Zimbabwean Women’s Views on the Performance of Parliamentarians in their Constituencies*

Research & Advocacy Unit (RAU)

June 2015
Executive Summary

The SMS Platform on the Parliament

Robust campaigning takes place prior to elections with potential candidates working vigorously to woo constituents in a bid to win their votes. In turn, the electorate therefore expects, that once voted in, their respective Member of Parliament will represent their interests.

According to the most recent study undertaken by the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU), it is evident that female citizens have high expectations about what an elected representative should and can do.

The emphasis on MPs providing projects and other services suggests that citizens are perhaps not very clear about the difference between executive and legislative (and oversight) functions in governance.

The SMS Platform on the Parliament project was developed as an exploratory study comparing MPs performance in and outside Parliament from the perspectives of women. The survey was undertaken by RAU to determine what expectations citizens have about what an elected representative should and can do.

Since 2013, RAU has undertaken studies to assess whether Members of Parliament (MPs) are effectively, and efficiently, performing their tasks as per the expectations of the constituencies they represent in Parliament.

A three part series of reports was produced with the initial report focusing on the attendance of Parliamentarians and their participation in the ordinary sessions, portfolio committees and answer and question sessions. The second report provided a gendered analysis of the last year of the Seventh Parliament of Zimbabwe by providing an analysis of the female Parliamentarians’ performance in Parliament versus their male counterparts. The achievements of this session were examined in the third and final report.

This fourth study on election officials examined:

- Whether citizens feel that MPs are representing the needs of their constituencies adequately in Parliament;
- Whether they interact with their constituency members regularly; and
- Whether the communities that elected these Parliamentarians trust them enough to undertake their duties adequately.

The present report was conducted with women to find out their views and perceptions on the overall work and performance that Parliamentarians undertake on their behalf in Parliament.

The information was collected through an SMS crowd sourcing platform, a means of communication used to provide information and gather views from members of the public and this information is received in real time. This report is therefore based on information received through this platform.

Working in partnership with The Women’s Trust (TWT) the study was conducted in Mazowe West, Goromonzi North; Goromonzi South and seven urban constituencies namely Marondera Central; Warren Park, Mufakose, St Marys, Zengeza, Kuwadzana and Seke.

When asked what services they expect their MPs to deliver in their constituencies, 51% of the women reported that they expect MPs to initiate income generating projects. Forty percent stated that they expected MPs to help with public services delivery while 19% of the women expected MPs to work on improving security in their communities.

While these responses reflect some confusion about the role of an MP, seeing them being part of the executive, and not as providing oversight and pressure on an executive, a different picture emerged from the respondents when they were questioned on the role of their MP. The responses clearly showed that some women have well-informed views on the role of MPs:

“My view is that the MP should do a follow up of government projects which come through ministries. He should give us feedback of the parliamentary discussions as well as the policies. As an MP, he should be in a position to attract donors in our community so that we can develop like other communities.” [Rural Constituency]

“The MP should meet with the people who elected him/her into that position. He should listen to our challenges like the water crisis and ensuring good roads in our area. It is his duty to present our problems to the responsible ministries to take action. A feedback from the Parliament should be given to us by the MP.” [Urban Constituency]

The report concludes that citizens clearly hold some contradictory views about Parliament and MPs.

While their trust in Parliament has increased over time and there is a very large increase in the number of citizens that feel that their MP is doing a good job, there are also claims that corruption amongst MPs is increasing, that MPs do not listen, and that MPs do not spend enough time in their constituencies.

