



ZIMBABWE GENDER COMMISSION

CAPACITATES ASPIRING WOMEN CANDIDATES AHEAD OF 2023 ELECTIONS

THE Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) has moved in to capacitate aspiring women candidates with knowledge and competency skills to contest for political office in the upcoming elections. This follows the extension of the women's quota following the signing into law of Constitutional Amendment Number 2 after it secured a two thirds majority in both of Parliament and Senate in May.

The Amendment extended the women's quota to now provide for at least 10 of the women to be under the age of 35 years. This means that apart from getting more women in Parliament in general, the Constitution now specifically gives space for young women in the legislature. Further the Amendment also introduces a new provision of 10 seats of the youth quota.

In a statement, the ZGC in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWomen), said aspiring women candidates will be capacitated under a program titled "Women Rise in Politics (WRiP)" with the 2023 elections in sight. "The broader objectives of this program are to increase representation and participation of women in politics; change the perceptions around gender and leadership effectiveness; and ensure more inclusive and gender-responsive electoral processes," the ZGC said.

The ZGC noted with concern that women held only 23% of elective parliamentary seats, 13.3% of local government seats and 48% of the senate despite constituting 52% of the population. "From a gender perspective, the political environment in Zimbabwe is highly toxic and polarised.

The country's political domain is infested with gender intolerance which often manifests in violence, name calling, body shaming, sexual exploitation and harassment, stereotyping and systemic exclusion –predominantly against women. These practices hinder women's meaningful participation," the ZGC added.

Regional and international normative frameworks call for an enabling environment for developing and strengthening women's capacity "to build their confidence, resilience and coping mechanisms necessary to participate in political leadership." The ZESN has previously noted with concern that, "notwithstanding the presence legislative framework to ensure gender equality and equity as well as gender mainstreaming in electoral processes to enhance

women's participation in democratic governance processes, Zimbabwe has not yet achieved equal representation in public office including the Presidium and other key decision making positions."

The broader objectives of this program are to increase representation and participation of women in politics

As you

WASH YOUR HANDS

with soap, remember those hands will be useful during voter registration and voting in future elections



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CITY WILL PAY DEARLY FOR FEW VOTERS

BULAWAYO's loss of any constituency in the delimitation exercise will result in under-representation with devastating consequences on development and legislative priorities for the city, civic groups and political parties warned as they called for decentralisation of voter registration.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has repeatedly warned that the country's second city risks losing two to three constituencies in the next delimitation exercise as the voter registered population falls far short of the minimum threshold.

In June, the government announced the population census would kick off in April next year with results expected in August while the delimitation exercise —the creation of new electoral boundaries — is expected to start in October, ending in December 2022.

A delimitation exercise is provided for under section 161 (1) of the Constitution on Delimitation of Electoral Boundaries.

Constituency and ward boundaries have not been redrawn since the 2008 elections.

ZEC Bulawayo provincial elections officer Innocent Ncube warned the city risks losing some constituencies in the delimitation exercise citing massive voter registration apathy in the city. He revealed that the elections body is registering less than a dozen new voters every month.

Bulawayo currently has 12 constituencies. Ahead of the 2000 and 2005 elections, Bulawayo had eight and seven seats, respectively.

Analysts, opposition parties and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (Zesn) argued that Bulawayo has more to lose if the number of constituencies is reduced in the next delimitation exercise as they called for a multi-stakeholder approach to encourage city residents to register to vote.

"Any city or area losing representation or constituency, it means less representation in Parliament, something that is extremely devastating. So, at the end of the day there will be serious under-representation in Parliament," Bulawayo-based commentator Effie Ncube said.

"Under-representation means fewer voices in Parliament for development in Bulawayo, for the legislative priorities for the people of Bulawayo, and other things.

"It means Bulawayo would have less influence in Parliament than it should as the second largest city in the country."

ZESN Programmes Co-ordinator Ellen Dingani weighed in, saying this will mean less Constituency Development Fund (CDF) allocations for development projects to Bulawayo, a city that suffers urban decay.

All legislators are entitled to CDF allocations to implement development projects in their constituencies.

As you also know, there is the CDF that MPs get and this would have its effect further reduced because of misleading numbers," Dingani said.

"The major negative will be the issue of the CDF, meaning that if Bulawayo loses two constituencies, it also loses CDF for those seats that are given to every MPs to develop their constituency."

In his 2021 budget, Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube allocated \$420 million to the CDF, which translated to \$2 million per constituency and 10 times more than the \$200 000 allocated to MPs in 2020.

Mqondisi Moyo, the Mthwakazi Republic Party (MRP) president, added: "Under-representation means that less is known by the central government about Bulawayo's needs.

