

# POSITION PAPER ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND 2024 NATIONAL BUDGET PRIORITIES

Position Paper on Women's  
Participation in the 2024  
National Budget Priorities  
Agenda 2063 (The Africa  
we want) Aspirations:  
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Does it reduce  
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## Introduction

The Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) is a feminist organization driven by the vision to see women enjoying the benefits of actualizing their full potential in all areas of their lives. The organization's mission is to transform women's lives and relevant institutions to achieve gender equality through strengthening resilience, agency and policy influence, knowledge, and information. Based on ZWRCN's commitment to the rights of all people to live free from poverty, the organization promotes the empowerment of women and girls, and engage with men and boys, to transform unequal power relationships and address gender inequality. One of the strategic focuses of the organisation is to contribute towards Gender Responsive Public Services (GRPS) in Zimbabwe and with emphasis on Gender Responsive Budgeting.

This position paper focuses on the 2024 National Budget Priorities from a gender perspective as defined by collaboration with various stakeholders, female parliamentarians through the Zimbabwe Women Parliamentary Caucus.

## Background

Globally women make up 49.7% of the world population and in Africa they constitute 50% while in Zimbabwe they make up 52% of the population. To create a more just, resilient, inclusive and sustainable society women's needs should be at the forefront in national budgets. There is pervasive injustice which keeps women and girls out of school, the workforce and leadership positions; limits their agency and ability to make decisions about their health and sexual and reproductive health; and heightens their vulnerability to violence, harmful practices and preventable maternal mortality, with a woman dying every two minutes due to pregnancy or childbirth.

The 0-17 years age group constitute almost 50% of the population and the children in this age group is almost 50:50 hence they are all entitled to enjoy children's rights equally. 66% of children live in the rural areas (majority in communal areas) of Zimbabwe and 49.3% of children in the rural areas are girls.

Women continue to face challenges that are embedded in a patriarchal society especially those who live in rural areas. For instance, of the 717505 Zimbabweans who have never attended school, women account for 59%, which disadvantages them in terms of their potential to participate in the economy through decent productive work. Among the major reasons for never attending school are financial constraint, parents not valuing sending girls to school since they will get married, and lack of appropriate school especially for the women with disabilities. Over and above the number of women who have never attended school there are thousands who have dropped out of school for reasons that include financial constraints, early marriage, or teenage pregnancy.

There are still huge gaps in accessing water, sanitation, and energy especially in rural areas. Women socially shoulder the responsibility to fetch water and gathering firewood or energy for cooking and generally provide for the family. 11% of rural households take more than 60 minutes to get clean water while 76% take between 30-60 minutes to get clean water. With the likelihood of El Niño weather conditions in 2024, access to water may worsen especially in Masvingo and Matabeleland regions which has the impact of increasing the burden on women. In urban areas such as Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru and Masvingo water is a perennial challenge due to inadequate water bodies, poor water cleaning capacity and the population risk contracting water borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid. Other services such as sanitation remain a challenge with 28.9% of rural households having no toilet. Achieving sustainable development goals may remain a pipedream for most rural dwellers if interventions through prioritized allocation of resources through the national budget is not actioned.

Therefore, in understanding these different challenges being faced by women there is need of deliberate prioritization of gender sensitive allocations in the national budget, especially for targeted specific empowerment programmes, this position paper seeks to point out the key priority areas to be addressed in the 2024 budget. This position paper aims at influencing the Women's Caucus presentation for priorities in the 2024 budget.

## Background of Gender Responsive Budgeting

Gender budgeting is not about having separate budgets for women, rather it is a way of crafting the budget which responds to the different specific needs of the different demographic groups of society. The standard of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) was established at the Beijing Platform for Action where countries were called to, "Develop conceptual and practical methodologies for incorporating gender perspectives into all aspects of economic policy making." The importance of GRB was then strengthened in Southern Africa through the development of the SADC Guidelines on GRB in 2014. By then Zimbabwe has long incorporated gender issues into the budgeting framework in 2007, although the process is still far from being perfect.