These contradictions seem mostly related to the very unclear understanding that citizens have about what Parliament actually does and what are MPs’ duties

* Reported prepared by Fungisai Gcumeni and Tony Reeler
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1. Introduction
The Parliament project spearheaded by the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) since 2013 has the objective of assessing whether Members of Parliament (MPs) are effectively and efficiently performing their tasks as per the expectations of the constituencies that they represent in Parliament. A three part series of reports was produced that provided an overview of the performance of MPs during the Parliament sessions covering the period June 2012 to June 2013. The initial report focused on the attendance of Parliamentarians and their participation in the ordinary sessions, portfolio committees and answer and question sessions. Part of this series included a report providing a gendered analysis of the last year of the Seventh Parliament of Zimbabwe by providing an analysis of the female Parliamentarians’ performance in Parliament versus their male counterparts. The achievements of this session were examined in the third and final report that focused.

These reports on the performance of Parliamentarians in the 7th Parliament have been followed by a recently published report on their performance in the first session of the 8th Parliament. This report focused only on the House of Assembly, but was interesting in that the House of Assembly is now controlled by a single party, ZANU PF, as opposed to the split Parliament that followed the 2008 elections and the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

As was pointed out in the 2015 report, the overall attendance (72%) by Parliamentarians in the 8th Parliament was a marked improvement on the previous 7th Parliament, where the average attendance was only 65%. It was also interesting that the performance of the “new” members of the House of Assembly was significantly better (77%) than the “old” members who only attended 59% of the sessions on average. It must be noted that the first session of the 8th Parliament was not nearly as productive as the final session of the 7th; only 11 Bills were passed in a total of 90 sittings in the first session of the current Parliament as opposed to 13 Bills in 48 sittings in the 7th. The majority of the 11 bills to date in the 8th Parliament were bills related to finance, as they were in the final session of the 7th. Thus, for the 8th Parliament, can we conclude that the members of the House of Assembly spend more time in Parliament but do less work, and is this related to the members needs to obtain their sitting allowances?

The work of Parliamentarians is only partly about being in the House of Assembly and providing both their legislative and oversight functions and communicate with their constituencies. This last is the context of the present report, a pilot study that was conducted on women in Zimbabwe, to find out their views and perception on the overall work and performance that Parliamentarians undertake on their behalf in Parliament.

The information was collected through an SMS crowd sourcing platform, a means of communication used to provide information and gather views from members of the public and this information is received in real time. This report is therefore based on information received through this platform. This preliminary study is to provide information about

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whether citizens feel that MPs are representing the needs of their constituencies adequately in Parliament; whether they interact with their constituency members regularly; and whether the communities that elected these Parliamentarians trust them enough to undertake their duties adequately.

In addition to the above, the project hoped to sensitise community members on the importance of the role and activities of their MPs. This feeds into the on-going project that RAU has undertaken since 2013 with the main objective to facilitate active citizenship, one aspect of which is to influence police makers to effectively undertake their legislative role and interact with members of their constituency by encouraging dialogue between the MPs and the constituents, especially women. This in turn will provide the critical evidence that can be used to hold Parliament accountable to members of their constituencies.

2. Methodology
The SMS Platform on the Parliament project was developed as an exploratory study comparing MPs performance in and outside Parliament from the perceptive of women. The process of gathering the data involved women from 10 constituencies sending their responses to an SMS platform from pre-existing questions. This information was collected between September and November 2014.

The women reporters were drawn from a total of 10 constituencies through our partner The Women’s Trust (TWT). Three of the constituencies were rural from Mazowe West, Goromonzi North; Goromonzi South; and seven were from urban constituencies namely Marondera Central; Warren Park, Mufakose, St Marys, Zengeza, Kuwadzana and Seke. Therefore a total of 10 women reporters who took part in this study were drawn from each of the listed constituencies bringing the total to 100 women representing the two main political parties, ZANU PF and MDC-T. It was necessary to include women from both political parties in each constituency to eliminate bias. Before the data collection phase, a training workshop was conducted by TWT and RAU. The purpose of this workshop was to train the women how to report into the SMS platform and sensitise them on the importance of the role and activities of their MPs and raise awareness and engage the women on their participation on the SMS platform. The workshop was intended to solicit buy in from the women on the importance of active citizenship.

