and men's participation in elections as voters. A gender audit of the 2013's voters roll by RAU (2018) showed that 51.93% of the registered voters were women, but there was a significant skew in favour of rural women: about 2,154017 out of the 3,050588 of the females in 2013 were from the rural areas, which was 71% of the total registered female voters, and a ratio of almost 4:1 rural to urban women. However further analysis revealed that there was under registration of young women under 30 (18-19 age range, and only 18% from the 20-24 age group) and a large number of elderly women, 12,920 over 100 years and predominately in the rural provinces. The youth remain on the fringe of Zimbabwean politics

due to socio-economic barriers and gender and age biases within the leadership of political parties (ZEC 2017). On another note, the BVR released by Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in April 2018, showed that 54.3% of registered voters were women.

RAU and IYWD (2018) showed that there was a large increase in the number of young women that registered to vote. Hence, the number of registered voters below the age of 35 stood at 2,371,753 which accounted for 43.8% of female registered voters. However, there was a dramatic fall in the number of female registered voters from the age of 45 to 99 years. At the same time, although women were the majority of voters, only 11% voted for female candidates. An intersectional analysis also shows that people with disabilities are often excluded in political processes such as voting. ZEC indicated that in 2018 elections only 29 803 people with disabilities were registered to vote. Although the country has ratified disability-focused legislation and has adopted national legislation that promotes equal opportunities to PWDs, there are many barriers that inhibit their participation in electoral processes.[16] Besides participating as voters and candidates, women also serve as election officials and political reporters. However, regarding the July 2018 elections, it has been reported that female election officials were subjected to intimidation and hate speech (RAU and IYWD 2018), whilst the exclusion of women from political reporting contributed to the proliferation of repressive false narratives on women, which in turn precluded their access to the political domain.[17]

As noted earlier, governance institutions such as traditional leadership and the traditional judicial systems continue to be patriarchal. Even in spaces were traditional authority is not present such as the newly resettled areas, patriarchy has been transplanted and reproduced itself leading to marginalisation of women from key decision making positions (WLSA 2017). In church politics men are influential as prophets and other leaders. Women are excluded from church boards, and lead women and children's ministries. It was also noted that women also populate village committees related to their gender roles such as WASH and Child Protection Committees. For instance, at community level, women act as committee members or secretaries in School development committees. In the study by WCoZ (2019) women consulted in FGDs in Murewa pointed out that women perform administration work for village heads, and rarely become chairpersons or financial administrators of Village Development Committees

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[16] ZEC Gender and Inclusion Policy 2020-2024
[17] ZEC Gender and Inclusion Policy 2010-2024

(VIDCOs). In the same study, in Kariba it was noted that even if women are in village committees they cannot freely express their opinions because the Tonga culture still expects women to be submissive or they simply face male resistance in executing their duties.

5.2 Gendered analysis of the political and policy architecture

Zimbabwe has a legal framework that values gender equality and equity in politics. The country ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1991 and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1995. It also adopted both the Dakar Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration in 1995. Zimbabwe is also part to the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender and Equality in Africa. In 1997 Zimbabwe ratified the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Gender and Development Protocol and subsequently ratified the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which was adopted by SADC in 2008. The ratification of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development also signified the state's commitment to gender equality. The Protocol stated in Article 12 that: State Parties shall endeavour that, by 2015, at least 50% of decision making positions in the public and private sectors are held by women including the use of affirmative action measures as provided for in Article 5. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also require countries to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life", and calls upon states to "adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels". However, Despite the provisions in the Agenda 2030 SADC Gender Protocol for "special measures" the uptake is patchy across the region and in Zimbabwe (Gender Links 2018).

5.2.1 Constitution of Zimbabwe

The 2013 Constitution provides the basis for understanding the legal architecture for women's participation in politics. The fundamental pillars essential for gender-responsive good governance and the respect for human rights and women's rights as human rights are enshrined in the Constitution (ZEC 2017). However, on one hand, Zimbabwe's constitutional democracy is premised on gender equality. On the other hand, when it comes to women participating in political governance structures, customary laws and traditions often create barriers to the fulfilment of constitutional provisions. In the constitution political participation is recognised as a human right. In pursuing gender equality within the political realm in 2013 the new Constitution adopted the following:

Table11: Constitutional sections that relate to women's political participation

Section	Narration	Implication
104(4)	In appointing Ministers and Deputy Ministers, the President must be guided by considerations of regional and gender balance	Although there is no clarity of what constitutes gender balance this section provides for women to be included within the cabinet.
120 (2)(b)	Elections of Senators must be conducted in accordance with the Electoral Law, which must ensure that the Senators referred to in subsection (1)(a) are elected under a party-list system of proportional representation-- b. in which male and female candidates are listed alternately, every list being headed by a female candidate.	This section ensures that the senate achieves a 50/50 gender representation. This approach can be instrumental to achieve gender parity in other spaces such as commissions and boards of parastatals.
265(1)(g)	Provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities must, within their spheres-- g. ensure the fair and equitable representation of people within their areas of jurisdiction	There needs to be clarity on measures to be taken to ensure equitable representation.
124(1)(b)	For the life of the first two Parliaments after the effective date, an additional sixty women members, six from each of the provinces into which Zimbabwe is divided, elected through a system of proportional representation based on the votes cast for candidates representing political parties in a general election for constituency members in the provinces.	In the findings section of this report we provide evidence from the field around how women at the grassroots view this provision and whether they want it renewed.
245 and 246	Establishment and composition of Zimbabwe Gender Commission	The commission is critical in ensuring that gender protections afforded by the constitution are followed and implemented including the political provisions. It is also responsible for recommending affirmative action programmes.
56 (2)	Women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.	This in essence promotes women's right to equal opportunities in all spheres of life.
17	The State must promote full gender balance in Zimbabwean society, and in particular-- a. the State must promote the full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society on the basis of equality with men; b. the State must take all measures, including legislative measures, needed to ensure that— i. both genders are equally represented in all institutions and agencies of government at every level; and Civil service recruitment ii. women constitute at least half the membership of all Commissions and other elective and appointed governmental bodies established by or	This section provides a starting point to lobby the government to follow the Constitution. The Mnangagwa government has a long way to go to achieve gender parity in all commissions and agencies of government.

	under this Constitution or any Act of Parliament; c. the State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must take practical measures to ensure that women have access to resources, including land, on the basis of equality with men	
17 1(c)	The state and all institutions and agencies of Government at every level must take practical measures to ensure that women have access to resources, including land and on the basis of equality with men	As noted by respondents in the research economic challenges hinder women's participation. It is important to advocate on these rights to economic equality provided in the constitution.`
16 (3)	The State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must take measures to ensure due respect for the dignity of traditional institutions.	As well, the constitutional provision on culture and traditional institutions and leadership (Section 16) limits the empowerment of women through ownership and control of land.
67	1. Every Zimbabwean citizen has the right-- a. to free, fair and regular elections for any elective public office established in terms of this Constitution or any other law; and b. to make political choices freely. 2. Subject to this Constitution, every Zimbabwean citizen has the right to form, to join and to participate in the activities of a political party or organisation of their choice; b. to campaign freely and peacefully for a political party or cause; c. to participate in peaceful political activity; and d. to participate, individually or collectively, in gatherings or groups or in any other manner, in peaceful activities to influence, challenge or support the policies of the Government or any political or whatever cause. 3. Subject to this Constitution, every Zimbabwean citizen who is of or over eighteen years of age has the right a. to vote in all elections and referendums to which this Constitution or any other law applies, and to do so in secret; and b. to stand for election for public office and, if elected, to hold such office. 4. For the purpose of promoting multi-party democracy, an Act of Parliament must	Bill of rights thus provides protections for women to participate in politics

Adopted from WCoZ (2019)

However, the Constitution contains no special measure for women's representation in local government, which has remained far below 30% (ZEC 2017), yet this is a space where more women can have better chances of participating. This is because there are more positions at local government level and political campaigns are cheaper and based mainly on community relationships when compared to parliamentary elections. WiLGF, a structure of the Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZiLGA) has long made the case that the failure to extend the

constitutional quota to local level is a violation of Article 17 of the Constitution (Gender Links 2018). The quota system is also exclusionary to young women mainly because it caters for older women already established in political parties (Hamandishe 2018). There is also a serious problem in that the current quota seemed to have been a way to appease the women's movement - the mere fact that a quota outside the 210 constituencies was created is testament to the art of politricking, gamesmanship and lip-service played by the dominant power brokers in political parties.[18] Maphosa et al (2015) argued that the women parliamentarians are often ridiculed and thus it is tokenist in nature. Writing on the quota system, WCoZ (2017) also observed that we continue to live under a patriarchal state that views rights as concessions or favours to be given for legitimacy or support at a particular moment, rather than as entitlements that it is duty bound to honour.

5.2.2 Electoral Act and Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

The Electoral Act [Chapter 2:13] of 2018 provides for the electoral framework in the country. In terms of section 155 of the new Constitution, certain principles of electoral systems should be met in letter and spirit whenever there is a national election or referendum (Zimbabwe Election Support Network, ZESN 2013). It is quite positive for women that every Zimbabwean has a diversity of political rights (see Table 12 below on the Electoral Amendment Act 2018).