If successfully implemented, GRB enables the country to:

- Address poverty and inequality as women, men, girls and boys experience poverty in both similar and different ways;
- Help government to honour its commitments to achieve equality, as set out in international, regional normative frameworks;
- Increase economic efficiency and social welfare: Ignoring the specific roles played by women in the economy and in society, as well as their needs, undermines the efficiency of certain public policies; and
- Reduce gender gaps and inequalities: Gender responsive budgets highlight the definite but different contributions of women and men to the economy, including the care economies.

Gender budgeting is a strategy that aims to promote gender equality by incorporating a gender perspective into the budget process.

The OECD has identified several best practices for successful implementation of gender budgeting, including:

- **Political commitment:** Gender budgeting requires strong political will and leadership to ensure that it is integrated into the budget process and that it is sustained over time.
- **Institutional mechanisms:** Gender budgeting requires the establishment of institutional mechanisms to support its implementation, such as gender units or focal points within government agencies.
- **Capacity building:** Gender budgeting requires the development of skills and knowledge among government officials, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that they understand the concept and can apply it effectively.
- **Data collection and analysis:** Gender budgeting requires the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data to identify gender gaps in access to resources and services.

Zimbabwe has made significant progress in integrating gender issues into national and sectoral economic policies, national budget policies, Call Circulars and Guidelines. The presentation of the national budget by the Minister of Finance is now accompanied by a National Budget Gender Responsive Statement for the fiscal year. Zimbabwe has gone further to train Gender focal persons in several Ministries, Departments and Agencies on how to use the gender budgeting guidelines. However, the progress in the integration of gender issues into national and sectoral economic policies and the national budget has not gone beyond statements of intent and tangible results are yet to be seen. Whilst gender issues are identified in Ministry policies the resourcing of programmes to advance gender equality within the various sectors remains limited and hence outcomes intended in the policies remain to be seen. The deliberate prioritization of gender sensitive allocations in the national budget, especially for targeted specific empowerment programmes, is still lacking. A good example for this is the Zimbabwean land Reform programme where despite the intention to bring gender equality, men who constitute 48% of the population in Zimbabwe got access to 80% of the land leaving women with only 20%. (This is a consequence of legal restrictions on women and land ownership rights).

Realizing that the National Budget plays an important role in advancing gender equality and providing resources needed to implement the various international, regional, and domestic rights frameworks for women, these are some of the important issues it should seek to address:



## Women's Key Priorities in the 2024 National Budget

### Training and Education

- The Government should implement its electoral promise of free education at least primary and secondary education. This will assist thousands of girls who are denied access to education due to financial constraints. Keeping girls in school will also help to avoid early marriages and equip them with skills to enter decent employment as well as escaping poverty.
- The government has declared a school deficit of 2800 hence there is need for government to come up with a plan to build at least 100 schools every year. This will also give access to children who could not go to school because the existing school is too far. In building schools' considerations should be made to accommodate children with disabilities.
- Adequate resources should be allocated under BEAM to ensure that vulnerable children, particularly the girl child, are able to access education.

### Health

- In rural areas there is need for a budget that facilities frequent mobile visits by specialist doctors so that some diseases such as diabetes, cancer are detected early.
- The Curative Services budget under MoHCC should be adequate and ensure free maternal health care for all expecting mothers at all health institutions. The Curative budget programme under the Ministry of Health and Childcare Budget is meant to reduce morbidity and mortality through provision of accessible, affordable, acceptable, and effective quality health services at community.
- Acknowledging that Village Health Workers (VHWs) are key players in the Primary Health Care delivery system is key. VHWs are the entry point at the community level, and it is necessary to keep them motivated to delivery on their duties according to the Community Health Package. It is therefore recommended that VHWs stipends be considered and allocated funding in the 2024 budget, including capacity building for upskilling to match the demands of the new community health package and for new village health workers to fill current gaps in terms of coverage.
- It is proposed that 0.02% of the 1%<sup>1</sup> Intermediated Money Transfer Tax (IMTT) be set aside towards creation of a cancer levy fund for creating cancer centers.
- Allocate at least 15% of the National Budget to the health sector in line with the Abuja Declaration target:

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<sup>1</sup> Intermediated Money Transfer Tax (IMTT) is payable by financial institutions on transactions mediating the transfer of money, with certain exceptions. The tax is payable at 1% (reduced from 2%, effective 1 June 2023) of the amount transacted.

