Political participation by young women in the 2018 elections:
Post-election report

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

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Background

This report is the second of a series examining young women's participation in elections. The aim was to provide an analysis of participation in the 2018 elections, using a pre- and post, matched sample design. The pre-election period was covered in two main publications, one a gender audit of the elections themselves,[1] and the second the findings of a survey of the attitudes and beliefs of 120 young women who were members of the Institute for Young Women's Development (IYWD).[2] These two reports are summarised in a shorter, overview report.[3]

The pre-election data from both the survey and the gender audit indicated the following:

- Large numbers of women, and especially young women, registered to vote;
- The desire to vote is not matched by the desire to stand for office. Nominations for both the National Assembly and local government were disappointing to say the least;
- The votes cast for female candidates was also very disappointing. This may reflect a lack of choice or the resort to partisan voting in a very important election;
- It also seem possible that there is an issue about solidarity amongst women at play, both for nominations and for voting.

RAU, therefore, made 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;

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[1] RAU (2018), *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. September 2018. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

[2] RAU (2018), P*olitical participation by young women in the 2018 elections: Pre-election report*. September 2018. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

[3] RAU (2018), *2018 Elections: What Happened to the Women?* September 2018. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

- 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.

Whilst the elections were undoubtedly disappointing for women, the gross numbers tell us little about the manner in which women engaged with the election process. Thus, it was hoped that the post-election survey carried out with IYWD would give us a better understanding of the participation of at least young Zimbabwean women.

Methods
The objectives of the research were twofold:

- To identify the factors facilitating and inhibiting young women's participation in elections;
- To identify the issues and concerns of young urban women that should be addressed by political parties and political party candidates.

For the first phase, the objective was to determine whether women registered to vote and what they encountered in this process. A half day workshop was conducted with the enumerators to familiarize them with the questionnaire before going into the field. The enumerators then interviewed those chosen by IYWD to participate. The selection was based on identifying women that were either "active" members in IYWD activities and those that were perceived as merely members.

The same procedure was adopted for the second phase, but the questionnaire was modified in order to be relevant for a post-election inquiry. The many questions relating to issues around voter registration and previous voting issues were removed since the concern here was with the past immediate election. The two questionnaires used in the first phase, the Political Efficacy Scale, [4] and Personal Efficacy Scale were again used.[5]

Apart from the obvious interest in participation in the elections, we were still interested in the two previous questions that we hoped would unpack more deeply the reasons behind young women participating in political life and elections. These questions were framed as hypotheses:

- Do young women that are active members of IYWD's programmes score higher on Political and Personal Efficacy?
- Are Political and Personal Efficacy correlated?

The data was compiled and entered into an Excel spreadsheet and exported to SPSS. Analysis was done in SPSS (20).

Findings
This report is a short summary of the findings from the post-election survey, and a more comprehensive report covering the findings from the entire research project will be produced

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[4] 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.

[5] Ammirati, R. & Nowicki, S (2015), *Locus of Control*. Oxford Bibliographies. [*file:///C:/Users/VSO1/Documents/Research/citizenship/Citizenship%20review/self%20efficacy/Locus%20of%20Control%20-%20Psychology%20-%20Oxford%20Bibliographies.html#]*

in due course. There are differences in many items from the pre-election survey, but this is due to the fact that this data was compiled from the entire sample, and the current data is a sub-set of this sample, those that participated in both phases of the research.

A comparison of the pre- and post-data using all the subjects in a non-matched design will be included in the next report.

Sample
The post-election sample was composed of 120 young women, but in the final analysis on 76 (63%) were complete matches with the original sample. This was a lower response than we might have hoped for, and hence comparison on some fields is different, especially on the demographics. The smaller post-election sample did not however skew responses on the content fields since the subjects were the same for both phases of the research.

The average age was 29.9 years (s,dev; 6.3 years), and hence the matched sample was older than the previous sample (19.9 years). However, 47% were still under 30 years, so there remained a reasonable representation of the much younger women

Table1: Marital Status		
	Pre-Election	Post-Election
Single	15%	12%
Married	78%	83%
Separated	3%	3%
Divorced	3%	1%
Widowed	1%	3%
Other	0.0	3%

Most were either married (83%) or single (12%), and, as might be expected, few were separated (5%), divorced (3%) or widowed (3%). The trends are largely the same for both phases.

Very few (3%) had formal employment, most were self-employed (56%), and the remainder were either farmers (9%), or supported by their parents (9%) or husband (20%).