Table12: Electoral Amendment Act 2018

Section	Narration	Implications
3b	(b) every citizen has the right— (i) 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; (ii) to join or participate in the activities of and to recruit members of a political party of his or her choice; (iii) to participate in peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of Government;	This provision is the basis for advocacy for an electoral framework that respects and protects women's rights to participate in political processes.

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[18] https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2017/09/22/raising-women-participation-politics-issues-consider/

	(iv) to participate, through civic organisations, in peaceful activities to influence and challenge the policies of Government;	
5 (d1)	In addition to the functions set out in section 239 of the Constitution, the Commission shall be responsible for (d1) ensuring that gender is mainstreamed into electoral processes	These provisions are commendable but require further elaboration on mechanisms required to ensure the mainstreaming of gender.
11 (2) (a) (i)	(2) Commissioners and the Commission's employees and agents shall— (a) exercise their functions in a manner that— (i) promotes conditions conducive to free, fair and democratic elections and referendums and the enhancement of gender equality in connection therewith:	This is another provision which places emphasis on gender mainstreaming in elections.

Adopted from WCoZ (2019)

Zimbabwe has a mixed electoral system with a First Past the Post (FPTP)[19] electoral system and a Constitutional provision (Section 124) for an additional 30% of seats for women only (distributed on a PR basis, i.e. according to the percentage vote achieved by each party) that will expire in 2023 (Gender Links 2018). At the local level, the tier of governance closest to the majority of women, elections are run solely on a FPTP system. Section 124 of the Constitution (creating a mixed system at the national level) does not apply at the local level. However, despite the above picture, there are also quite a number of problematic aspects. For example, the minimum age requirement of 40 years excludes young women from contesting as candidates for the presidency and Senate. In the local government, the requirement for nomination that the candidate should not be in debt to Council is problematic for a number of women who owe money because of a myriad of factors.[20]

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[19] Citizens vote not just for the party, but also for the candidate who represents the party in a geographically defined constituency
[20] Electoral Amendment Act, 2018 (No. 6 of 2018) 119 (2) (h)

Apart from the electoral law, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) was constituted by Constitutional Amendment 19 (Act 1 of 2009) and its role and mandate elaborated in Sections 238 and 239 of the Constitution (2013). Before that a new electoral management structure (in operation till 2004) had been established after independence consisting of the Delimitation Commission, responsible for the delimitation of electoral districts, and the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC).[21] The Registrar-General of Elections managed the elections, provided support by the Election Directorate. In 2004 ZEC was then established as an independent body in line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. The Chairperson is appointed by the President after consultation with the Judicial Service Commission and the Parliamentary Committee on Standing Rules and Orders. Currently there are five women and four men in the Commission. However, the Commission has faced a number of criticisms. ZEC admitted in 2017 that citizens regarded the Commission as partisan and non-independent in its operations. It was perceived to be aligned to ZANU PF, employing members of the military and using political party members as election officers/observers.

On a positive note, Zimbabwe's Electoral Act (Chapter 2:13 Section 5 d (1]), requires the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to mainstream gender into electoral processes. In that regard, ZEC has trained Gender Focal Persons (GFPs), undertaken capacity building trainings on gender for ZEC staff and facilitated dialogues with disabled people's organisations (DPOs). The Commission has also undertaken gender researches such as the Baseline Study on Gender Equity in the Electoral Process in Zimbabwe (2017) and the Post-Election Gender Survey Report (2019). ZEC has a Gender and Inclusion Policy (2020-2024). ZEC's Gender and Inclusion Policy (ZGIP) seeks to ensure that the needs of women, men, youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and other groups are fully taken into consideration during the conduct of the Commission's duties. For instance, during voting processes in 2018, expectant and nursing mothers, the elderly, and PWDs were given preferential treatment, and where necessary assisted to vote.

5.2.3 State Gender Institutions

One of the positive outcomes of the Marxist-Leninist politics in Zimbabwe was the creation of a Ministry for Community Development and Women's Affairs in 1981 to cater for women's

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[21] https://www.zec.org.zw/pages/history

issues. However, in broader terms, even with the support of various organizations such as the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, the ministry was never particularly powerful within government, but provided a valuable platform for the building of a gender consciousness and the exploration of feminist issues (Esoff 2013). The ministry did not particularly focus on a nuanced critique of patriarchy and women's participation in political processes. It did not articulate gender politics but rather supported gender conformity. From 1989 to 1993 the Gender Department was housed in the office of the President and Cabinet and the Department of Women Affairs was placed in the Ministry of Political affairs. With the formation of the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Cooperatives, still the gender department was headed by the minister of state in the president's office. Again, in 2000, the Ministry of Youth, Gender and Employment was established but was later renamed Ministry of Youth and Employment Creation. In 2005, the ministry was renamed the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development. Again, the ministry was renamed (Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development), removing small and medium enterprise development when Olivia Muchena took over the ministry. Currently, the ministry is called the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises, the gender component has been taken out, not without implications.

In a study by WCoZ in 2019, women participants were not satisfied with role of the ministry in the following manner:

- Besides having a low presence in communities, the presence of gender coordinators was regarded as just for decorative purposes.
- The presence of male gender coordinators was regarded as a setback in advancing women's questions around various issues. The idea was that men cannot speak on behalf of women.
- Women spoke about elitism and argued that the ministry was politically affiliated and captured.
- The ministry is urban focused, and its focus was also women centred.
- The ministry was incapacitated and has been affected negatively by the changes in leadership.

However, others argue that the Ministry has a local presence, but this has not translated into any meaningful changes for women, particularly in terms of political participation (RAU 2016). Currently, the ministry has no mandate to address women and gender issues. The

mission now is to create and maintain an enabling environment that promotes vibrant micro, small and medium enterprises and cooperatives. Its overall functions do not in any way speak to promoting women's empowerment and political participation.

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission is also an important part of the governance framework. The Zimbabwe Gender Commission was established in terms of Section 246 of the Constitution and operationalized through the Gender Commission Act of [Chapter 10:31] with an overall mandate to promote and ensure gender equality as provided for by the national Constitution. Among other issues, the Commission has raised concerns regarding political violence. In March 2018, it noted there were heinous acts of political violence aimed at intimidating the democratic contestation of ideas and silencing the voices of women in politics, which exacerbated the disparity between men and women in politics and decision making positions.[22] In the 2018 elections:

> The Zimbabwe Gender Commission set up a Gender Observatory, which was a mechanism for gathering evidence and documenting women's experiences throughout the electoral cycle. It was also a protection and response mechanism for electoral violence against women before, during and after elections. Its membership included other independent Commissions (Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, National Peace and Reconciliation Commission and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission), Government Ministries, security sector actors, civil society organizations, women's organizations, and the academia.[23]

However, from the WCoZ (2019) detailed study, it was revealed that the Commission is incapacitated and it was struggling regarding its mandate. Showing that this Commission was not taken seriously, it received a measly budget of approximately $100 000 (RAU 2016). It is also not decentralised hence it rides on other government departments and civil society organisations, making it susceptible to manipulation hence derailing their gender mandate. The Gender Commission is not independent as it has to report to the Minister of Women Affairs (ibid). Matyzak (2015) highlighted that the Gender Commission could be an important agency for implementing change, but it is evident that the government, as with other Independent Commissions, has been reluctant to provide the Gender Commission with truly enabling legislation, in fact, the Gender Commission Act leaves the Commission more in the position

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[22] http://kubatana.net/2018/03/28/condemnation-forms-politically-motivated-gender-based-violence/
[23] Personal notes from interview with Zimbabwe Gender Commission in 2018

of a sub-department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs than a truly independent commission. It has thus done very little to promote women's participation in politics. Commission has not tackled the various structural impediment to women's political ambitions which are outlined later in this report.

5.2.4 Women's parliamentary caucus

Another important institution housed in Parliament is the Women's Caucus. The Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus (ZWPC) was launched in October 2001 in response to the SADC Parliamentary Forum initiative. The aim of establishing a Women's Parliamentary Caucus was for women parliamentarians to rise above party politics and address issues of common concern as women. The committee has been involved in many activities geared towards promoting gender equality and women's participation.

