



A Gender Audit of the 2018 Elections

**Report produced by the Research and Advocacy Unit
(RAU) for the Institute for Young Women's
Development (IYWD) & Hivos.**

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Introduction¹

Elections in Zimbabwe have always been bitterly contested affairs since 2000, and women have not been immune from all the problems that emerge during elections. There has been an endless cycle of women victimization when it comes to voting or being elected for political office or within political parties. Many people assumed and hoped that the 2018 elections would bring different and positive results, but the run up to elections became increasingly acrimonious, and the allegations of intimidation and hate speech, particularly towards women, began to increase the closer the country got to the poll.

Predominate amongst the reasons why women do not participate in politics is the perception that participating in politics is dangerous. Although women believe that they should participate in politics, many are fearful of doing so, and with good justification. In the aftermath of the excessively violent 2008 elections, 52% of the 2158 women stated that they had been victims of violence while 14% had been physically injured.² An overview of violence against women during elections showed that women were increasingly becoming victims during elections: the study showed an increase of women experiencing violence during elections, from 0.1% in 1980 to 20% in 2002, and then a sudden increase to 62% in 2008.³ Other factors that inhibit the participation of women in politics, and primary amongst these is the dominant patriarchy that operates in Zimbabwe. There are also questions, probably related to patriarchy, about the solidarity between women. Public opinion surveys, such as the Afrobarometer consistently report that men and women agree about the need for gender equality, and also show that the perception that men only make better political leaders is changing very little in men (Table 1 over).

¹ This report was written by Tony Reeler, Tino Chishiri & Raynoldo Musikiwa, with the assistance of Junior Kandamire.

² RAU (2010), *Women, Politics and the Zimbabwe Crisis*, Report produced by Idasa (An African Democracy Institute), the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU), and the Womens' Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ). May 2010. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

³ RAU (2011), *Politically Motivated Violence against Women in Zimbabwe 2000-2010. A review of the public domain literature*. Report produced by the Women's Programme, Research & Advocacy Unit. August 2011. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

Table 1: Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women

[Source: Afrobarometer Online Data]

Survey year	Male	Female
2017	37%	19%
2014	41%	19%
2012	30%	16%
2005	39%	22%

Twice as many Zimbabwean men as women think that women are unsuitable for political office, suggesting that patriarchy is not trivial. However this is not necessarily a problem endemic to Africa as a whole, and there are many progressive African countries, such as Rwanda (and now Namibia), when it comes to being proactive about gender equality Rwanda being the first state in the world to elect more women than men in its parliament.

The political climate since 2008 has been relatively calmer, women have been more demanding of their rights to equal participation and representation, and the 2013 Constitution has provided a mechanism for realizing these ambitions. Furthermore, the fractured nature of the political parties seemed also to offer an opportunity for women to take advantage of this and forge solidarity alliances across political party lines: there were good examples of this multi-constituency solidarity under the 50/50 campaign. In light of these developments and the just ended 2018 harmonized elections this gender audit thus looks at the 2018 election period and the extent to which women's ambitions have been realized.

Background

In 2013, RAU and the Women's Trust (TWT) collaborated on a project to increase the participation of women in elections. The study provided a number of interesting findings.⁴ Women in the rural areas experienced violence perpetrated against women candidates and some women participated in political violence against other women. However, many women in the rural areas also felt that the elections were free and fair compared to those in the urban areas. Most women (94%) felt that it was important to vote for a woman, 73% felt that it was important for political parties to reserve seats for women. The study further found that more women had registered to vote because the elections in 2013 were far less violent than the previous elections and that woman to woman engagement was effective in encouraging their increased participation.

A second study examined participation of women through undertaking a gender audit of the 2013's voters roll.⁵ This showed that 51.93% of the registered voters were women, but there was a significant skew in favour of rural women: about 2,154,017 out of the 3,050,588 of the females in

⁴ RAU & TWT (2014), *Do elections in Zimbabwe favour the rural woman? Analysis of a survey on women's participation in the 2013 elections*. December 2014. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit and The Women's Trust.