Table 2: Sources of Income		
	Pre-Election	Post-Election
Formal Employment	4%	3%
Self Employed	57%	49%
Farmer	8%	13%
Parents	4%	8%
Husband	22%	29%
Other	3%	0.0

The differences in marital status and sources of income are not dramatic and are due to the falling away of 37% of the sample, who were mostly the younger group (18 to 30).

Registration and voting
We pointed out in the pre-election study the large increase from 2013 of young women registered to vote, as well as the large number that intended to vote. As can be seen from Figure 1 (over), this did transpire: the percentage that voted was identical with the percentage that indicated that they would vote.

Figure 1: Eligibility to vote and voting
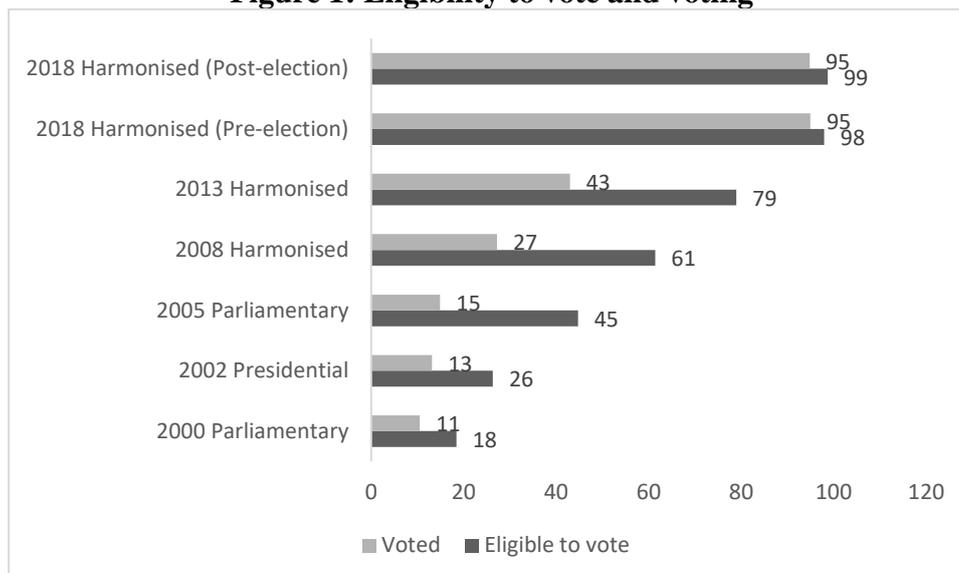
In addition, we also asked whether the young women though it was worth voting, and there was a 20% increase in those that agreed with the statement. 28% thought this in the pre-election study in reference to the 2013 election, whilst 48% now thought it was worth in 2018. However, there was a decline in the number that said they would vote again. Whereas in the pre-election study virtually all (96%) had registered and were looking forward to vote (99%), only 70% in the post-election said they would vote again. This suggests that there was dissatisfaction with the election, and 74% stated that they did not think that the 2018 election was *free and fair.*

Table 3: Reasons for voting		
	Pre-Election	**Post-Election**
Development/jobs	40%	26%
Political rights	37%	26%
Political change	20%	36%
Peace	4%	3%
Freedom	5%	3%

There were changes in the reasons for voting. There was significant shift towards reasons indicating a desire for political change from the pre-election period.

We adopt some caution in interpreting these changes. The post-election was carried out 6 weeks after the elections and many very significant changes that had taken place, so the shift away from *development/jobs* and *political rights* to *political change* perhaps should be seen in the light of the dissatisfaction with the election.

There was clearly a big improvement in the 2018 elections in comparison with 2013.

Table 4: Process of voting (Ballot papers easy to read?)		
	Pre-Election	**Post-Election**
Presidential	40%	78%
House of Assembly	40%	79%
Local government	41%	77%

Here we should comment that, just as it was evident that registering to vote was considerably easier than in 2013, it seems that it was also easier to vote. The average time taken to cast a vote was 1.8 hours (s.dev. 1.9), and, as seen in Table 4, the respondents in the majority found the ballot papers easy to read. It is evident that there were no differences between the ballot papers for the three elections, and, despite the many concerns about the Presidential ballot paper, this is not reflected in the responses of the young women.

Table 5: Voting for women candidates

	Post-Election
Presidential	44%
House of Assembly	25%
Local government	51%

One of the major thrusts of the Women's Manifesto and the 50/50 Campaign was to increase the number of women elected in 2018. Elsewhere we have reported on the election results, and pointed out the very low number of votes cast for female candidates.