Table13: Roles and achievements of the Women's Caucus

Area of focus	Achievements
Legislative	• Gender Mainstreaming in Legislation - ZWPC reviewed existing gender insensitive legislation and policies • Lobbied for Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 17 Bill- passed in September 2005, i had far reaching consequences on the status of women • Lobbied against Section 23 of the Lancaster House Constitution – as part of the Declaration of Rights hence government was to treat men and women equally with respect to allocation of land (50/50)– Land reform
Increase of Women in decision making positions	• Main Agenda of the ZWPC in 2005 was to achieve 30% women representation in Parliament and for a women's quota – lobbied political parties • Representation rose from 10.6% - 17% in the House of Assembly • Senatorial Elections held in November 2005 achieved 36% female representation • 7th Parliament representation stood at 18.2% and in the 8th Parliament it stood at 34%
Constitution making process 2009 - 2013	• Active participation of women • ZWPC conscientised all women in Zimbabwe on what women should advocate for in the new constitution • Established a pressure group during COPAC known as the G20 which also monitored all processes • ZWPC lobbied all women on the eve of the 2nd All Stakeholders conference to speak with one voice on issues affecting women • A new gender sensitive national constitution
Capacity Building	• Leadership

	• Gender responsive budgeting
	• Legal analysis
	• Economic and political empowerment

Source: Parliament of Zimbabwe (2013): https://www.parlzim.gov.zw/about-parliament/womens-caucus

In March 2018, in partnership with women civil society groups they 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. By 2020 it was clear that most aspects outlined in the manifesto were still a pipe dream especially women's representation in governance. Government buy in and political will to implement suggested programmes from civil society remains lacking.

5.2.5 Women and gender organisations

Women activists and organisations also do subscribe to the agenda to empower women in all decision-making structures within the various levels of society. A variety of organizations focus on gender, with their interest ranging from advocacy to protecting women's rights and promoting the equality, empowerment and political inclusion of women. Women's post-war political activism started to take shape in the 1980s with women organising in opposition to the Zimbabwean state. Political activism emerged, for instance, in response to Clean up Operations and repeated attempts to repeal the Legal Age of Majority Act as well as protests against the stripping of 'improperly' dressed women. This led to the establishment of robust women's groups such as Women's Action Group, Women and Law in Southern Africa, The Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, Musasa Project and Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association in the 1980s and early 1990s. The women movement was exceptionally strong after Independence moving into the 1990s, largely a result of post-independence euphoria, combined with a strong vision for the future, a clear idea of issues that needed to be prioritised women from all sectors of the community and political divide coming together on issues (RAU 2016). Women political activists invoked international instruments and channelled energy into both claiming and protecting women's rights with regard to full political and economic participation. During the same period, transnational feminist movements and the work of UN influenced several women organizations in the country to support women's political and economic participation. In that regard several women leaders engaged with radical

political perspectives, for instance during the 1985 UN Women's conference in Nairobi, 1994 Cairo Population Conference and the 1995 Beijing Conference.

However, as Zimbabwe plunged into socio-economic and political upheaval in the latter part of the 1990s, conditions for women's political participation became increasingly challenging. By then, the state's open hostility meant that women activists were targets of state-sponsored violence. Therefore, the late 1990s became a crucial time for organising and activism by women's political activists, at the same time it was a period marked by the rise of the opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change. A prominent demand during this period was also a new Constitution. However, spaces for the pursuit of a new Constitution were male dominated. A counter response was the formation of the Women's Coalition in 1999, which subsequently culminated in the drafting of the Zimbabwe Women's Charter (a series of demands to ensure full citizenship and participation). The Coalition managed to campaign for a no vote that contributed to the rejection of the draft Constitution in February 2000. The Zimbabwe Women's Charter boldly proclaims that "women must have the right to participate fully at all levels of political, civic and community life. Women must be made aware of these rights. Government and all political parties must ensure that women participate equally and represented equally in all national and local decision making bodies. They must have a system so that women hold the same number of positions as men." Increasingly this oppositional stance infuriated a state whose credibility was being called into question (Esoff 2012).

In the main, women's political activism became even more subdued and precarious, if we are to consider the violent elections that occurred from 2000-2008. RAU (2016) pointed out that the influence of the women's voices became less visible after the 2000 referendum as the women's movement changed direction and tone as intimidation, violence and state reprisal increased. Activists such as Bev Clark, Amanda Atwood, Janah Ncube, Nokuthula Moyo, Catherine Makoni, Tsitsi Matekaire, Thoko Matshe, Maggie Makanza, Petina Gappah, Gugulethu Moyo, Everjoice Win, Beatrice Mtetwa, Priscilla Misihairambwi, Grace Kwinjeh one way or the other faced ridicule, physical violence by state apparatus, body shaming and taunts about their private lives (Magaisa 2008). WCoZ (2017) also noted that besides state intimidation and brutality, the women's movement is fragmented mainly due to the political polarization that characterizes Zimbabwean society.

Nonetheless, in the context of state authoritarianism and repression on one hand, and limited Constitutionalism on the other, women and gender organizations have continued to provide spaces for citizens' participation. For instance, WLSA has continued to engage in action research based on women's voices and stories to enhance women's participation in leadership and politics. Working with women in various regions of the country, the organization has produced knowledge on the state of and constraints to women's participation, which has become their basis of interventions (WLSA 2009), other organisations and the state. The discourse of women's participation, mobilisation of and support to women to participate in politics has also remained important for Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU), The Women's Trust, Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA), Women Action Group (WAG), Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ). WiPSU facilitated the creation of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus in 2001. INGOs such as UNWomen have also played a critical role. For example, The National Gender Forum/Gender Theme Group is coordinated by UN Women in Zimbabwe. It brings together actors from the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Zimbabwe, women non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Government of Zimbabwe (represented by MWAGCD), to strategize on the implementation of various areas of critical concern to gender equality and equity (Tandira 2019). To note is also the emergence of young women's organizations to support young women's political participation such as Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT) and Institute for Young Women Development (IYWD). University based young women's platforms also tackle young people's political voices. The emergence of a men's movement to champion women's rights mainly through the work of organisations such as Padare should also be noted.

It has been noted that key to the gains made on behalf of women's interests and needs in Zimbabwe from the first decade after independence up to the recent adoption of the new Constitution came from networks and alliances (see Esoff 2013). At the same time, the women's rights movements have been full of divisions and contestations. Ideological fissures and fragmentation have emerged around certain aspects, driven also by fragmented over the ensuing political polarization that has characterized Zimbabwean politics and society. They have not been inclusive of women from all spaces and places, given that women have differentiated identities. Generational and inter-generational tensions are also evident. Eerdewijk and Mugdza (2015) noted that the second generation of feminist movements have become de-politicised, too professionalised, hence they embrace the gender equality discourse over the real politics of women's rights. This is the generation that has sought to balance the

radical feminist principles of the majority of the first generation and the need to achieve gender equality and therefore balance in society (ibid). The emerging third generation young women's movements, their location at the intersection of geretocratic politics, patriarchy and economic marginalisation also means that they are not able to easily identify and compete with long established women's movements. However, they seek to re-politicise the feminist agenda, tackling both the obvious political issues of women's rights in the public sphere, but also takes on the challenges young women face both at personal and public levels to assert their rights.

5.2.6 National Gender Policies

At the turn of the century the government seemed progressive by having National Gender Policies (2004, 2013, 2017). There was no gender policy guidance before that. In 2004, a National Gender Policy was promulgated to: Mainstream gender issues into all sectors in order to eliminate all negative economic, social and cultural practices that impede equality and equity of the sexes; Strengthen links between Government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector in mainstreaming of gender in the respective sectors; Develop, maintain and provide gender sensitive information and gender disaggregated data for use in planning and project implementation at all levels and in all sectors; Promote equal and equitable access, control and ownership of resources in order to address gender inequalities; Promote equal advancement of women and men in all sectors; Create equal opportunities for women and men in decision making in all areas and at all levels; Promote the projection of both women and men's efforts and contributions in national development; Establish the institutional framework to ensure implementation of the Gender Policy as well as the monitoring and evaluation of its impact; and Strengthen the institutional and legal capacity to deal with gender violence, inheritance and land property rights. The 2004 Gender Policy put in place Gender Focal Points in all Ministries and parastatals. In 2013 a National Gender Policy (2013-2017), steered by the Ministry of Women Affairs was enacted. This second policy sought to address the shortcomings of the 2004 one and the emerging issues prevailing under the changing political, economic and social contexts at local, regional and global levels. In 2016, the National Gender Policy was revised to include issues agreed in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995such as Gender, Constitutional and Legal Rights; Gender and Economic Empowerment and; Gender, Politics and Decision Making.

5.3 Challenges facing women in politics

The factors outlined in this section are discussed thematically. They are however interlinked and women often are at the intersection of these multiple factors at any given time. This leads to complexity in any analysis on women's continued lack of participation in politics. Any programming that seeks to promote women's participation needs to recognise this complexity and innovate ways that enhance the tackling of multiple issues at the same time. It is not enough to focus on the factors individually given that they are all interlinked and require conceited multi-pronged approaches as outlined in the recommendations section of this paper.