"It also means that less is availed to the city in the form of resources and development initiatives," Moyo said.

"With the Local Government ministry tightening its grip daily on city affairs, under-representation will allow unnecessary meddling into city business by central government, and that alone spells doom for the people of Bulawayo."

There has been no major development project in Bulawayo for the past decades.

The last known major development project is the Egodini Mall which remains unfinished.

Ncube pleaded with politicians and their respective political parties to up voter registration awareness campaigns to save the city from losing some seats

"It is up to politicians to make sure that people come and register to vote," Ncube said.

Analysts and the opposition, however, blame voter apathy on ZEC's "torturous" process of voter registration while adding that people have lost trust in ZEC to conduct any free, fair and transparent electoral process.

"People do not trust that their vote translates to the change that they desire," said Effie Ncube.

"They don't see elections as a mechanism towards achieving their political objective, their socio-economic objectives, eradicating poverty and/or changing the direction of the country, then people just stay at home."

Opposition MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa to date still questions President Emmerson Mnangagwa's legitimacy, citing vote fraud in the 2018 harmonised elections.

Patrick Ndlovu, the Zapu Bulawayo provincial spokesperson, blamed ZEC for failure to undertake sufficient voter registration awareness campaigns to "deepen awareness among people as to the level of importance of participating in electoral processes."

"I have not seen any banner from ZEC on voter registration awareness," Ndlovu said.

MDC Alliance Bulawayo provincial spokesperson Swithern Chirowodza noted: "As if that were not enough, the Registrar General's office in Bulawayo says it currently does not have enough material to make national identification cards.

"One can't register without a national identification card."

Zesn and opposition parties called on ZEC to decentralise voter registration and increase awareness campaigns in Bulawayo.

"If ZEC can also decentralise further from provincial to district to other areas that are strategic and this could be shopping centres or even clinics so that we have people utilising this opportunity of continuous voter registration throughout the electoral cycle as provided for in the law," Dingani said.

She added: "The fact that voter registration is voluntary and not mandatory then means we need to have some programmes as a civic society that encourage citizens to go out and register and to have a voters' roll reflecting the exact number of people that are supposed to register to vote."

Zesn's electoral education and capacity building department is currently engaged in a voter registration drive by means of community and national radio programmes, video skits and the production of information, education and communication materials such as fliers translated into local languages.

Effie Ncube weighed in urging the "government and electoral authorities to go out of their way in mobilising voter registration awareness," while also urging the ZEC to rope in civic groups and the church.

Chirowodza added: "The Registrar-general and ZEC must synchronise issuance of IDs with voter registration so that as youths acquire new IDs, they automatically register to vote.

"ZEC also has to set up voter registration kiosks outside the RG's offices."

Zanu PF has said it targets over five million voters, at least 65% of the voters in the 2023 polls.

Source: Standard Newspaper.....
<https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2021/07/18/city-will-pay-dearly-for-few-voters/>



CIVIC GROUPS FEAR BEING BARRED FROM CONDUCTING VOTER EDUCATION

CIVIC society and human rights' groups have raised fears of being barred from conducting electoral related activities such as voter education after a ZANU-PF official accused the groups of pushing a regime change agenda. ZANU-PF Acting Political Commissar Patrick Chinamasa recently threatened a ban on nearly 3 500 NGOs operating in the country, accusing them of harbouring sinister intentions to promote regime change. This is not the first time that the country has threatened to bar NGO's from operating in the country. fair elections in particular.

In 2017, the late President Robert Mugabe threatened to ban NGO's from observing the 2018 elections, a threat he implemented in 2008 a few weeks before the presidential run-off election. Mugabe banned the NGO's after losing the first round of balloting to the late MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai after accusing them of supporting the opposition. The ban was lifted after he was re-elected in an election boycotted by Tsvangirai citing widespread violence and killings of his supporters.

"We are worried that the civic space is going to be closed, and these are the clear signs that we are now approaching elections. They know that NGOs will do civic education, voter registration, voter mobilization and they are trying by all means to suppress that voice," Mbuso Fuzwayo, the Coordinator of Ibhetshu Likazulu Human Rights Group said.

Civic activist Khumbulani Maphosa added: "Why do we want to regulate NGOs? Threats to deregister NGO's are regrettable particularly now as we go towards elections. NGOs have a huge role to play towards elections to establish awareness of and respect for the right of individuals to exercise freedoms of expression, assembly, and association, which is crucial to participatory democracy."

The Electoral Act provides for the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to promote the provision of courses and programmes on voter education by persons and organisations in Zimbabwe so that the education reaches as many voters as possible.