In part the low number must have been due to the restricted choice available to women as there were very low numbers of female candidates nominated for either the House of Assembly or Local Government, but there were four female candidates contesting for the Presidency. As can be seen in Table 5, this was reflected in the responses of the young women from IYWD. Nearly twice as many votes were cast for female candidates for the Presidential and Local Government as for the House of Assembly. Clearly the lack of females nominated made a difference. It remains to be seen whether this can be corrected for the 2023 elections, and, furthermore, how this can be achieved. It does not appear that appealing to the better natures of men and political parties was successful, and the data above strongly suggests that having a choice will made a big difference to how women will vote.

Finally, we asked about their satisfaction with the elections, and, as noted above, 74% thought that the elections were not *free and fair*. Given that there was (and still is) massive dispute about the outcome, we also asked whether they had changed their minds in the aftermath of the ruling by the Constitutional Court on the Presidential election. Here there was a 10% change; whereas 74% thought the result was not *free and fair*, only 64% felt the same way in the light of the ConCourt ruling. A further 11% refused to answer this question or didn't know, and it should be noted that those that the percentage who thought the election was *free and fair* (18%) dropped after the ConCourt ruling (13%). Overall, these young women are in the majority unhappy about the result.

Participation
In the pre-election study we asked a range of questions designed to find out about young women's participation in politics and, in the light of the findings on voting and the results, we were interested to find out whether their views changed in the aftermath of the election.

Clearly these young women did not change their minds about the need for women's representation.

Table 6: View about representation of women.

	Pre-Election	Post-Election
Women adequately represented	21%	29%
Reserved seats	91%	92%
Permanent quota	84%	88%

We also followed up on the questions asked in the pre-election study about the reasons why women might find in hard to participate: *Why do you think few women participate in political processes?*

Table 7: Reasons why women don't participate.[6]		
	Pre-Election	**Post-Election**
The pull her down syndrome	66%	64%
Electoral process is violent	4%	29%
No support structures in political parties to support women	36%	53%
Culture requires women to focus on domestic duties	25%	31%
Other	26%	4%
Can these obstacles to women participating be overcome?		66%

There are some very marked changes from the pre-election study. There is no change on their views about the lack of women's solidarity, the *pull-her-down-syndrome*, but significant changes to the other inhibitory factors. There is a highly significant increase (25%) in the number of women who think that elections are violent as well as those that see no support by political parties for women (17%). There is also a small (but significant) increase in the number of women who see culture as an inhibitory factor.

All of these changes may also be linked to dissatisfaction with the elections, but there is no doubt that the view that political parties do not support women is totally accurate in the light of 2018.

Table 8: Standing as a candidate	
	Post-Election
Did you ever stand for or considered standing for election in 2018?	29%
If no, were you influenced by the above reasons,	
Yes	54%
No	41%
refused to answer	3%
Don't know	3%
If yes what influenced your decision?	
Political party support	57%
Family support	31%
Other	11%

It was interesting that some of IYWD's members decided to stand as candidates in the elections, and, as can be seen in Table 8, the majority were supported by a political party, and one-third by their families. Of those that did not consider this option for themselves, the majority were influenced by the inhibitory factors described in Table 7, but, equally, these were not reasons for nearly half, and presumably this means that standing as a candidate never entered their minds.

An additional set of questions addressed other factors hypothesized to influence participation.

Firstly, in answer to the question, "*do you think young women get equal opportunities to participate in politics",* the majority of the young women, both pre-election (77%) and post-

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[6] The percentages do not sum as the respondents could answer any number of the five questions.

election (83%), answered in the negative. It was also evident that this had become a stronger view post-election with a 6% increase, and presumably this was again related to dissatisfaction with the elections.

Table 9: Views about the support of older women. *Do you feel the older generation of women in politics did enough to encourage young women to take up political offices?*	Pre-Election	Post-Election
They did a great job	15%	9%
They did enough	11%	16%
Barely did anything	15%	9%
Did absolutely nothing	50%	61%
Don't know	9%	5%

Secondly, in answer to the question shown in Table 9, it is evident that the sample became more jaundiced about the support from older women in the post-election study. Whereas 65% felt that older women *barely did anything* or *did absolutely nothing* in the pre-election period, this had increased by 5% to 71% in the post-election study. This is a significant increase, probably related to dissatisfaction with the elections, but the crucial point is another solidarity issue for women: young women do not feel supported, and also felt that the PhD syndrome is prevalent. These two issues around women's solidarity really have to be unpacked in future research, and we need to understand in detail how these two inhibitory factors actually operate.