5.3.1 Cultural norms and societal chauvinism

Patriarchy as a cultural system largely explains the continued challenges faced by women who want to participate in politics. Patriarchy ultimately is a gendered power system: a network of social, political and economic relationships through which men dominate and control female labour, reproduction and sexuality as well as define women's status, privileges and rights in a society (Chakona 2012). The term 'patriarch', understood traditionally as 'the father' or 'chief of a clan', captures the dominant position of men in society and the social inequalities that exist between men and women. Cultural norms based on traditions and religion relegates women to the private sphere. Women's roles are seen as being supportive to their husbands by providing reproductive and social productive roles (Powley 2007). WCoZ (2019) argues that experiences of patriarchal controls of women continue to be mediated by marital status. Marriage is commonly used to define a proper woman in many societies. Chiweshe (2016) highlights how patriarchy utilises the practice of *lobola* payment to place married women in submissive or subordinate positions and limit their mobility in political and economic spheres. In this research male participants who were interviewed overwhelmingly thought that because of the polarisation of politics in Zimbabwe and stigma, men would not be comfortable with their wives participating in politics. Below are some of the narratives:

> I personally would not want my wife to be a politician if l am not also a politician. If l am into politics that is fine. I will explain why. For one to get good platforms for visibility there must be someone working behind the scenes, propping you up financially. This person must have interests, personal interests. It is hard for one to get someone willing to do such work for free. These 'interests' (if they are not coming from me) can be source of conflict between me and my wife. Anyone who must have interests with my wife, especially interests that would see her attain such positions of influence such as politics, can only come from me. If these interests come from someone who is not me, it's hard to explain what such interests would eventually

lead to. Put simply, politics is a dicey game, very slippery. It needs very strong support anchors. If l am not a politician myself, I do not see how l will stand such pressures. But then someone else (other than me) can't do it if l me the husband is there. Secondly, politics is about plotting, manoeuvring and positioning one self. I could not stand it seeing my wife coming home late, getting late night calls, etc. because she is plotting, positioning herself or manoeuvring. It is just too dicey and uncomfortable.[24]

Remember when a wife is out there in the public she is representing you and your name. You have to be careful and make sure that your wife is adequately skilled and prepared for politics otherwise she will embarrass you.[25]

I do not want my wife near Zimbabwean politics because it is full of manipulation and abuse of women. I think that for women to succeed in politics especially when they are young they have to exchange 'favours' with senior male politicians.[26]

As shown above, men are not comfortable with their wives' active participation in politics. The responses ranged from those who are willing to be supportive if the politics was different and those who outright forbid their wives from participating in politics. It is clear that most male respondents have a problem with their partners or female relatives participating in politics. The major reason outlined is the nature of politics in Zimbabwean which is described as not conducive for women. Whilst it seems the men are concerned with the safety and protection of their loved ones, they are perpetuating the stigma that women are weak and thus unable to tussle in politics.

5.3.2 Lack of support from family and intimate partners

The research provides different narratives from both male and female respondents who allude to the lack of support systems for women participating in politics. This lack of support makes it difficult for women to succeed in politics because of the multiple roles they play. Without a support system women find it difficult to balance the demands from both the public and private sphere. One young respondent noted:

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[24] Male anonymous respondent, Harare
[25] Culture and Heritage expert, Chinhoyi
[26] Male anonymous respondent, Chipinge

I have seen that for us women you are forced to make choices early about what you want and what to follow. We grow up being taught to seek a good husband and thus marriage becomes an achievement which is why we have big parties called weddings to celebrate it. For young women it becomes the most important thing in your life and being active in politics does not work well for someone looking for a husband. Women in politics have negative stereotypes especially young women. The men see you as a sexual object and they actively harass you whilst the public only see your success as a result of sleeping with powerful men.[27]

Men unlike women have the support of the whole family especially their wives who will ensure that the household and other issues are taken care of. They do not have to worry or feel guilty of leaving the children or the family as they spent days away from home. A woman has to worry about all these things and often the wider extended family actually accuses women of abandoning their children and families.[28]

5.3.3 Political violence

Walby (1980) argues that patriarchy systematically utilises violence as a means to subjugate women. In politics, actual violence or the threat of violence is deployed as a means to scare women from the political arena. At a meeting focusing on, "Women's participation in Elections," Reyhana Masters, from Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) argued that:

Violence is a major push away for middle class women; the political environment is not currently conducive for people entering space. Women are also objectified and seen as sex objects, their contributions are not viewed in any manner other than that and this has forced many of them to stay away.[29]

Whatever the source of violence, a spouse, community or state, it is detrimental to women's participation at all levels in Zimbabwe. Research and Advocacy Unit (2018) observed that there has been an endless cycle of women victimization when it comes to voting or being elected for political office or within political parties. This type of violence against women over the years includes:

- According to Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2019), in 2001, there were 75 women whose rights were violated in Zimbabwe, 151 in 2002; 217 in 2003; 229 in 2004; 154 in 2005 259 in 2006 and 1 323 in 2007.

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[27] Young woman, anonymous, Bulawayo
[28] Woman, anonymous, Harare
[29] https://www.hivos.org/news/women-in-zimbabwe-face-barriers-to-equal-participation-in-politics/

- During the 2008 election, Reeler (2017:31) argues that there were, 'individual cases in which severe abuse of women is described but provides no breakdown of the gender distribution. However, the report does comment that there are reports that gang rape was widespread in Mashonaland and Manicaland...16% of the victims were women. Another report suggests that as many as 2,000 cases of rape during the period March to June 2008.

- The Human Rights Forum reported that 21% of the victims between March and June 2008 were female, but has no reports of rape. Zimbabwe Peace Project does not give a clear indication of the percentage of women for the period March to June 2008, and reports rape and attempted rape as less than 1% of the total violations recorded.'

Violence is a pervasive part of the electoral processes in Zimbabwe. It is violence which was also largely identified as a deterrent by both male and female respondents in the current study. Box 1 below outlines the experiences of Thokozani Khupe to highlight women's experiences with violence. Speaking on the 2018 election, Women in Politics Support Unit director Sifelani-Ngoma argued:

'So the violence against women candidates during the 2018 elections was not only physical, but also structural. Structural violence can be described as failure by political parties to have rules that are inclusive of everyone plus women. Other forms of violence on female candidates observed were physical violence, and even verbal and cyber violence.'[30]

Structural violence speaks to the institutionalisation and normalisation of systems within the electoral and political party system that actively act against women who wish to participate. This includes the work of party leaders that allow sexist actions and languages that lead to women shunning politics. Cyber violence was also evident during the 2018 election with women suffering from cyber-attacks and abuse. The attacks centred on women's looks, marital status and other stigma related to being feminine. To better understand this one has to only visit the Facebook page of Linda Masarira which is a microcosm of the type of cyber abuse women in politics face in Zimbabwe.

Box 1: Case of Thokozani Khupe and the MDC

> The ugly face of political violence began to manifest itself on Khupe when she announced her wish to lead the MDC-T after Tsvangirai's death. Her ambition attracted violent attacks and threats were made on her life. The violence worsened during Tsvangirai's funeral

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[30] https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/06/women-bear-brunt-of-political-violence/

> proceedings at his rural home in Buhera. Khupe's personal assistant Witness Dube said she could have been killed simply because of her ambition. "Tsvangirai's funeral turned out to be the worst nightmare for Khupe because rowdy youths affiliated to the Chamisa faction threatened to burn her and her vehicle. The bigger context of their fury was her wish to be on the late Tsvangirai's throne. It was clear misogyny (hatred for women) and people even chanted that the MDC-T cannot be led by a woman," Dube said. "For the better part of the funeral proceedings, she was holed up in a hut as the rowdy youths threatened to burn the hut and shouted that she was a 'dissident'. She managed to escape after the intervention of diplomats and Red Cross International officials who rescued her. They threatened to burn her vehicle, and she had to return to Bulawayo even before Tsvangirai's body was lowered," he said.

Source: https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/06/women-bear-brunt-of-political-violence/

Violence also leads to young women shunning politics. YETT (2017) noted that overt and covert violence, including threats of economic deprivation, is also a key factor restricting the youth from participation and 76.6% of the youth in their study thought violence plays a key role in affecting their participation in elections. Combating violence require political will on the part of government through the police, National Prosecuting Authority and judiciary working with political parties to educate, arrest, prosecute and deter political violence acts. The challenge is when the state itself becomes accused of perpetrating gendered violence on political activists. One example is the case in May 2020 where three MDC Alliance female activists (Joana Mamombe, Netsai Marova and Cecilia Chimbiri) were allegedly arrested after a demonstration in Harare but were later taken into bush by armed men, put into a pit, severely beaten, forced to eat human excreta, sexually assaulted and raped.[31] This deliberate and purposeful violence aimed at women's bodies in horrific sexual trauma in many ways scares women away from politics. In an open letter to the president, human rights lawyer, Beatrice Mtetwa, concludes:

> …gendered nature of these violations where it is clear that these women were targeted for these violations because they are women who have chosen to participate in the country's politics. The attacks on them is therefore clearly designed to dissuade young women from engaging in politics outside of the ruling party.[32]

5.3.4 Concept of '*hure*' as a political weapon against women

The term '*hure*' has been progressively used for the surveillance of women and exclude them from public spaces (Chiweshe 2015). *Hure,* loosely translated means whore or woman of loose

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[31] https://www.bigsr.co.uk/single-post/2020/05/16/BSR-Concerning-abduction-and-torture-in-Zimbabwe
[32] https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-opinion-sc-columnist-byo-185626.html

morals. WCoZ (2019:14) shows that '…women [are] called *hure* if they became politicians or aspired to become so…it was observed women would have penetrated male spaces, thereby challenging patriarchy. It is about male perception of woman's upward mobility that causes violence.' A female student highlighted the following:

> Whenever a woman shows ambition and is assertive in what she wants to achieve patriarchy has a term for you. Women who wish to participate and challenge men in the public sphere are suddenly labelled *hure.* This is like a nuclear bomb for women who are raised in a society that moralises their every action. No one wants to be a *hure,* a woman of loose morals yet participation in politics comes with this implied moralising. Once you start on a political path, the label may stick and this can lead to serious social repercussions especially if you are married or you wish to get married.[33]

This term has been used by both the ZANU PF and opposition parties to discipline female politicians who are seen to be challenging the status quo. This system of slut shaming has faced some resistance with women such as Misihairambwi-Mushonga wearing a T-shirt printed with the word *hure*, when she formally registered Khupe's candidacy for president in 2018.[34] The appropriation of the notion of *hure,* in this case was criticised by various sections of the society, yet in terms of women's political activism it is a long established strategy of defiance or rebellion against patriarchal control.