2.1 Limitations
It should be pointed out that this project was a pilot, and hence part of the aims were to test whether the methodology would be effective, and to determine what the limitations of the methodology might be. A number of limitations emerged.

The first limitation relates to the SMS Platform. The SMS platform does not continue sending messages if it is interrupted or shut down when there are still pending messages. One can receive messages from individuals if they are sent within a three-day waiting period. This therefore meant that the platform operated every day of the week or at least three times a week.

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7 The average age of the women who took part in this study was 39 years. The youngest was 18 years and the oldest was 73 years.
The second limitation was in relation to airtime. Airtime was sent to all participants in the constituencies in order for it to be converted into SMS bundles, this would enable them respond to the questions. However some participants had negative balances for airtime and they therefore failed to convert the airtime sent to the SMS bundles. This affected their ability to respond to the questions. Other participants reported that they had not received airtime; verifications with the telecommunication companies to confirm delivery of airtime to these participants revealed that the participants were not being truthful.

The third limitation related to responding to messages. A number of participants did not respond to questions despite the fact that they had confirmed receiving the necessary airtime through the follow ups calls done by our office. Some did not respond at all which led to their removal from the participants list. Some sent messages stating that they no longer wished to take part in the study. Therefore 77 was the final sample number of women that took part in the study.

The fourth limitation related to the responses to questions by participants. Majority of the women responded well to the questions however a number of the women gave one-word answers instead of providing comprehensive responses with details explaining their answers.

3. Findings
Since Afrobarometer has been a consistent source on the views of Zimbabweans citizens, we consulted the five Rounds of Afrobarometer surveys for the specific questions on citizens’ views on Parliament and Parliamentarians. Some key questions asked were whether citizens trusted Parliament, their thoughts on Parliament’s performance, whether Parliament was interested in their wellbeing and whether Parliament was corrupt. This would provide a basis for comparison with this current (preliminary) investigation of women’s views on Parliament.

3.1 Findings from the Afrobarometer
Not all questions were repeated through the series of five surveys, so we organised the data around the comparisons between years that were possible. One question was common to all five Rounds: How much of the time can you trust Parliament to do what is right?

![Figure 1: Male & female views on trusting Parliament](source: Afrobarometer 1999, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2012)
As can be seen from Figure 1, there is a fluctuating trend over time, and two large jumps, between 1999 and 2005, and 2009 and 2010. It is interesting to speculate that this is to do with, firstly, the development of serious opposition politics at the end of the millennium, and, secondly, the return of opposition force with the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the Inclusive Government. Does this have something to do with the possibility of restraining an over-powerful executive? Nonetheless, the trend over the past decade is increasing trust in parliament.

Table 1: Views of men & women on various aspects of parliamentary performance

[Source: Afrobarometer, 2010 & 2012]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrupt in Members of Parliament</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs listen to their constituents</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance of MP/National Assembly rep.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voters responsible for MPs doing their jobs</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly, it is evident that there are no significant differences between men and women in their views on Parliament and Parliamentarians. Secondly, the results from the 2010 and 2012 survey showed that citizens viewed Parliamentarians as increasing in corruption during the life of the GPA, but they did also feel that corruption had dropped between 2008 and 2010. In 2008, 41% of men and 38% of women felt that MPs were corrupt.

However, they also felt that their Parliamentarians were doing much better in the performance of their duties (30% in 2010 and 50% in 2012). In relation to the issue on whether MPs listen to their constituents, there was not much of a reported difference between the year 2010 (25%) and 2012 (22%); citizens generally felt that MPs do not listen to them.

The low number of women who reported that their MPs listen to their views and opinions can be explained by the feeling that prevailed among women rights groups and activities during the time that led to the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) which put into place the Inclusive Government. Women generally felt that their views were not included in the drafting to the GPA.