⁵ RAU & Women's Trust (2013), *Gender Audit of the 2013 Voters' Roll*, July 2013. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

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.

When the 2013 voters' roll was further disaggregated it was shown that there was under-registration of young women under 30, over-registration in rural areas in comparison to urban areas, and a large number of every elderly women, 12,920 over 100 years and predominately in the rural provinces. The very low rate of registration of young women was clearly of concern. The 2013 Voters roll showed only 8% of the voters came from the 18-19 age range, and only 18% from the 20-24 age group.

Although women made up majority of voters, their numbers at representation level were comparably low. After the 2013 elections only 25 women were directly elected. The total number of women stood at 34% in National Assembly. At local government level representation did not fare so well either with women making up 16% of total councilors.

Ahead of the elections in 2018, there was a determined effort by women to increase their representation in the National Assembly and other representative bodies. The clarion call has been for "50/50" and the demand was that representation meet the prescription of the Constitution in Section 17 of Chapter 2.

(1) 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

(ii) women constitute at least half the membership of all Commissions and other elective and appointed governmental bodies established by or under this Constitution or any Act of Parliament;

Considerable work was undertaken by parliamentarians, women's organisations and women generally to ensure that this requirement was met in the 2018 elections. Most notable of this work was the launch of the Women's Manifesto and 50/50 campaign in March of 2018, spearheaded by the Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus. The Manifesto spelt out Zimbabwean women's demands and calls for government's accountability in advancing gender equality in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5. The main objectives of the Manifesto were to:

- *Call upon political parties and electoral management bodies to comply with the Constitution on gender balance.*
- *Raise awareness and galvanize the electorate to participate in elections and vote for female candidates.*

- *Articulate a united women candidate’s campaign message on gender issues across political parties.*

The new constitution of 2013 introduced a gender quota which provided for the reservation of 60 seats for women based on a proportional representation system. This measure, running until 2023, increased the number of women in parliament, but also at the expense of fewer women being directly elected. Studies of the proportional representation mechanism suggest that this was not a success. Women that are not directly elected by the voter seem to be regarded in a lesser light by their male colleagues in the National Assembly, and frequently are seen as competitors for their female colleagues who were directly elected.⁶

However, it is evident that women make substantial contributions in the National Assembly, and studies of parliamentary performance regularly show women outperforming their male counterparts.⁷ Whilst accepting that the proportional representation mechanism was something of an advance in increasing women’s representation, the “50/50” campaign was more ambitious, and was pushing for absolute equality in the direct election of women in the legislature and administrative bodies of the country.

In light of the recently held harmonized elections this gender audit seeks to evaluate the performance of women both as candidates and voters and the results and their implications on women’s representation.

Registration according to BVR

There has been a concerted, and deeply divisive, process involved in the registration of voters, and it is not our intention to detail all of these as they have been covered in multiple reports. Here we merely wish to provide an overview of the outcome of the registration process as it affected women. First, we looked at the information available from the first release of the BVR roll by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in April 2018.⁸

Table 2: Gender distribution of the BVR registration

<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
2,481,054	2,945,541	5,426,595
45.7%	54.3%	

As can be seen from Table 2, women significantly outnumbered men in the rates of registration. A slight preponderance of women to men might be expected as indicated by the 2012 Census, but

⁶ RAU (2016), *Participation but no Voice: A Preliminary Report on Proportional Representation in Zimbabwe*. December 2016. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

⁷ Dube, R (2013), *Parliamentary Performance and Gender*. November 2013. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit; RAU (2015, *Occasional Visitors Re-Visited: Attendance in the First Session of the 8th Parliament of Zimbabwe*. April 2015. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

⁸ These numbers are based on the April BVR, and hence do not include the additions to the BVR since then. However, the trends are unlikely to have changed by much since the additions to the BVR are only about 147,000, or just under 3% of the total.

this is much larger than expected, and may well be due to the much more accessible process of registration in 2013. There were many complaints previously about the difficulties in registering, and particularly for women and urban women. In 2013, the ratio of rural to urban women registered was slightly more than 3:1 in favour of rural women.⁹