The ZEC must also monitor courses and programmes of voter education provided by such persons in order to ensure that they are adequate, accurate and fairly balanced.

Civic and Voter Education remains key in mobilizing citizens to participate in electoral processes and ZEC may not reach out to the entire citizenry single handedly; the civic society should be afforded space to complement the efforts.

NGOs have a huge role to play towards elections to establish awareness of and respect for the right of individuals...

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Civic & Voter education must be intensified in between elections

1. Before putting on a mask, clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
2. Cover mouth and nose with mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
3. Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap.
4. Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp.
5. To remove the mask: remove it from behind (do not touch the front of mask).
6. Discard immediately in a closed bin; clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.



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STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH QUOTA SYSTEM?

The extension of the women's quota by another 10 years has been met with mixed feelings by women's groups and other stakeholders. There have been calls for clarity on the added provision on clause 11 where the quota system will now cascade to local government seats.

Government recently passed Constitutional Amendment Number Two which touches on the issue of the running mate, extension of terms for judges, delimitation and the women's quota. The quota system was introduced in the Constitution of 2013 to increase representation and participation of women in politics. It was supposed to end in 2023 but has since been extended after Constitutional Amendment Number Two sailed through Parliament.

The Constitution provides a system where 60 women are elected to the National Assembly through proportional representation. Through the amendment, 30 percent of seats in local authorities will now be reserved for women. In addition, political parties must ensure that 10 women elected by proportional representation are under 35. Women with disabilities are represented as per their party's lists in terms of an Act of Parliament while 10 proportional seats in the National Assembly will be reserved for youths.

Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) Chairperson, Margaret Mukahanana Sangarwe said the interpretation of the section of the amendment which introduces the quota system is vague on how local government quota seats will be administered. She said there is need for clarity so that people are clear on whether the third will be within the local government seats or they are outside as in the House of Assembly. She added that the quotasystem was not the best way to achieve gender equality.

"The 60 seats have not improved the effectiveness of women in Parliament because a lot of the women who are in Parliament through the quota system are regarded as inferior to those who are elected. We should change our system to total Proportional Representation.

This is the system that is being used in the Senate and that is why there is almost a 50-50 gender representation. This is the only system that can bring gender equality," she said.

Since the implementation of the quota system the percentage of women in Parliament and Senate has increased because of the 60 seats reserved for women in the National Assembly. However, women elected through this system have no real political power as they have no constituency nor access to Constituency Development Funds (CDF).

The Constitution of Zimbabwe provides for equal representation in politics. Sections 56 and 80 focuses on the rights of women and highlight the provision for equal opportunities in political, social and economic activities. Therefore, the extension of the quota system appears to counter the call for aligning gender parity laws with the constitution.

Ellen Dingani, the Programmes Co-ordinator for Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) said for the country to achieve gender balance, there is need for political will in ensuring that reforms are taken seriously.

"The environment has to be conducive for free and fair participation by women. Political parties have a major role to play in ensuring that gender balance and representation of women in politics is improved as they are the political players who are the primary stakeholder in political participation," she said.

She went on to say that increased knowledge and awareness by women on their civil and political rights and the need to avail platforms for women to engage in key electoral processes is another way that can increase women's representation

According to the Gender Audit produced by the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) out of the 47 political parties that fielded candidates in the National Assembly, only 27 fielded at least one woman candidate.

Approximately 243 of 1652 candidates contesting in the National Assembly were female and 146 women out of 290 candidates contested for senate seats. For local authority positions, 40 political parties fielded candidates, 12 of which fielded men only. Seventeen per cent were women and 83% were men out of the total 6 796 candidates.

Additionally, Gender Links (GL) reports that representation of women at local government has been declining since the 2008 elections when the representation of women at local level stood at 18%. In 2013 it had declined to 16% and by a further 2 percentage points to 14% in the last election in 2018.

Women in Politics Support Unit (WIPSU) Director, Sakhile Ngoma confirmed these reports by saying that despite implementing the quota system, numbers of women represented in politics have been dropping.

"Quota systems are okay but what we are proposing as women's organisations is to build a tenure system where there will be seat rotation for the local government seats. That way we are ensured of more women in politics and proper representation because over representation of men violates our social standards," she said.

Zimbabwe is a signatory to various conventions that call for equal representation of women across all sectors. These include the United Nations (UN), Africa Union (AU) and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Conventions and Protocols. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) upholds women's right to participate in public life and the (1995) Beijing Platform for Action is an appeal for women's empowerment. While Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Number 5 provides for gender equality in governance and all spheres of life, Zimbabwe is still a long way from achieving gender equality despite efforts to implement the quota system.