5.3.5 Sexual harassment

There are multiple ways in which sexual harassment is a deterrent to women's political participation. Firstly, sexual harassment is a part of parliamentary life for female politicians. Ngwenya (2019:3) quotes Misihairambwi-Mushonga a former member of parliament who argued 'female MPs were being harassed in the Parliament by fellow male Parliamentarians by the type of language used, how they were treated and sexually suggestive comments'. Theressa Makone an opposition Minister once received comments from the former President himself in the Parliament. The former president said, "Who and what is Makone? Is it a girl or a boy? The problem is that most of these in women are so ugly that it is difficult to recognise them".' In 2019 Joseph Chinotimba, a ZANU PF parliamentarian called opposition parliamentarian Thabitha Khumalo a prostitute (*hure*).[35] There are numerous other examples that highlight how women in the highest law making institution in the country are constantly facing sexual

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[33] Female student anonymous, Harare
[34] https://www.news24.com/Africa/Zimbabwe/zim-election-female-candidates-face-scathing-abuse-20180727
[35] https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/main/mayhem-in-parliament-as-chinotimba-labels-tabitha-khumalo-prostitute/

harassment. This shows that even women in political positions and with assumed political power are not protected from sexual harassment. The problem with harassment is that is makes women shun politics as they are not protected from harassment.

Secondly, sexual harassment is linked to what Transparency International Zimbabwe (2019) has called sextortion. The TIZ survey showed that 57% of female respondents are solicited for sexual favours in exchange for jobs, positions, medical care, services and contracts. Whilst the study does not directly speak to female politicians it shows that sextortion is also part of the political sphere. There are many allegations of powerful male politicians demanding sexual favours from women in return for political power. Another part of sexual harassment is misogyny. Misogyny is an old strategy that has always benefited patriarchy at the expense of women. For instance, young unmarried women such as independent candidates Fadzayi Mahere and Linda Masarira, experienced sexist critiques (largely from men) about their eligibility to be politicians, given their lack of husbands (Hamandishe 2018). Others have also commented that during the 2018 election season, women's private lives were publicly scrutinised and demeaned, as misogyny and sexism took centre stage.

5.3.6 Money in politics

Money is an important weapon of political control in Zimbabwe and gendered access to the market place and capital work against women to a large extent. The impact of money in politics works negatively against women because of their historical exclusion from the economic sphere. Zungura and Nyemba (2013:205) argues that, 'the aspiring Member of Parliament gives to the voters which might be beer or monies for projects. Women are poor hence the need to support them financially especially during election time if an increased participation of women in politics is to be realised.' Speaking to an aspiring primary candidate from ZANU PF it was clear how money plays an integral role in Zimbabwean elections. Box 2 below outlines her story:

Box 2: Narrative on the impact of money in elections

I was competing in the ZANU PF primaries in a rural constituency and being a war veteran I thought the party would support my candidacy. The only problem was that one of my primary opponents was the wife of a military boss. She had cars to campaign through the constituency including fuel and a team that was moving with her. Compared to my campaign, she could afford t-shirts and to buy food and drinks for people. It is difficult to compete with that. She always used her connections to remove my name from the ballot paper. My name had to be written in during the by election. The party does not provide support for

campaigning at primary level and this makes it unfair when you compete with people who have access to resources.

5.3.7 Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities occupy an intersection of multiple oppressive systems which makes it difficult for them to access political positions. Political parties do not have a quota or any policy framework to include women or people with disabilities within their structures. In the Senate however the proportional representation has a quota of two senators representing people with disabilities.[36] In the 2018 election there were women with disabilities who were keen to participate in elections but they later withdrew because of the harassment and polarisation.[37] The challenges faced by women with disabilities with political ambition are multiple and a community organiser for people with disabilities in Epworth argued:

> People with disabilities are not homogenous neither are we silent or hidden. We are speaking on issues that affect us but politics is still a difficult space to penetrate. There are many challenges and mainly the lack of finances to actually campaign is the biggest. If you have finances people will listen and vote for you. I believe that all the challenges we face from stigma and people looking down on people with disabilities also play a part. Also being a woman adds to the disadvantage in the eyes of the voters. The electoral process in Zimbabwe is not also geared towards people with disabilities for example access to information is difficult. Political parties are also dominated by men and it will be difficult for a woman with disabilities to compete with them if she has no funding.[38]

The situation is made worse by the fact that the parliament building itself is not friendly to those with disabilities.[39] In interviews with youths with disabilities in Epworth in 2018[40], it was clear that they face multiple challenges that excluded the young women from political spaces. This included lack of knowledge, finances, support and access to political positions.

5.3.8 Negative cooptation

It is clear that women are mostly included in power structures as a tokenistic attempt to portray equality. This cooptation of women leads to a situation in which women are negatively included as window dressing. Most of the respondents in the current research indicated that women in the political arena in Zimbabwe are largely occupying this tokenistic space. One respondent

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[36] http://kubatana.net/2018/08/20/party-strengths-new-parliament-election-watch-41-2018/
[37] https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/10/why-marginalise-women-in-politics/
[38] Community organiser, Epworth, Harare
[39] https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/mps-slam-parlys-inadequate-arrangements/
[40] Personal notes 13/11/2018

argued: 'At the moment in Zimbabwe women are largely included as a tokenistic measure. These women have no power and are chosen largely because they are not seen as a threat to the status qou. In all major political parties, women who threaten or question the masculine status qou are often sidelined.' At all levels of politics in Zimbabwe it has become customary to have a women's representative in any committee. A Harare based lawyer interviewed in this research noted:

> Women are still largely seen as window dressing in political institutions. There is always that one woman chosen to represent all women in a tokenistic manner. Usually the woman chosen is not listened to or is not effective. Her performance is now used to judge other women and it becomes a self-fulling prophecy that women are not effective in political positions.[41]

5.3.9 Lack of female solidarity

Several researches indicate women are the majority of voters in Zimbabwe yet female candidates in the presidential election in 2018 garnered less than 2% of the vote. RAU (2018) argues that in the 2018 election, 54% of registered voters were women but only 11% of voters cast their vote for a female candidate. Women thus voted mainly for male candidates. This can be explained by the fact that the major parties all had male candidates and it is difficult for female run parties to gain the financial and political support to compete in elections. At the same time there is systematic mobilisation of women (mostly by men) to fight other women in politics as a strategy to thwart female solidarity. Beyond this, Everjoice Win (2004) suggested that the identity of being a woman was not enough for women to support each other. In Tsholotsho district women who wish to participate in elections face negative attitude from fellow women.[42] Despite all of the possible benefits that women could gain from having women political representatives, a fair number of women still do not support women politicians. This has resulted in all the aspiring women candidates who contested in July 2018 elections losing the local government authority seats in Tsholotsho district.

5.3.10 Pitting women against women

Zimbabwean politics is filled with examples of the patriarchal political system using women to eliminate other women. Pitting women against each other has been a way to not only exclude militant or seemingly independent women in favour of those propped by party elites. An example is how Zanu PF in 1995 elevated Vivian Mwashita against Margaret Dongo and also

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[41] Legal expert, Harare
[42] Community gender advocate, Tsholotsho

in 2014, then first lady, Grace Mugabe led the campaign against then vice president Joyce Mujuru (see Box 3 below).[43] In both cases it elevates the assumption that women are their own worst enemies and justifies the many stereotypes against women in politics. In the MDC, 'May [2018], the main opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is alleged to have overseen irregularities in a primary election that saw its favoured candidate Joana Mamombe push out Jessie Majome. Majome was reportedly told she was "old and should retire to the countryside to herd donkeys".'[44]

Box 3: Grace Mugabe vs Joyce Mujuru

Within ZANU PF, Joyce Mujuru, a veteran of the liberation struggle was the first female vice president in Zimbabwe was accused of leading a faction attempting to topple Mugabe. She suffered multiple public attacks from the wife of then president, Grace Mugabe. The attacks by the Mugabe's and their allies contained specific derogatory messages and dog whistles laced with misogynistic statements about her body and sex life.[45] These attacks mirror the often used attacks against women in powerful positions. The impact was to further entrench the stereotypes about women being unreliable leaders. It had the effect that since then ZANU PF has not elected a woman into the top three positions in the party. In December 2014, factional wars that have plagued ZANU PF came to a head leading to the expulsion of senior political figures including then vice president Joyce Mujuru (Chiweshe 2017).