The preponderance for women registered in the rural areas has continued in 2018. As seen in Table 5, 64% of rural constituencies have female/male ratios greater than the national average. The reason for this is not immediately obvious, but is probably a mixture of party affiliation, enthusiasm for participation and coercion. RAU’s research on active citizenship and social capital in women suggests that all three reasons will apply.¹⁰

Table 3: Gender distribution according to type of constituency (BVR)

	No. of constituencies above average (54% female)	Percentage above average
Urban	8	16%
Rural	90	64%
Mixed	5	26%

When it comes to age distribution, then the pattern is what might be expected. According to the April BVR, the number of registered voters below the age of 35 stood at 2,371,753 which accounts for 43.8% of female registered voters, while the number of registered female voters below the age of 45 is at 3,675,015, 67.8% of the female voters. As such the bulk of the female voters is below the age of 45.

Table 4: Age Distribution

	<35	<45
No.	2,371,753	3,675,015
Percentage	43.8%	67.8%

The age group between 18 and 19 had the least number of registered female voters at 3.9% as might be expected given this is a group coming of age to vote. The percentage of female voters’ increases to 13.2% on females in the 20-24 age group. The highest number of female voters is in the 30-34 age group, 13.9% of the female voters.

From the age of 45 up to 99 years, there was a dramatic fall in the number of female registered voters. With the 45-49 age group having had a high of 8.46%, followed by a constant fall as the

⁹ RAU & Women’s Trust (2013), *Gender Audit of the 2013 Voters’ Roll*, July 2013. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit;

¹⁰ RAU (2016), *Are middle-class women “disconnected democrats”? A preliminary investigation into political participation of Zimbabwean women*. November 2016. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit; RAU (2018), *Women and Social Capital in Zimbabwe: A Statistical Analysis*. February 2018. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit; RAU (2018), *Women and Social Capital in Zimbabwe: 2012 to 2014*. March 2018. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

50-54 to 5.11%. Surprisingly 55-59 age group showed a slight increase to 5.24% a slight reversal to the constant fall pattern in the number of female registered voters as they grow old. From the age of 60 to 99 the number of female registered female voters continues with the constant fall pattern to a paltry 0.08% in the 90-94 age group registering to vote.

Representation of women in 2018

The representation of women in all provinces in the 2018 harmonized elections was a far cry from the “50/50” representation that women have been pushing for. Only 242 of the total candidates (1648) for the National Assembly were female, a mere 15%. Among all the ten provinces Harare had the highest number of women candidates for the National Assembly at 25% , and this was followed by Bulawayo (18%)

Table 5: Nominations for the National Assembly by Province

	Total Candidates	Total Female Candidates	% Female Candidates
Bulawayo	204	37	18%
Harare	319	81	25%
Manicaland	194	22	11%
Mash Cent	99	11	11%
Mash East	121	16	13%
Mash West	159	18	11%
Masvingo	140	11	8%
Mat North	135	13	10%
Mat South	99	16	16%
Midlands	178	17	10%
Total:	1648	242	

Furthermore, and despite all the effort, the number of parties fielding female candidates was slightly more than half, as seen in Table 6.

Table 6: Distribution of female candidates according to political parties

No of parties	51
No with female candidates	27
% of parties with female candidates	53%

The picture was little better when it came to nominations for local government seats. Only 1,301 (17%) of all 7,564 nominations for the local government elections were female.

In March 2018, during the launch of the Women’s Manifesto, political parties signed a pledge committing to promotion of gender equality in fielding of candidates, but ended up turning a blind ear and eye to their promises as evidenced by the paltry number of female candidates.

It was also very disappointing to note that the two biggest parties which fielded the largest number of candidates in the election failed to sign the pledge. The MDC Alliance had the lowest representation of women as only 8% of their party candidates are women (Table 7 over). With the ruling ZANU PF not very far ahead as they have 10% of their candidates being women

Table 7: Frequency of nominated female candidates in political parties

Party	% of total candidates	% female candidates
ZDU	2%	30%
NCA	4%	29%
BZA	3%	26%
CODE	3%	23%
ZIPP	8%	20%
MDC-T	7%	20%
NPF	6%	12%
ZANU-PF	13%	10%
INDEPENDENT	15%	10%
MDC Alliance	13%	8%
ZAPU	2%	5%
PRC	10%	3%

The contrast between the enthusiasm by women to register and vote and then those seeking representation could not be more stark. Women are in a significant majority for the former and a huge minority for the latter. The question thus was how could women make their choice for a female candidate when the elections came in July?