Fourthly, and this is the important question about whether citizens feel that they have the agency to hold Parliamentarians directly accountable, in 2010, it is evident from Table 1 that very few citizens, as voters, feel that they have the agency to hold their MPs accountable: in 2012, 76% of the women felt that they had no power or responsibility in ensuring that when MPs are elected into office they can undertake their duties, but men (65%) felt that they had more agency.

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\[ \text{Chi}^2 = 11.72 \ (p = 0.001) \]

\[ \text{chi}^2 = 34.57 \ (p = 0.001) \]
Table 2: Men & women views on MPs involvement with their constituents
(Source: Afrobarometer, 2009 & 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time MP should spend in constituency</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time MP does spend in constituency</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The most startling result from the Afrobarometer surveys was in relation to citizens’ view on whether MPs spend time in their constituencies, and was a focal point for the SMS study conducted by RAU. As can be seen from Table 2, the discrepancy between the amount of time expected by citizen and they amount they actually got is very large indeed.

The findings from the Afrobarometer are thus very useful in helping understand the findings from this small preliminary study on direct feedback on Parliamentarians’ performance in their constituency.

3.2 SMS data Findings

The findings from the SMS report back from the respondents in the RAU project are described below according to each of the questions put to the respondents.

Table 3: Last visit by MP and the agenda during the visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of visits:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MP was not available at all</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP visited in 2013</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP visited in 2014</td>
<td>47%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for visit:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Came to thank constituents for support in 2013</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to give feedback</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to hold political meeting</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held meeting about development</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to distribute “gifts”</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to visit own party members</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants were asked to provide information on when last their MPs visited their constituencies, and what was the agenda of the visit. 47% of the women reported that their MP had last visited their constituency in 2014, but 43% of women stated that that their MP was unavailable, with 9% reporting that their MP last visited their constituency in 2013. It should be noted here that the last elections held in Zimbabwe were in July 2013.

Three examples of the negative feedback given by our respondents:

The MP last came in 2013 to thank us for supporting her during the election period as well as distributing maize seed to us. That is when we last saw her.[Rural Constituency]

Our MP came on the 16th of September 2014 and had a meeting with the war veterans. We have no idea of what they discussed about but the

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10 Question 1: “When last did your MP visit in your Constituency? If he came, what did he/she talk about?”
grapevine says he issued them some copies of the Constitution. [Rural Constituency]

He has never visited to address the constituency ever since we voted for him into power.[Urban Constituency]

From these findings, it can be concluded that, though a significant number stated that their MPs had visited at some point, women feel that MPs are generally unavailable in their constituencies. However, when the MPs do visit, they mainly come to talk about party related matters, development issues, present gifts, and thank constituency members. It is interesting to note that very few MPs give feedback to their constituencies on the processes in Parliament which is a fundamental role and duty of MPs to their constituency members.

### Table 4: Projects initiated by MPs and beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project for own party members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project for all constituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project related to land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project related to farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project for women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project for youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project for elderly</td>
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</table>

The issue of whether MPs see their duties as for the benefit of ALL constituents rather than those that voted for them is important. Take the following examples:

From the time he stepped into the office, the MP has not yet established projects for us. He only arranged a party for the youths soon after his success in the elections, where Zimdance hall artists performed and that was the end of it. [Rural Constituency]

The MP bought 4 plate stoves, sewing machines and peanut butter making machines and distributed them in all centres as well as council crèches where people of the community converge. Everyone in the community is free to use these resources without any restrictions. The resources are open to everyone without any payment. [Urban Constituency]

The next question dealt with issues around benefits (projects) that might have begun since the MP took office.

As can be seen from Table 4 (above), a majority of the women (57%) reported that since coming into office, their MPs had not initiated any projects in their constituencies. 25% of the women did, however, report that their MPs had initiated a development project. The range of projects and the beneficiaries was wide, and depended on the constituency; some were rural and some were urban, and obviously the projects were tailored to the type of constituency. It

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11 Question 2: “From the time your MP was elected into office, which projects did he/she initiate in your constituency and who were the beneficiaries of those projects?”
is also interesting that a fair number reported that the projects initiated were for the benefit of all constituents, but this was mainly reported by those from two urban constituencies, Warren Park and Mufakose. There were also a fair number of reports on projects that were aimed at vulnerable or marginalised groups – women, the youth, and the elderly - 24% in all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Services expected from MP$^{12}$</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better public services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better community security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take grievances to parliament</td>
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</table>

The third question dealt with the issue of expectations about what services MPs could deliver.