Source: WCoZ (2019:5)

5.3.11 Lack of female role models and political sisterachy

Related to the above is another factor that explains the continued female exclusion from politics is the lack of female role models to act as an inspiration and guide for young women. As in the case of Majome and Mamombe above what emerges is a political sisterachy in which women who are in powerful position use their power to exclude other women whom they view as competition. Balance (2019) alerts us to the 'pull her down syndrome' which leads to women acting against each other in furtherance of male political ambitions. Oyewumi (1997) for example spoke about sisterarchy denoting the hierarchies that exist amongst women. Amina Mama (1995) also talks of femocracy, where women in leadership fail to challenge patriarchal practices but create a clique that focuses on its own interests than those of marginalised women. Win (2004) shows how in 1998, Joyce Mujuru had said there is nothing like equality between men and women. She has thus been regarded as a femocrat eager to create a 'femocracy' in Zimbabwe without questioning underlying unequal gender relations in society.

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[43] https://africanarguments.org/2018/07/11/boys-allowed-7-faces-zimbabwe-patriarchy/
[44] https://africanarguments.org/2018/07/11/boys-allowed-7-faces-zimbabwe-patriarchy/
[45] https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2014/11/19/grace-attacks-on-mujuru-hit-new-lows;
http://www.sundaymail.co.zw/dr-joice-mujuru-unmasked/

5.3.12 Lack of access to media and negative media portrayal of women

One of the fundamental challenges facing female politicians in Zimbabwe is both the unequal media coverage and also unfair media coverage laced with stereotypes. The 2009 Women and Men in Zimbabwe media study conducted by Gender Links showed alarming disparities in gender difference in the media sector. The study found out there are six times as many men as women in Zimbabwe media houses survey and also that only 17% women are in editorial departments in the media, way below the regional average of 42% (Gender Links, 2009). A media expert interviewed indicated the following:

> The media has two fundamental roles when it comes to women in politics. Firstly, the media provides women with a platform to sale their ideas to the electorate. The media gives aspiring politicians the chance to grow their political brand and is an important access to the electorate. At the moment the media is skewed against women. Secondly, the media provides an opportunity to fight the stigma surrounding female politicians. At the moment the media plays a pivotal role in entrenching negative stereotypes of women in politics.[46]

ZESN (2013:47) argues that in the media, women's voices were clearly relegated to second place behind their male counterparts in most election-related stories, providing an accurate reflection of the prevailing male dominated political environment in Zimbabwe.

5.3.13 Intersection of age and gender in political participation

Intersection of age and gender in political participation was particularly important in this research as it also targeted student politics at universities in Zimbabwe. Discussions and interviews with students showed that gender remains central to politics at university level. A male student representative indicated that there are a few female students who participate in student politics because of the unethical, often violent and masculine nature of the politics. Women who participate have thick skins and some have been successful. Student politics mirror national politics when it comes to women's participation in politics especially in terms of violence as barrier to participation. Another male representative highlighted how female students participating in politics are subjected to cyber bullying, body shaming and attacks on their character especially accusations of being sexually loose. RAU and IYWD (2018) also observed that older women seem to be doing little or nothing to encourage young women's participation. CEADZ (2018:8) also noted that the youth's disillusionment with the election

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[46] Media expert, Harare

results could negatively affect their faith in elections and participatory democratic decision-making processes whilst some youth may decide to disengage completely from democratic participation processes. YETT (2017) also noted youth disillusionment with leadership failure and lack of visible youth representation in leadership positions, as well as economic resource constraints.

5.4 Voices from the field: Experiences of women in politics in Zimbabwe

This section of the report focuses on providing the various voices of the participants in the research. It builds narratives that seek to provide a grounded understanding of how women experience politics within a Zimbabwean context. The narratives provide a rich tapestry focusing on how female politicians are perceived, why people generally do not vote for female candidates and the lived experiences of female politicians. Given that the study focused on localized voices in Binga, Bulawayo, Chipinge and Harare the narratives tend to be similar across the sites, the context is however different. As such the study found that in Bulawayo, women's experiences cannot be understood outside the historical marginalisation of the region and the unresolved issues of Gukarahundi[47] and as a respondent noted, '…in a region that witnessed the Gukurahundi atrocities in the recent history of our country and some of those scars from such things would make women from our region to fear participating in politics especially when threatened with violence.'

In Binga, the major challenges are around polygamy and how culture dictates a woman's position to be under her husband. One villager speaking to a news reporter in 2017 summarises women's position as, 'The woman's responsibility is childbearing and satisfying her husband sexually. Refusing a husband sex is taboo and one can be punished for that.'[48] The level of control of patriarchy through traditional institutions on women's political ambitions is also evident in rural parts of Chipinge. In Chipinge, just like Binga, poverty is also an important factor in limiting women's access to politics. Poverty intersects with lack of education, lack of political knowledge and lack of access to political power brokers, as one key informant noted, 'for rural women, their role is to sing and ululate. They are not expected to have political ambitions.'

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[48] https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2017/04/23/cultural-beliefs-perpetuate-spread-hiv-binga/

5.4.1 Male perceptions on women's political participation

It is important to highlight how men perceive women in politics currently as this shapes the cultural norms that impact on women's political participation. Male perceptions on women's political participation provide important insights into the challenges faced by women. This is because men in patriarchal societies shape women's access to public spaces including politics. The narratives below outline some of the perceptions emerging from the field. They portray varied opinions around women and their ability to participate in politics. There is a general perception that women are not supposed to be politicians because of the dirty nature of the Zimbabwean politics. The men's focus group discussion respondents felt that women should stay away from politics as much as possible as it will corrupt their 'otherwise good nature'. In their view this was not discriminatory but rather a way to show that they are invested in protecting women from the filth of Zimbabwean politics. This form of benevolent sexism pervades most male narratives on women's political participation. Some of the narratives are outlined below:

> My opinion is that women in politics belong to specific political parties so that what they do is seen through the prism of their party. So in general terms it is difficult to separate them from the failures of their political parties.[49]

> I do believe that some parties just involve women in politics as tokenism and window dressing so as to be politically correct. When men feel as if the women in politics are mere appointees, they tend to silence them by threatening withdrawal of the appointments.[50]

The Grace Mugabe effect post 2017 cannot be underestimated. Her aggressive actions in dealing with political enemies especially through public ridicule became a way of dismissing female candidates. She became the measure for all female politicians and for the militaristic patriarchal state, a stark example of the perils of women involvement in politics. For other respondents Grace Mugabe became a scapegoat to promote the continued exclusion of women. In line with this, one of the key informants argued that:

> I think it is a reflection of the major problems facing our societies that we even have to ask whether women should be active participants in politics. It is like asking whether women should breath or eat. There is often the misconception that women cannot get 'dirty' like men and they are 'weaklings.'[51]

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[49] Male, anonymous, Harare
[50] Male, anonymous, Bulawayo
[51] Gender expert, Harare

The narratives were similar for men in different locations, classes and professions. What is clear is that there are specific stigmas which affect how men view women in politics. Firstly, women in politics are seen as tokenistic, weak and unfit for politics. Secondly, most men are technically in support of women participating in politics but are afraid that the politics as currently constituted is not suitable for married women. It is however suitable for married men, showing the hypocrisy and double standards attached to men and women in politics. This is aptly summarized by a respondent who argued:

> Our political landscape is violent and toxic. Women in politics have to deal first with the misconceptions of that they have to provide sexual favours to the gate-keepers for them to be in politics. This limits their participation as family members, their husbands and other people will always oppose their participation. We have also observed many forms of political violence sometimes resulting in some people losing their lives and when women see such events it scares them from participating.[52]

There was however an undercurrent of sexism amongst most male respondents. Some respondents however were openly sexist and accused women of using sex to make it in politics. One such respondent speaking on the rise of Joanna Mamombe in the MDC argued:

> We do not have evidence but rumours exist, but even if you were to look at her it is clear. Jesse Majome was the voters' favourite but this young babe [derogatory language] came like a blazing fire and 'charmed' [derogatory language] the party big wigs.[53]

This idea of women in politics as loose sexually has been used as a way to discourage women's participation in politics. The sentiment from the various discussions with some men in this research centred around the idea that women are incompetent, emotional, weak and thus unable to hold leadership positions.