How will women vote?

The only indicators for how women might vote came from the Afrobarometer Round 7 survey carried out in February 2017. Two further polls were carried out in 2018, but the data unfortunately was only disaggregated by residence and not by gender.

Table 8: Political participation of rural and urban women in 2017

[Source: Afrobarometer Round 7, 2017]

	Voted in the most recent national election	Last national election: attend a campaign rally	Last national election: work for a candidate or party	Close to party	Not close to party	Refused to answer/Don't know
Rural (n=378)	67%	52%	9%	64%	29%	7%
Urban (n=225)	51%	27%	5%	37%	54%	8%

According to the Afrobarometer data from 2017 (Table 8 above), 67% of rural women admitted to have voted in the most recent elections and just over half (51%) of urban women admitting to the same. Rural women were also more politically active with 52% having attended a campaign rally in the last election as compared to 27% of urban women. In addition 64% of rural women admitted to being close to a party whereas 37% of urban women were not.

Based on this data and the voter registration statistics it can be concluded that rural women made up the largest number of female voters as a result of their high social capital, but maybe also moderated by pressure of culture and coercion.¹¹ Here the earlier points about political violence are relevant.

As regards the urban women, a positive development is worth noting. In an online survey,¹² 55.6% of urban young women, who previously had no interest in voting, stated they had not voted in the previous election because voting has not worked to their advantage. However, over 80% of these respondents indicated their intention to register to vote because they felt it was their constitutional right to do so and they wanted to see a change in government.

So, what then happened?

Who got elected?

There certainly was an enormous turnout for the July poll. Whilst there is considerable dispute over the numbers in the poll, this was the largest turnout in any poll since 1980. In the National Assembly, of a total of 242 female candidates, only 25 were directly elected, no improvement on 2013, and extremely poor returns for all the hard work on the “50/50” campaign. Although, with the proportional quota, the number of women in the National Assembly will reach 33%, the lack of directly elected female MPs does not suggest that Zimbabwe is taking great strides to honour the constitution.

As for local government, the position is even worse: only 13% of local government seats went to women, a drop of 3% from 2013.

In addition to the poor showing by female candidates, there is also the very depressing finding that very few people even voted for a female candidate.

Table 9: Gender voting patterns in 2018 elections

	Number	%
Total votes for male candidates	4,215,127	89%
Total votes for female candidates	513,099	11%
Total votes cast	4,728,226	

As can be seen from Table 9, and bearing in mind that 54% of registered voters were women, a mere 11% of voters cast their vote for a female candidate. This obviously means that women

¹¹ See again RAU (2018), *Women and Social Capital in Zimbabwe: A Statistical Analysis*. February 2018. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

¹² RAU (2017), *Will Young Women make a difference in the 2018 Elections? Findings from an Online Survey*. June 2017. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

themselves preferred male candidates, although it must also be factored in that there was no much choice except to do this with so few female candidates.

Thus, it is evident that much work needs to take place, and on two main themes. The first is to do with increasing representation, and this needs to focus on making the constitutional requirement a reality, as has been done in Namibia, for example. This will need legal action and an enforceable requirement for political parties to field equal numbers of female and male candidates. This will only be possible through a shift from a First-Past-Post electoral system to a fully Proportional Representation one.

The second is to increase solidarity amongst women, and this will require careful research to understand the factors that inhibit this. Whilst fear of political violence, and actual violence, may be an obvious inhibiting factor, there are undoubtedly other factors, and these need to be understood and ways of counteracting these found. Some partial evidence may emerge from current research by RAU and the Institute for Young Women's Development (IYWD).