Finally, we looked at actual political participation, comparing the pre-election data (where the responses were based on previous elections, and mostly 2013) and the post-election.

Table 10: Political participation in elections	Pre-Election	Post-Election
Stand as candidate	0.0	16%
Persuade others to vote for a certain candidate or party	34%	68%
Attend a campaign rally?	43%	66%
Attend a campaign meeting?	28%	60%
Work for a candidate or party?	22%	35%
Assist someone to vote	12%	20%
Polling agent for a political party	12%	12%
Other	9%	14%

Table 10 shows that political participation in the election increased for every measure except being polling agents. This suggests that the mobilising by IYWD of its members to participate, already seen in the very high registration and voting rates, also produced a strong sense of agency in these young women. This further supports the earlier work by RAU and TWT where mobilising woman-to-woman was the most effective way of increasing active participation in the 2013 elections.[7] However, in that study we did not examine agency as we have done here, and in 2018 this is evident. Whatever IYWD is doing to interest young women in political participation, it seems to be working well.

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[7] RAU & TWT (2014), *Does Encouraging Women to Register and Vote Make a Difference? A Preliminary Report on Women's Experiences with the 2013 Elections*. Report prepared by Caroline Kache, Researcher [RAU]. March 2014. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit and The Women's Trust.

Personal and Political Efficacy

As pointed out in the Methods section, we were also interested to see whether the young women changed in two ways as a consequence of participating in the IYWD programme and the elections. We included two instruments to measure this, the Political Efficacy Scale (PES) and the Personal Efficacy (I-E) Scale. In the pre-election study, we found that the group as a whole was high on both scales, but also that the two scales were not correlated.

As can be seen from Table 11, there were no changes in Political Efficacy: the young women were active members of an activist organisation and hence highly motivated to participate. Hence they would show high rates of some of the following: *being interested in public affairs, being a member of a community group, joining others to raise an issue, contacting a local government official, etc.* Some of them even decided to stand as a candidate.

Table 11: Changes in Political Efficacy, Personal Efficacy & Political Participation

	Pre-Election [n=75]	Post-Election [n=75	df	*t*	Sig (2-tailed)
Political Efficacy Scale (PES)	22.31	22.24	148	*0.06*	ns
Personal Efficacy (I-E) Scale	5.72	5.07	148	*2.25*	0.03
Political participation	1.63	2.91	148	*-4.34*	0.000

There is also a small but significant increase in the number of young women that showed an increase in Personal Efficacy. This means that they changed between the pre- and post-election period, but the data do not allow us to determine the reasons for this change. Presumably just voting was a factor, but also it is evident that they had strong personal reasons for participating as a whole and this reinforced their self-perception that they had agency.

Finally, there is an extremely large change in their Political Participation, as was already shown in Table 10. Here, we comment again that working woman-to-woman seems critical to increasing the agency of women, and this is not merely about voting but in participating in all the aspects of an election as good citizens should.

Conclusions

There were a number of interesting findings that should be highlighted.

In respect of the elections in 2018, it was gratifying to see that those that claimed they would vote did in fact do so. 98% stated that they were registered in the pre-election survey, with 95% stating they would vote, and, post-election, 99% were registered and 95% did vote. The process of voting was not arduous, with voting taking a little over an hour on average, and there was a substantial improvement in the readability of the ballot papers in comparison with 2013.

The reasons for participating changed slightly from the pre-election survey, with perspectives about political change becoming more common, and issues about development and jobs or political rights diminishing significantly.

It is evident that women were unable easily to vote for female candidates due to the limited choices available, and this reflects the position outlined in the gender audit.[8] Despite the poor choice, female candidates in the presidential and local government elections got nearly twice as many votes from these young women as did candidates in the House of Assembly election. Thus, the very low number of votes received by female candidates must be a direct function of lack of choice. This is a very hard confirmation of the effects of the failure by political parties to nominate female candidates, and equally hard evidence that, in this very politically-polarised environment, the Women's Manifesto and the 50/50 campaign can be politely called a failure. Not a failure because the campaign was ill-conceived, but that persuasion of men and political parties may not be the right strategy: if the Constitution is to be obeyed, then clearly gender equality in the competition for representation must be compelled in one way or another.