5.4.2 Female perceptions on women's political participation

The study also to understand the perceptions of ordinary women on the participation and experiences of female politicians. Some of the narratives in this study indicated that women are involved in stigmatizing other women involved in politics. They also show that women in Zimbabwe generally have a negative attitude towards female politicians. Most respondents highlighted that politics is dangerous for women. One of the respondents argued that:

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[52] Sociologist, Harare
[53] Male, anonymous, Harare

> The end of the political life of Zimbabwean women has recently been prison, shaming and violence. It is becoming a norm. Ask Prisca Mupfumira who was targeted for doing what other male ZANU PF politicians continue to do at alarming levels.[54]

There is also admiration of women in politics especially their courage to compete in the murky waters of politics. One of the respondents from Bulawayo argued:

> I admire women who go into politics especially here in Matabeleland. It is a harrowing task dealing with all the problems related to politics. Imagine having to deal with marriage and politics. Having to deal with people talking behind your back and saying nasty things to you. In many ways you have to be strong like men.[55]

As outlined earlier, there were also women who were critical of women's participation in politics. The narrative below from a respondent in Harare shows how at times women act in furtherance of patriarchal norms that exclude women from politics. She argued,

> I do not think it is a good idea having my wife/partner participate in politics. I think that once a woman takes an active role in public sphere they are bound to apply the same ideas at home where they will challenge the husband's authority. Married women should stay away from politics.[56]

Some of the respondents were also highly critical of women in politics. The arguament was that women in politics are usually used as pawns in male power struggles. Women were argued to need men to be politically relevant in the major political parties. One of the key informants argued that:

> Women in politics are loud mouthed and often used to fight male battles. Look at how in ZANU PF Chimene, Grace Mugabe, Mahofa and even Muchinguri were used to settle factional politics controlled by men. Who takes such people seriously? They are followers and tools used for political expediency.[57]

Another ordinary woman speaking on what women politicians should do to excite other women to vote for them noted the following:

> They should speak clearly in a way that show they understand our issues. "*Handiti muri kuona tiri panze kuine Corona iyoyi and handingagari mumba nekuti nzara haizvizive zve lockdown izvozvo* (You see we are out here (selling) despite the mandatory Corona lockdown because we still have to feed ourselves).[58]

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[54] Female anonymous, Harare
[55] Female anonymous, Bulawayo
[56] Female anonymous, Harare
[57] Aspiring female politician, Harare
[58] Female anonymous, Harare

The implication is that at the moment women politicians are not speaking to issues and interests that concern women but rather their political parties. Generally, the women felt the politicians are alien to their area and do not know their needs and so are not capable of representing them or making any difference in their lives. They could not distinguish between men or women candidates but rather political candidates in general. Asked whether they think having female candidates would make a difference, one respondent noted: *"If she is someone from this area who knows our needs, not these ones who come when its election time."*[59]

Other respondents had a more revolutionary approach to change the male domination of politics. Such women argued the need for women to be politically organized and to build their own political coalitions geared towards promoting women's interests and issues. One such respondent highlighted that:

> I have lost support for women in political parties especially the ruling party who continue to participate and prop up systems that have systematically abused women; from rape, violence and torture. There is a point where women have to say enough is enough; we are the majority; let us form our own parties and put our representatives in power.[60]

There were also other women who had disengaged from politics arguing that they had not benefited in any way from politics or elections. Such women were disillusioned by politics and saw it as a waste of time since it did not solve the challenges in their everyday lives. A woman from Harare who once lived in rural Guruve also highlighted how fear of violence also affected female voters. She argued: "*In Guruve, it was dangerous if people were to suspect your voting preferences or that you do not want to vote. So I learnt that, if you stick out and become too visible you will be alone and exposed to violence when the voting is ended.*"[61] Most women are thus reluctant to actively participate in the political processes because they fear violence.

5.4.3 Experiences of female politicians

The study interviewed eight women involved in politics at different levels and from different political parties. These experiences provide important insights that build on the various challenges women face which are outlined earlier in this paper. Women are constrained to the domestic sphere and political participation is seen as male pursuit. In Bulawayo, a key informant highlighted:

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[59] Female anonymous, Harare
[60] Key informant, youth advocate, Harare
[61] Female anonymous, Harare

Women in politics in our region present an interesting picture of our political landscape. Women are the ones that attend political rallies in numbers, they cook, they mobilise other people to participate and do other activities that make such events successful. However, at the end of the day they are not voted into various positions. Our politics is still dominated by "strong men" who act also as gatekeepers and at the end of the day limit women's participation. Because of these strong men in our politics, the general public then assumes that women who go into politics in Zimbabwe would have had to sleep with those men in control. Our politics in Zimbabwe is also polarised not only on political lines but also on tribal grounds and for women from our region that is largely marginalised in most areas to make it into politics becomes a toll order.[62]

Another female politician in Harare narrated her experiences below:

Also society calls women who get involved in politics prostitutes. I wanted to be an MP in Mt Darwin and there was hope because people gave me support, however, a friend in the party when they saw my papers warned me that I was going to be made someone's 'wife' [insinuating that to succeed I was going to be a girlfriend to one of the top politicians] but that is good, you see that kind of thinking. Hate amongst women in politics themselves is just too much. When have you heard of ZANU PF and MDC women meeting] to discuss issues to do with women since they are representing us. In parliament women from ZANU PF don't raise issues that are affecting women.[63]

The narratives point towards largely negative experiences by women in the political sphere in Zimbabwe. It adds to the continued low numbers of women willing to take part in politics. Women in politics have similar stories all centring on the sexist nature of party politics. In a personal conversation in 2018, a female politician narrated here experiences position politics highlighting that:

Women have no voice, they are supposed to be there and be girlfriends to political party leaders which I refused. I have a personal motto that I don't date people that I work with, is was the same even when I worked for the railways. You will find that the men in political parties "chuff" you, if you drink beer they will invite you for a drink so that they manipulate you afterwards. I have a reputation of being unapproachable to the extent men would say "*hakwiriki uyu*!" (she does not give sexual favours) This is so real, these men want people that they can use, manipulate and they run their agenda, but I was not that person.[64]

A young woman from Chipinge now at university and interested in politics narrated the following:

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[62] Padare Chapter member, Bulawayo
[63] Female politician, Harare
[64] Personal conversation with Linda Masarira, 2018, Harare

Growing up in Chipinge as a girl you are never socialised directly or indirectly in leadership roles. Good girls learn to be respectful and how to raise a good family once married. Ambition to leadership is not a good trait in a woman. I am lucky my parents wanted education for me but I know many girls who did not have this chance. When I got to university it was difficult for me to start assert myself and find my voice because I was never taught to speak my mind and to hold my ground in the public domain. So it was difficult to get the confidence and courage to get involved in student politics.[65]

The home thus is an important space in creating future leaders. WCoZ (2019) highlights how the family is one of the most important impediments to women's political participation. Most aspiring and practising female politicians either fail or succeed due to the presence or lack of family support. In that regard, the current politics of gender socialization should be transcended using multi-actor approaches involving all social institutions on one hand, the Constitutional provisions on equality.

5.4.4 Reasons for not voting for female candidates

It is important for the research to highlight the major reasons why both men and women do not usually vote for female candidates. The narratives below provide an insight into the various ways in which programming can be done to ensure more women participate in politics. It can also provide insights into how female candidates can better prepare for elections. One of the most highlighted reason was the fact that the electorate in Zimbabwe usually votes along party lines in elections and not necessarily according to gender. It is in the political parties were the problem lies because women are either sidelined in primary elections or placed in constituencies where the parties are not strong. Women thus need to belong to one of the two biggest parties in Zimbabwe. The 2018 election showed that qualified female candidates who ran as independents lost the election. A respondent highlighted that:

In Zimbabwe, the political system is mostly based on party politics as it is extremely difficult (even for men) for one to stand as an independent candidate and win an election to become a member of parliament. There are currently two main political parties which dominate the local political scene. This means that for one to realistically stand a chance of being elected into the legislature, they have to be a member of one of the two main political parties.[66]

There is also lack of choices among female candidates because of the low numbers of women running for office. One key informant noted that, '*During elections women participate actively as mobilisers, educators, observers in large numbers but as candidates their participation*

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[65] Female student politician, Harare/Chipinge
[66] Key informant, Women Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence, Harare

remains very low.'[67] The main reason given for not voting for women is that most women in positions of decision making are political impositions. They do not constitute the choice the voter would have chosen to vote for. There is overall discontentment with the party primary elections where eligible candidates are elbowed out. Asked for a specific example most of the respondents gave the example of Joana Mamombe in the MDC Alliance who they feel was imposed by the party leadership. There is a general feeling among the focus group discussion respondents that there is pressure for political parties to 'window dress' and their input in discussions is not valued. The voters asked felt that their vote does not at all matter because the choices they vote for are not the choices they would have made on their own. They said the quality of female candidates is limited by the choices that the parties they vote for put up.