A report by Women's Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE) states that after two full cycles of harmonised elections and numerous by-elections, the net number of women in elected leadership positions has decreased. For example, the number of women MPs directly elected into constituencies dropped from 26 in the 8th Parliament to 25 in the 9th Parliament.

The Gender Audit reports that in 2018, ZANU PF had a total number of 2178 candidates who contested for 2168 seats. Women represented 15% of the candidates and out of the 2178 total candidates for seats at the level of parliament and local council seats there were 325 contesting women only and 1853 contesting men. MDC-Alliance had a total of 2154 contesting candidates for both the National Assembly and Local Authority. There were 317 women 15% and 1837 men 85% of contesting candidates.

Catherine Mhondiwa, MDC Councillor for Ward 13, Mkoba Gweru says although the quota system was created so that more women can be in top political positions, all they have are positions with no power. She said the women put into power through this system do not contribute much in Parliament as they have no constituency to represent.

"These women are not elected. If you are given something, you remain at the mercy of the giver. You will say 'yes' to whatever they want even if it's something wrong because you will be afraid of being removed from that position," she said. Councillor Mhondiwa said it was not fair for women to be appointed by quota when they represented the larger population. She called on 50-50 representation as the solution to under-representation of women in politics. Councillor Mhondiwa believes that the best route for Zimbabwe is to have a system where constituencies have women candidates contesting against each other.

Continued to the next page ...



STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH QUOTA SYSTEM?

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This she said, would mean that women from different political parties will contest against each other.

Perseverance Zhou, ZANU PF Proportional Representative MP for Kwekwe said that since the political environment does not provide a level playing ground for women, the quota system allows women to be represented in decision making positions in both Parliament and local government.

"Extending the quota system by another 10 years is progressive as the extension provides a mechanism to increase women's representation. This will be done while government works on creating a conducive, socio- economic, political and legal environment which will enable the women to participate equally with men," she said.

National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO) Programs Manager MacDonald Munyoro believes that there should be certain seats designated for female candidates for which women contest amongst themselves. He said such an approach would result in women being voted for by the electorate and then represent actual constituencies.

"Representative democracy is about the will of the people. It's about connecting the needs in a community with the processes of Parliament .When we allow MPs to sit in Parliament without constituencies what are we saying and what are we doing? The strength of an election rests on the will of the people. When we limit the will of the people to a certain political elite we are overshadowing democracy," he said.

Munyoro said that one of the challenges of the quota system is that it places limitations on the exercise of democracy. He called on the government to set up measures that will create a pathway that creates 50-50 gender representation.

Mr. Munyoro further stated that the quota system which has been brought back is retrogressive and contravenes the Constitution. He emphasised that structural issues that have to do with patriarchy have to be dealt with.

"How can political parties with youth and women wings fail to field equal candidates from those wings? It's an issue of political will and political party systems excluding and locking young people and women from public office," he said.

Mrs. Mukahanana Sangarwe said the ZGC believes the electoral system should be changed. "The electorate should vote for political parties and not for individuals and political parties should present their list of candidates before elections on a Zebra basis. Without this it will remain very difficult if not impossible to achieve gender equality. It will remain an aspiration, yet the Constitution has already said it should be 50-50," she said.

The Zebra system increases the chances of equal representation through a system of rotation. It brings equality because for every man chosen a woman is chosen as well.

Rwanda, Nigeria and Uganda have managed to increase women's representation in their Parliaments and other decision-making positions through the quota system and implementing other structural reforms. Organisations like ZESN and ZGC have called on government to mandate ZEC to receive only nominations which have gender balance at the district, provincial and national levels. Political parties have also been called upon to register so that they are regulated on issues of inclusivity and adherence to the Constitution. There have also been calls to have support desks for women and for political parties to identify potential female candidates and groom and capacitate them ahead of elections to ensure their readiness to stand for elections.

Source: Louder Magazine –
<https://loudermagazine.co.zw/strengthening-womens-political-participation-through-quota-sytem/>

V-R-S

It takes 'u' and 'i' to
fight COVID-19

COVID-19 is real
Let's practice hand
hygiene by frequently
sanitizing our hands



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01
Dispense the hand sanitizer on
your palms.



02
Rub hands together, palm to
palm and back of each hand.



03
Rub tips of hand with palm of
other hand.



04
Cover all surfaces until
hands feel dry (about 20 sec).

#stayhome

but don't forget...

ZEC has a duty to adopt a voter
registration process that is transparent and
accessible to the public and many other
stakeholders to encourage participation in
the process and promote legitimate
democratic outcomes.

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