As is evident from Table 5, more than half of the women (51%) when asked what services they expect their MPs to deliver in their constituencies reported that they expect MPs to initiate income generating projects. 40% of the women stated that they expected MPs to help with public services delivery while 19 % of the women expected MPs to work on improving security in their communities. Now this seems again to reflect some confusion about the role of an MP, seeing them being part of the executive and not as providing oversight and pressure on an executive. Very few women (13%) expected their MPs to provide feedback from Parliament and take their grievances to Parliament (10%).

A few examples of these views:

_We elected the MP because we wanted him to restore order in our constituency through constructing roads and drilling boreholes. We are still waiting eagerly for projects specifically for the youths because the unemployment rate is increasing by the day. The aged also need aid and the MP should scavenge for funds to fulfil the above mentioned. He should relay our grievances to the Parliament._ [Urban Constituency]

_We are looking forward to a powerful representation during parliamentary meetings. We also desire to have projects established for us by the government or donors especially for us women and our children. We usually hear of development in other communities whilst it’s strange in our area. We would also want to hear of his participation during the constructive debates in the Parliament._ [Rural Constituency]

However, in response to the question about the role of the MP, a different picture emerged.

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$^{12}$ Question 3: “When you elected your MP, what services were you and are still expecting your MP to deliver in your Constituency?”
Table 6: Women’s views on the role of the MP\textsuperscript{13}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give feedback from Parliament</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solve problems</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster development</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help the community</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take grievances to parliament</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

As can be seen in Table 6, nearly half (48%) of the women think that their Parliamentarians have the specific role of taking their grievances to Parliament, and nearly one quarter (23%) see there being a role for giving feedback from Parliament. However, since nearly half (see Table 3 above) also reported that their MP was unavailable, this seems like hope rather than reality.

The following examples show that some women have well-informed views on the role of MPs:

- My view is that the MP should do a follow up of government projects which come through ministries. He should give us feedback of the parliamentary discussions as well as the policies. As an MP, he should be in a position to attract donors in our community so that we can develop like other communities. [Rural Constituency]

- The MP's role is to develop his community. His obligation is to disclose our problems as a constituency to the Parliament and report back to us. Looking for donors for the uplifting of our community is also his duty. [Rural Constituency]

- The MP should meet with the people who elected him/her into that position. He should listen to our challenges like the water crisis and ensuring good roads in our area. It is his duty to present our problems to the responsible ministries to take action. A feedback from the Parliament should be given to us by the MP. [Urban Constituency]

A good number of women still focus on the role of the MP to deliver public goods and services, but further work is needed to understand whether women see MPs as being sources of influence or direct providers, which the latter is clearly not their role.

3.3 Comparison with the Afrobarometer

This is obviously a very small sample and clearly not representative of any population, but it is nonetheless interesting to see these responses in the context of the large data set provided by the Afrobarometer.

The Afrobarometer provided some confusing results: women (and men) reported their trust in Parliament growing over the decade as well as seeing their MPs performance as improving, at least between 2010 and 2012. However, they also reported that they did not think that MPs listened to them or spent much time in their constituencies, never mind the most startling finding that they thought that corruption was increasing. It is worth commenting here that the most recently released Afrobarometer data on Zimbabwe, from the 2014 survey, shows little change from 2012: 38% of Zimbabweans still think that “most” or “all” Parliamentarians are

\textsuperscript{13} Question 4: “What do you think is the role of the MP?”
corrupt\textsuperscript{14}. If we add the percentage that thinks that “some” Parliamentarians are corrupt, then 82% of Zimbabweans see corruption as a problem in Parliament\textsuperscript{15}.