Speaking to ordinary women, one respondent indicated that, "*it is not about hating other women running for office but we just do not want to be used by politicians anymore especially those that show up for elections.*"[68] Also, there is a general feeling that their individual vote will not really amount to much, and that no matter the amount of rationality they invest in voting for a female candidate, it will only be of no significance since the bulk of the voters are not going to be using rationality but are going to be hyped into voting for whichever candidate is imposed on them and supported by the leaders of the political parties. In any case, women in political positions are as corrupt as the male candidates. This view though not as prevalent was echoed by some respondents in Harare. The respondents were disappointed by the fact that the female candidates did not provide 'a new form of politics'. Asked whether they think there is any advantage in voting for female candidate one of the respondents argued that, "*A politician is a politician, whether they are male or female in Zimbabwe. They will use you for their selfish benefit.*"[69] There was a general sense of expecting women to behave in a different way or play a different type of politics and lead in a way that is different enough to warrant the voters to make. There also is a feeling amongst the female voters that people are used to relying on the naive female voter who they can rely upon to achieve their political ambitions. The women expressed a feeling that they felt that the politicians want to use them and their relationship with the voters is one sided. The modern day female voter is now calculating the costs and benefits. One female respondent noted that:

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[67] Key informant, Oxfam, Harare
[68] Female, anonymous, Harare
[69] Female, anonymous, Harare

> People are used to the old type of women who would tie *zambias* (waist cloths) around their waist and dance for politicians. Nowadays life is hard in Harare, a person will actually say give me all those things you are promising me first, before I vote for you. In any case of what use is a waist-cloth to me? If you give me a *zambia* (a waist-cloth) you are actually exposing me to political violence as people will obviously know my candidate preferences.[70]

This shows that female politicians need to be intimately involved in the interests of their constituents to garner support and recognition from voters. For other respondents, the nature of Zimbabwean politics makes near impossible to achieve gender equality in political participation. From our research, it is clear that there no compliance, or even willingness to comply with the provision to ensure that both genders are equally represented and that women constitute at least half the membership of all commissions, elected and appointed governmental bodies established by the Constitution or any Act of Parliament. Looking at such a state of affairs what the following governance expert says could be apt that:

> The governance architecture is driven by the pursuit of power politics - how to get power, how to expand it and how to protect it. So what this means is that issues like gender equity, increasing women participation in governance have to fit into the model. In other words, the call for and the promotion of increased women participation must be helping the regime to expand or retain power. It therefore follows in my view that government policy on increased women participation is insincere, driven by guarded, selective and exclusive motives. In short, increased women participation means opening up more opportunities for the politically correct women. It has nothing to do with the ordinary woman in Dotito.[71]

Changing the masculine nature of Zimbabwean politics is thus of paramount importance for those fighting to increase women's participation. The type of politics that promotes 'big men' competing against 'big men' in a zero sum game leads to an exclusionary politics characterized by violence and lack of a common purpose. In such situations women tend to be the losers especially in patriarchal societies where socio-cultural and religious norms already place women at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression and exclusion.

6.0 Recommendations of improving women's participation in politics
6.1 Building a feminist movement and female political solidarity

Many respondents in this study alluded to the need for female solidarity in politics. Building a feminist political movement to promote female political solidarity is necessary to build a shared

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[70] Female, anonymous, Harare
[71] Expert interview with anonymous

consciousness based on shared experiences and interests. There is need for women's organisations to play an important role in crafting a movement that supports, trains and equips female political candidates. Women's organisations should be at the forefront to movement building through promoting women's political causes and interests.

6.2 Implementation of constitutional provisions on gender equality

It is clear from this research that the president, state and major political parties are operating outside the constitution. The 2013 Constitution has specific provisions for ensure gender equality as outlined in this report yet key political actors are not adhering to these provisions. For example, the president is required to ensure gender and regional considerations for public appointments but appointments since 2018 have generally favored men including the failure to have gender balance on deputy ministers. There is need to continuously advocate and if necessary litigate to ensure that the constitution is followed.

6.3 Constitutional reforms to ensure gender equality beyond the quota system

The special quota system has not improved the status of women in politics. There is need for a more robust approach to meeting gender equality in political representation such as a women's quota within the top executive of political parties and government; setting aside women only constituents; moving towards a proportional representative system such as in South Africa so that a 50/50 threshold can be ensured in parliament.

6.4 Gender mainstreaming in key governance and political institutions

There is need to do gender mainstreaming in key governance institutions such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. Such a process will equip the commission to ensure electoral laws and processes adhere to constitutional provisions. It will also include capacitating government institutions to collect gender aggregated data to shape their gender programming. Civil society organisations must hold government, legislature and political parties accountable for progress in increasing women's participation and representation. The state should also aim to achieve gender parity in all decision-making bodies, by establishing incremental time-bound targets for increasing women's representation.

6.5 Political will and political commitment to eradicate all forms of violence from politics

Violence was identified as an important inhibitor for women's participation in politics. There is need to ensure that the state apparatus such as police and judiciary effectively deal with political violence through effective arrest, investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of violence. Respondents indicated that at the moment perpetrators of violence are known and they have never been arrested. Every election they are known and in the rare cases that they are arrested, they are soon released. Such a situation creates conditions for impunity and lack of protection for people leading to women suffering more from all forms of violence especially sexual assault.

6.6 Advocacy and community outreach promoting women's political participation

There is need for government and civil society organisations to continue and intensify community awareness programmes geared towards fighting stigma and cultural norms that militate against women's participation in politics. It is important that such programmes involve and engage men especially in critical positions within religious and cultural systems who actively work to promote and protect patriarchal norms that perpetuate women's political exclusion.

6.7 Public financing for female political candidates

Election campaign is a huge and expensive process involving, travel, visibility material, online presence and door-to-door visits. Its most likely that the local level women who are supposed to make meaning representation of women do not have the adequate funds to stage an equally competent campaigns. No wonder why most business people end up joining politics because of their ability to buy votes and in some cases stage very well-funded campaigns. Beyond the Political Parties Finance Act which funds political parties, a pot of money should be availed to female candidates who make it beyond the party primaries from the public fund. The Government has potential to allow donor funds to come through the public finance management system to be disbursed to female candidates as an affirmative action move. The political parties finance act could also be amended to have an affirmative action clause that mandates the party receiving public funds to ensure that a certain percentage is given directly to female candidate to finance their individual constituency campaigns. The Act could go on to give time frames and modalities that protect abuse of that fund.

6.8 Reappropriating derogatory language and using it as a tool for empowerment

There is a growing debate in the global women's movement on the efficacy of reappropriating slurs and derogatory language especially the term bitch. The Zimbabwean equivalent is *hure* which has been used as a means to scare women away from politics. Nunn (2015) cites Thorne arguing that "Reappropriation of ethnic and sexual slurs starts as an act of bravado by a few of the oppressed, then may become an empowering mechanism for a much wider community. It's pleasingly ironic that those discriminated against have learned the Orwellian trick employed by the state and the establishment of hijacking everyday language (as in 'doublespeak') for their own nefarious purposes. Alternative discourse ousts and replaces the discourses of power."[72] There are studies that are increasingly showing that it is empowering to reappropriate words such as *hure*. The empowerment process, and the denial of language as a tool of oppression as abuse of power, has also been stressed by scholars such as Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, the latter who also referred to it as a reverse discourse.[73] Female politicians such as Priscilla Misihairambwi-Mushonga have been at the forefront of reappropriating the term.

6.9 Advocacy and training for a more gender just society

It is important to ensure that programmes that target both men and women in our communities are further implemented to ensure we build a society with a changed mind set. One of the key informants argue that, "'I do not think that legal reforms including the constitution on their own will change anything. We need a more gender aware society however to do that also risks other issues. Women who have done it have become burnt out and are stigmatised as a rubble-rousers."[74] Law and institutional reforms on their own are not adequate without changing social norms and attitudes.

7.0 Conclusion

The state of women's political participation in Zimbabwe is undesirable, an anti-thesis to the country's development. Despite proclaiming a Constitutional democracy, there are contestations, contradictions and complexities regarding how women are participating in various sectors of the political landscape. The data in this study shows that women are

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[72] https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/oct/30/power-grab-reclaiming-words-can-be-such-a-bitch
[73] https://www.huffpost.com/entry/psychology-reclaiming-language_n_589c96bde4b04061313bf423
[74] Gender expert, Harare

underrepresented across the executive, cabinet, legislature, judiciary, traditional leadership, public sector and private sector. Women continued to encounter a myriad of long established challenges and emerging ones that continue to define or mis-define their political participation. These include the intersection of patriarchal norms, lack of financing, lack of female solidarity, negative cooptation and sexual harassment. One of the key challenges noted in the research is how the word '*hure*' is utilised as a political weapon against women in politics. What is however important is to note that such political strategies are not new but are getting more pronounced. Hence, we argue that the marginalisation of women in politics should be historicized, taking into consideration gender inequality politics and legacies in Zimbabwean spaces. At the same time, there is need to understand how old and new ideologies are used to discipline and control women as well as continue to collude in a complex neo-liberal, militarized and polarized state. It is also important to note that, the agency of women should also note be underrated within and outside the women's movements. Some women have been able to devise counter strategies and become agents for new forms of political governance.

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Annex: Research respondents

Field Data Sources	Who	Data Collection Method	
Key informants	- TIZ - UNFPA - Women - Oxfam - Batanai: Women Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence - Harare based youth advocate - Bulawayo Padare Chapter - University student political representatives - Officer, MW	Key informant interviews	14
Ordinary citizens	20 men and 20 men	Semi structured interviews Focus group discussions On line discussions	40
Women Politicians	6 women	Semi structured interviews	6
Experts	-Gender experts -Sociologist -Political scientist -Political economy expert -Lawyers -Media expert	Expert interviews	8