



Press Release on Women Rise in Politics (WRiP) Mentorship and Training Programme

In Zimbabwe women's representation in political leadership remains low, despite the introduction of a women's quota in 2013. To address this, the Commission in partnership and with support from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), has developed the initiative Women Rise in Politics (WRiP) for aspiring women candidates. The programme is designed to be continuous and is meant to train women candidates aspiring for political careers. The participants will be attached to specific women mentors to assist them with practical guidance and leadership. The initiative, which will kick-start in the third quarter of 2021, will draw its participants from political parties in Zimbabwe as well as independent candidates. The program will rest on the principle of inclusivity and therefore young women, women living in rural areas, women with disabilities, women living with HIV, among other diversity, are especially encouraged to apply. More information on the selection criteria and priorities can be found on <https://www.zgc.co.zw/download/1449>

The broad objectives of this programme are to:

- Create a large pool of women candidates who are ready to contest for elective posts in the 2023 harmonised elections and beyond;
- Provide knowledge, skills, and competencies that will enable aspiring women candidates to effectively participate in political decision-making positions;
- Increase representation and participation of women in politics;
- Change the perceptions around gender and leadership effectiveness; and
- Ensure more inclusive and gender-responsive electoral processes.

The program which targets the 2023 national elections and beyond, has been necessitated by the decrease in the participation and representation of women in the recent past national elections. Women do not only constitute around 52% of the total population but are also the majority of voters in Zimbabwe. Despite these facts, women hold only 23% of elective parliamentary seats, 13.3% of local government seats and 48% of the Senate. These unfortunate statistics are an affront to the aspirations of Zimbabweans for full gender equality (50-50) as captured in the Constitution.

Regional and international normative frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, call for an enabling environment for developing and strengthening women's capacity to build their confidence, resilience and coping mechanisms necessary to participate in political leadership.

From a gender perspective, the political environment in Zimbabwe is highly toxic and polarised as systemic barriers to the participation and representation of women are widespread. The country's political domain is infested with gender intolerance which often manifests in violence, name calling, body shaming, sexual exploitation and harassment, stereotyping and systemic exclusion – predominantly against women. It is these negative practices that have hindered meaningful participation and representation of women in politics other than as voters.

It is against this unfortunate background that the Commission, in conjunction with UN Women and other development partners, initiated the Women Rise in Politics initiative.

A call will be issued out for all interested candidates to apply.

For more information, visit zgc.co.zw or contact ZGC Chairperson, Margaret Mukahanana-Sangarwe 0712214203/ 0772869214, and/or the Chief Executive Officer Virginia Muwanigwa 0712899543/ 0772327955

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