Most (74%) did not think the elections were *free and fair,* and, whilst this number reduced to 64% after the Constitutional Court ruling on the Presidential election, the number that thought it was *free and fair* dropped from 18% to 13% in the aftermath of the ConCourt decision.

In summary, there was both high participation and dissatisfaction with the 2018 elections.

In respect of participation, and the reasons for non-participation, the PhD syndrome was still cited by a majority (64%) in the post-election survey, but the percentages of those that thought elections are violent, parties do not provide support and culture inhibits all increased significantly (see Table 7). However, 29% did consider standing as a candidate, some because of political party support and other because of family support, so we are dealing with a group of young women that may be more assertive and confident than the general population of young women. Of those that did not consider standing, the majority (51%) agreed that the factors cited as inhibitory - PhD, violence, etc. - were amongst the reasons they did not consider this option.

Most (70%) were in agreement that young women received little support from older women, and this was an increase from the pre-election survey (65%). When the views on non-participation and the support from older women are taken together, they seems to indicate a serious problem of a lack of solidarity amongst women. This may also be a partial explanation for the very low number of votes for women candidates. This does suggest a need to unpack in a more detailed fashion how this lack of solidarity actually operates.

Political participation, apart from being a polling agent, increased significantly from the pre-election to the post-election survey. This suggests that the mobilising by IYWD of its members to participate, already seen in the very high registration and voting rates, also produced a strong sense of agency in these young women. This further supports the earlier work by RAU and TWT where mobilising woman-to-woman was the most effective way of increasing active participation in the 2013 elections.[9]

Finally, the attempt to measure behavioural changes in the young women seemed useful. Using such measures gives a more reliable indicator for the effectiveness of any intervention. Firstly, the Political Efficacy Scale (PES) demonstrated that the IYWD members are a highly-

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[8] See again RAU (2018), *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. September 2018. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

[9] RAU & TWT (2014), *Does Encouraging Women to Register and Vote Make a Difference? A Preliminary Report on Women's Experiences with the 2013 Elections.* Report prepared by Caroline Kache, Researcher [RAU]. March 2014. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit and The Women's Trust; 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.

motivated group of young women, already strongly engaged in political and social participation, which was corroborated by the measures taken of political participation. Whilst the sample showed increased political participation between the pre- and post-measures, Political Efficacy did not change. Secondly, the Personal Efficacy Scale (I-E), measured by the Internal-External Locus of Control, indicated that the sample was similarly a group of young women predominantly with an Internal Locus of Control, meaning that they saw themselves as having agency. This significantly increased from the pre-election period, suggesting that their participation in the elections enhanced their belief in their own personal agency.

Two caveats must be made about these last findings.

Firstly, we attempted a matched sample design, which was achieved in the main, but the post-election sample was slightly older on average than the pre-election sample due to a number of the younger members of the sample not returning for the second interview. There is thus a small bias in the results, but the matching criterion was still met in a smaller sample, and hence we can have a high degree of confidence that the results are valid and reliable.

Secondly, it was interesting that there was no correlation between the two personality measures, the Political Efficacy Scale and the Personal Efficacy Scale. The former unsurprisingly correlated strongly with measures of political participation, but the lack of relation between the above suggests that each scale is measuring something different. It would seem that Political Efficacy measures a social characteristic of an individual and is part of collective behaviour: IYWD has a large membership, working together in concerted actions, thus Political Efficacy relates to behaviours that are always collective, and hence are probably "safe".

Personal Efficacy seems to be much more about the individual, tapping into an individual's personality structure. This structure is of course not static and will change according to an individual's life experiences, and, as Albert Bandura (2000) has pointed out in regard to related personality construct, *Perceived Self-Efficacy*, nothing succeeds like success.[10] In relation to the Internal-External Locus of Control, a belief in one's agency will increase with every occasion in which positive feedback follows agentic action. This seems to be what we have found here: young women felt more strongly that they are "agents" through participating in these elections: registering and voting, but also attending rallies, meetings, working for candidates, persuading others, etc.

Overall, and despite the dismal showing of women in the 2018 elections, there are some pointers for the future that are positive. Young women are motivated to participate in political life, and, when they do, especially perhaps when working within a feminist framework (and woman-to-woman), their agency is strengthened, even to the extent that they are willing to try to achieve representative office. The task ahead is to see this in the context of fostering active citizenship in young women, and, of course young men, but also to see this in a broader perspective than merely participating in elections.

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[10] Bandura, A. (2000). Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 9,* 75-78; Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change. *Psychological Review, 84*, 191-215.