Conclusion & Recommendations

As shown by the analysis above, women make up the majority of voters at both national and provincial level. However they have little representation in the political fields as shown by the numbers of the outgoing members of Parliament (34%) and councillors (16%), and further evidenced the paltry number of female candidates who contested in 2018. The “50/50” goal appears to remain nothing but an unachievable dream in light of such statistics. What does it mean for our political platform given that most of the registered voters are women, yet they have little representation? One point of interest is to look at the reason why this is happening. Is it the culture? The women themselves are not willing to participate, the women are not willing to vote for other women, or does patriarchy have a hand in this? What this data has clearly shown is that, as Zimbabweans, we still have a long way to go. We need to change our mindsets about women leadership and achieve the “50/50 goal”. This will not only benefit our country but also put us on the map as one of the few countries to do so in Africa.

RAU, therefore, makes the following recommendations to address the issues identified:

- *Advocacy work around demanding 50/50 representation, as spelt out in section 17 of the constitution, needs to start as soon as possible in light of the fact that the gender quota is coming to an end in 2023;*
- *As gatekeepers to political office, political parties need to be held accountable for the pledges of gender equality that they are not honouring;*
- *Need for more work to be done in encouraging women in urban areas to participate in civic affairs;*
- *Need for more transformative programmes that change the way women in leadership are viewed.*

However, the real solution for creating gender equality would seem to lie in the direction of radical electoral reform and the movement to a proportional representation (PR) system instead of the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system currently in place. This would allow for a rigid implementation of 50/50 where all political parties could easily ensure equal numbers of women and men in their nominated candidates.

Appendix 1
Women candidates elected to the National Assembly in 2018

CANDIDATE	PROVINCE	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY	VOTES
Chikwama, Berta	MASVINGO	Gutu East	ZANU-PF	7,203
Chinomona, Mabel	MASHONALAND EAST	Mutoko North	ZANU-PF	16,902
Chombo, Marrian	MASHONALAND WEST	Zvimba North	ZANU-PF	20,308
Gumbo, Sithembile	MATABELELAND NORTH	Lupane East	ZANU-PF	7,875
Kanhutu, Irene Nzenza	MASHONALAND EAST	Chikomba East	ZANU-PF	7,972
Kankuni, Winnie	HARARE	Sunningdale	MDC-A	10,599
Maboyi, Ruth Mavhungu	MATABELELAND SOUTH	Beitbridge West	ZANU-PF	8,421
Madiwa, Chido	MANICALAND	Mutasa North	ZANU-PF	11,913
Mahlangu, Sichelesile	BULAWAYO	Pumula	MDC-A	9,241
Mamombe, Joanah	HARARE	Harare West	MDC-A	20,045
Masango, Chinghamo	MASHONALAND WEST	Mhangura	ZANU-PF	26,072
Mathe, Stars	MATABELELAND NORTH	Nkayi South	ZANU-PF	7,312
Matsikenyerere, Nokuthula	MANICALAND	Chimanimani West	ZANU-PF	10,757
Matsunga, Susan	HARARE	Mufakose	MDC-A	9,087
Mliswa, Mary	MASHONALAND WEST	Hurungwe West	ZANU-PF	11,645
Moyo, Priscilla	MASVINGO	Mwenezi West	ZANU-PF	23,778
Mudyiwa, Magna	MASHONALAND EAST	Mudzi West	ZANU-PF	14,289
Mukunyaidze, Spiwe	MASHONALAND EAST	Marondera West	ZANU-PF	7,619
Mushayi, Miriam	HARARE	Kuwadzana West	MDC-A	19,808
Ndlovu, Stella	BULAWAYO	Luveve	MDC-A	13,193
Nyoni, Sithembiso	MATABELELAND NORTH	Nkayi North	ZANU-PF	8,695
Rwodzi, Barbara	MIDLANDS	Chirumanzu	ZANU-PF	11,144
Sanyatwe, Chido	MANICALAND	Nyanga North	ZANU-PF	14,167
Tsvangirayi, Java Vimbayi	HARARE	Glen View South	MDC-A	9,942
Watson, Nicola Jane	BULAWAYO	Bulawayo Central	MDC-A	11,178

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