However, this is an aside from the current study since we did not ask our respondents any question about corruption. What is evident is that almost half stated that their MP was unavailable (43%) or had only visited in 2013 (9%), and this is better than the Afrobarometer finding that less than 10% of Parliamentarians, in either 2010 or 2012, spent time in their constituency. Here it is worth commenting that 2013 was an election year, and MPs should have spent time in their constituencies or their putative constituencies, but, actually, nearly half (47%) of the respondents in our study only saw their MP in 2014. There is an area for future research here: how to determine how much time MPs do actually spend in their constituencies, and to move beyond report by citizens, which may be subject to bias.

The Afrobarometer data showed that very small numbers of citizens over the years felt that their MPs listened to them, and this seems corroborated by the data from the present study: only 10% felt that they were getting feedback about Parliament and 13% felt that their grievances were taken to parliament. But much larger numbers in our study felt that these two “duties” should be expected from MPs.

Thus, overall the two sets of data, when they are tapping the same question, do seem to corroborate each other, and do not paint a picture of contented constituents, even though they paradoxically (according to the Afrobarometer) see Parliamentarians increasingly trustworthy and MPs doing a good job.

4. Conclusions
Citizens clearly hold some contradictory views about Parliament and MPs. Their trust in Parliament has increased over time and there is a very large increase in the number of citizens that feel that their MP is doing a good job, but they also claim that corruption amongst MPs is increasing, that MPs do not listen, and that MPs do not spend enough time in their constituencies. These contradictions seem mostly related to the very unclear understanding that citizens have about what Parliament actually does and what are MPs’ duties. This emerged during the training session before the SMS system was put in place, and has also been evident in other research RAU is currently conducting on women’s perceptions of local government.

It is also evident that citizens have high expectations about what an elected representative should and can do. The emphasis on MPs providing projects, services and the like suggests that citizens are perhaps not very clear about the difference between executive and legislative (and oversight) functions in governance. This will be more clearly articulated by a current RAU study examining women’s views on local government. But it is also clear that a significant number of women do see the need for MPs to provide better feedback on what goes on in parliament, as well as seeing the need for MPs to provide feedback to Parliament on the needs of their constituency. The link between the legislature and the citizen is extremely important in building confidence in the governing of the country, and is

\textsuperscript{14} Afrobarometer (2105), Public perceptions of corruption, trust in state institutions, China’s influence, media usage and medical male circumcision. Findings from Afrobarometer Round 6 Survey in Zimbabwe. Harare, Zimbabwe. 5 May 2015

\textsuperscript{15} In collating the Afrobarometer data on corruption amongst MPs, we only reported on those respondents that stated “most” or “all” MPs were corrupt, and hence this figure is comparable with the lower figure (38%) from the 2014 Afrobarometer survey.
considerably more than merely being an active participant in parliament: it requires legislators to provide feedback to their constituents on a regular basis. It is also critical that citizens understand the role and powers of the legislators, as well the distinction between the executive and the legislature, and it is encouraging to see that a significant number of the women participating did seem to understand these matters.

Despite the many problems in running a system of reporting such as that used in this study, it seems that it is a very useful adjunct to monitoring Parliamentarians’ performance in the House of Assembly. It does provide a missing piece of the puzzle in understanding how effective is the legislature, and linked to a feedback system, where citizens receive on-going information about their MPs attendance and participation in parliament, can be the basis of an effective accountability system.

It can be even more important when the composition of Parliament becomes highly skewed, as it is at present. When a ruling party has a massive majority, as it is at present, a two-thirds majority, government can find it exceedingly easy to pass legislation without much debate and with very small majorities. In such a situation, attendance and participation in Parliament can easily become unnecessary for many MPs, and it is here that their attendance and participation in their own constituencies can be even more important.