

FACT SHEET



Situation of Women at Provincial and Local Government Levels in 2023

The Constitution

- The Constitution of Zimbabwe provides a strong foundation for addressing gender equality and women's empowerment. It guarantees equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of gender. The Constitution also recognizes the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes, including in local government.
- Section (56) provides a strong framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of women.
- Section (17), says that the state must promote full gender balance and must promote the full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society,
- Section (277), another 2021 amendment states that rather incoherently that the Electoral Act may provide for additional women councillors to be elected on a party list basis to urban and rural district councils.

National Development Strategy

- The National Development Strategy (NDS1 & 2) is the country's overarching development plan, outlining the government's priorities and strategies for achieving sustainable development. The NDS recognizes the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in achieving these goals.
- The NDS emphasizes the need for gender-responsive policies and programs at all levels of government, including in local government. It highlights the importance of promoting women's leadership and participation in decision-making processes, as well as addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by young women.
- However, there is a need for stronger implementation mechanisms and monitoring frameworks to ensure the effective integration of gender equality and young women's rights into the NDS1.

Zimbabwe Local Government Association Gender Policy

- The Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA) has developed a Gender Policy that aims to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in local



government. The policy recognizes the specific challenges faced by women and young women in accessing and participating in decision-making processes.

- The ZILGA Gender Policy provides guidelines for increasing women's representation in local government, creating gender-responsive service delivery, and addressing gender-based violence and discrimination. However, the policy could benefit from stronger enforcement mechanisms and regular monitoring to ensure its effective implementation.

High-Level Political Compact (HLPC) On Ending Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Cultural Practices (2021-2030):

- The HLPC is a recent initiative aimed at addressing gender-based violence and harmful cultural practices in Zimbabwe. It involves commitments from various stakeholders, including government institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector.
- The compact recognizes the importance of empowering young women and girls and ensuring their safety and well-being. It sets specific targets and actions to be taken over the next decade to end gender-based violence and harmful cultural practices.
- However, the success of the HLPC will depend on strong coordination, adequate resources, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the timely and effective implementation of its commitments.

Local Government Policies (council level)

- Local government policies vary across different councils in Zimbabwe. While some councils have adopted gender-responsive policies and measures to promote women's participation in decision-making roles.
- It is crucial for all local government policies to prioritize gender equality and address the specific needs and challenges faced by young women. This includes providing opportunities for their meaningful participation in decision-making processes, ensuring access to essential services, and addressing violence and discrimination.
- To bridge the gaps within local councils, it is important to strengthen policy implementation mechanisms, providing adequate resources, and ensuring that policies are regularly monitored and evaluated.
- Overall, while Zimbabwe has made progress in developing policies that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, there are gaps in implementation, enforcement, and monitoring. Specifically, more targeted efforts are needed to address the challenges faced by young women in accessing and participating in local government decision-making processes.

Although Zimbabwe has constitutional provisions that seek to promote women's empowerment, there is a gradual decline in the number of women who contest and win during elections. However, the push for more women's participation in local governance seeks to achieve gender responsive service provision.

Surveys indicate that women rely more on council services because they are the major consumers of services like potable water, sanitation, and primary health care. This led to the growing optimism that having more women in key decision-making positions at the council level will improve service delivery because decisions will be made by people who have personal experiences of the importance of these services. A lot of inspiration is being drawn from the fact that women appreciate and

understand people's problems better; hence their presence in decision making positions at the local authority level will change the state of service provision.

Trends of Women Representation for the Direct Local Government Seats (2013, 2018 and 2023):

YEAR 2013	YEAR 2018	YEAR 2023
314	275	243
16%	14%	12%

Brief Analysis on the Trend of Women's Representation In Provincial and Local Government.

There is continued regression in women's representation at local government. For the past 3 General Elections since 2013, the number of women candidates directly elected in local government continues to dwindle. In the August 2023 General Elections, women represented only 11 % of the total number of directly elected councillors. Compared to 2018, this figure has gone down by 2%. Compared to 2013, the number goes further down by 4%. This alarming regression cannot be alleviated by the extra seats provided by the proportional representation (PR) in the women's quota. This is the argument which the women's movement has continuously advanced over the past 5 years, in its advocacy for electoral reforms. The failure to meet constitutional standards by political parties and the Government undermines progress on gender equality and gender balance at local government. In addition, the inability by Zimbabwe to deliver substantive electoral reforms on women participation has derailed progress on gender equality and level the electoral playing field for women, despite heavy investment by the women's movement in women leadership and representation in politics.

During the 2023 harmonized elections at the Provincial level the results were as below showing a slight increase in the female representation:

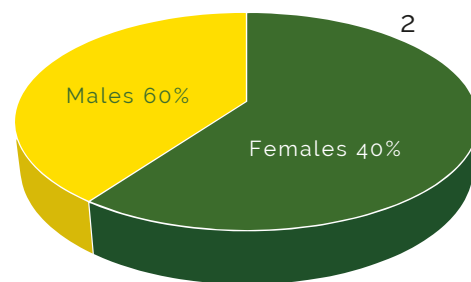
1. Provincial Councils¹

Province	Female	Male
Bulawayo	5	5
Harare	6	4
Manicaland	5	4
Mashonaland Central	5	5
Mashonaland East	6	4
Mashonaland West	5	5
Masvingo	6	4
Matabeleland North	6	4
Matabeleland South	6	4
Midlands	5	5
Total	55 (56%)	44 (44%)

Provincial Ministers Appointment Disaggregated by Sex

4 women and 6 men

¹Source: Zimbabwe Gender Commission



Gender disaggregated percentages of representation in the councillors

Out of the 1970 seats at Local Government level, a total of 244 women and 1719 men were successfully elected translating to 12% women representation down from 13.3% in 2018³. However, through the Local Government Women's quota, a total of 602 women were elected as Local Government Councillors. The low figures of women representation remain a major concern.

The case of Bulawayo City Council

The needs of women and girls are increasingly being reflected in how the municipality allocates resources in Bulawayo and the city council's gender policy has cemented gender mainstreaming throughout the budgeting process. The Bulawayo City Council (BCC) conducts budget planning of its programmes based on its "key results areas" which include the prioritisation of women in council projects and adapting to the needs of service beneficiaries. The BCC Gender Policy explicitly enshrines gender equality and equal representation of women and men in all areas, and access to decision-making platforms.

BCC has a gender policy and a disability policy in place and its programmes are meant to achieve gender equity and social inclusion within Bulawayo City Council. The BCC uses a results-based approach in integrating gender-responsive planning and budgeting by using specific performance indicators that take gender and women's needs and concerns into account. BCC has managed to maintain a budget allocation of 22% -27% for gender specific budgets as per the Ministry of local government guidelines. BCC has services that target specific groups for example in the health department it has set to establish maternity centres and there are four maternity centres that are currently functional. The budget allocation for maternity centres to support smooth service delivery is one of its key performance indicators.

Conclusion

The Provincial and local levels of government are crucial for development as they are closer to where the action is. Having women representation in the political and decision making at these levels is crucial. It is here that decisions on housing, services, health, education etc), infrastructure are made. Women's equal participation and representation at these levels of decision making are crucial as they will not only look at strategic needs but practical needs as well. Whilst the quota system at local council level helped to increase the number of female councillors, equal representation remains a major challenge. This calls for more women being elected through the elections to increase the total number of women inclusive of those that come through the quota system. More work still needs to be done in preparation for the next elections to attract women to stand as candidates as well as to secure votes for women.

²Source: Zimbabwe Gender Commission

³Source: Zimbabwe Gender Commission – figures do not show any recalls