## Economic Empowerment

- The government has set up loan facilities for both youth and women starting their projects. However, the current facility offered by government to women is only up to US\$500 and only caters from projects that are already running. There is need for the facility to also accommodate start-up projects.
- The government also set up a women's bank the bank still requires collateral from women in a society where they, in most cases, do not own any assets that can be used for this purpose. The bank should remodel their financing arrangements towards innovative packages that promote collateral substitution.

## Employment

- The government should continue ensuring the existence of gender focal persons in each government department/institution/agency and this should also be extended to the private sector. The focal persons should ensure that roadmaps are prepared by each Ministry/Department, which shows how they plan to meet gender needs and bridge existing gender gaps and estimates of budgetary allocations for women and girls. In this way gender budgeting will be transformed from being casually reported and instead become a living reality used on a continuous basis to transform the lives of women and girls in each department's domain of work.
- Many women are informally employed in the retail sector including vending. The government should build and identify appropriate areas where women can do their business without fear of being harassed by police and council officers.
- Budget should incentivize tax compliance by SMEs through linking adherence to tax rules to tangible benefits, such as a certain percentage of revenue collected from vendors by local authorities being directed towards construction of market stalls and facilities that provide adequate and safe shelters for vendors who are predominantly women.

## Social Welfare

- The 2024 budget should index social welfare support packages, such as the harmonized cash transfer, to the cost of living.
- The 2024 budget should aim at improving working conditions for the social service workforce to support retention and the quality of the services provided. Social service workers are hosted in several Government Ministries and Department (Social Welfare, Health, Education, Prisons and Correctional Services). Most are found in the MOPSLSW. However, remuneration and working conditions do not support them to effectively discharge their responsibilities. At district levels, MOPSLSW lack basic furniture, ICT equipment, stationery, and transport. The Public Service Commission recently designated social work skills as critical skills and therefore eligible for skills retention benefits.
- The budget should prioritize Civil Registration Systems Strengthening by ensuring the decentralization and digitalization of the CRVS system in Zimbabwe through the

- computerization of 208 civil registration sub offices throughout the country. The target in the CRVS Strategic Plan is to computerize 48 sites in 2024. The government should prioritize allocation of resources for this purpose.
- Adequate provision of state-funded Safe shelters, at least one per district and improved provision of quality services for victims of Gender Based Violence (whilst at the centre and beyond). Economic activities for women at the centers can also be integrated to assist the women to become financially independent. Most shelters belong to NGOs, and this brings their sustainability into doubt.

## Agriculture

- Village Agro Business Units being set up should be well resources and ensure participation of women small holder farmers.
- Adequate allocations should be made towards capacitation of Extension workers (through access to extension workers women farmers are able to have information regarding farming activities and by doing so improve their productivity).  
Mechanization of Pfumvudza must ensure resources are set aside to allow access by women to the equipment being rolled out under government efforts: According to the
- Ministry of Agriculture, farmers who access the equipment will be able to obtain a starter pack that includes a two-wheel tractor(16hp), double row planter, multi crop sheller and a trailer (1.5 tonnes).
- Loan facilities for this equipment should deliberately also target women as they are often disadvantaged in terms of their participation in the finance sector and in accessing loan facilities.

## Water and Sanitation, Energy

- Adequate provision for women to access water, sanitation and energy especially in rural areas. Women socially shoulder the responsibility to fetch water and gathering firewood or energy for cooking and generally provide for the family.
- Allocation in budget for provision of water in urban areas such as Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru and Masvingo water is a perennial challenge due to inadequate water bodies, poor water cleaning capacity and the population risk contracting water borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid.
- 28.9% of rural households have no toilet therefore need for provision sanitation facilities.  
Meaningfully provision in the national budget for impacts of the El Nino drought particularly in as far as they relate to women and girls who already have multiple vulnerabilities.

## Technology and Digital Inclusion

- Addressing the digital divide and promoting access to ICT to women must be prioritised in 2024 and beyond.



