



Zimbabwe
Gender
Commission

**GENDER OBSERVATORY
ELECTION MONITORING**

REPORT

OCTOBER 2018

GENDER OBSERVATORY ELECTION MONITORING REPORT

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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ERC	Election Resource Centre
EU	European Union
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
SADC	Southern African Development Community
VAWE	Violence against Women in Elections
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZESN	Zimbabwe Election Support Network
ZGC	Zimbabwe Gender Commission
ZHRC	Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

Executive Summary

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) is one of the five Independent Commissions established in terms of Section 232 and 245 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013 and operationalised through the Zimbabwe Gender Commission Act [Chapter 10:31]. The ZGC has a critical role to play in supporting gender equality in electoral processes, using its mandate to support the implementation of gender provisions in the Constitution. Key provisions include Section 17 which provides that the State must promote gender balance to ensure that women fully participate in all the various spheres of Zimbabwean society.

As this was an election year the ZGC was concerned about the low participation of women due to various reasons, including lack of financial resources, violence and intimidation in past elections. The ZGC therefore set up a Gender Observatory which carried out a pre-election assessment from 2 – 6 July 2018 followed by election and post-election monitoring from 27 July to 2 August 2018 in all the 10 Provinces in the country. The GO consists of members of the Chapter 12 institutions, Ministry of Women Affairs and Community Development, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, civil society, members of the security sector, women's peace committees and academia. The overall objective was to carry out a gender analysis of the electoral processes. The Gender Observatory is a mechanism for gathering evidence and documenting women's experiences throughout the electoral cycle. The GO is also mandated to facilitate the promotion of gender justice, as well as ensuring that the gender equality provisions of the Constitution are adhered to.

Prior to the elections, the GO deployed teams to five Provinces for a pre-election assessment exercise to assess the situation on the ground. During this period, it was noted that the political environment was generally calm and relatively peaceful unlike in the previous elections though there were incidents of intra-party violence. On the election day itself, the environment remained peaceful with isolated reported cases of violence. However, on the 1st August before the announcement of the Presidential results, post-election violence was reported in Harare. This resulted in the death of seven (7) civilians as reported in the media.

It was observed that women constituted the majority of voters. Although 54.3% registered to vote through the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) system, their participation as candidates was limited as evidenced by the low number of women who succeeded in the primary elections of different political parties. Only 53% of the political parties fielded female candidates in the July polls. At the National Assembly level 15% women and at local Government 17% women stood for elections. The actual election results show that only 12.4% were elected outside the women's quota for National Assembly (33.4% inclusive of the women's quota as per Section 124b of the Constitution). At local government level only 13.3% women were elected. This is a decrease from the previous election in 2013 at both National Assembly and local government.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) is commended for an improvement in engendering the elections in the following areas:

- Gender sensitive voter education materials in national languages;
- Separate queues for men and women, which is in line with Sections 51 and 52 of the Constitution on personal security and bodily integrity;
- Preferential treatment for groups such as pregnant women, nursing mothers, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Monitoring Findings

Whilst the GO applauds the comparatively peaceful environment before and during the elections the GO noted with concern the following gender issues:

- Although women constituted the majority of voters, their participation as candidates was limited because of factors affecting women in politics including patriarchal attitudes and violence. The low participation is evidenced by the low number of women who succeeded in the primary elections of different political parties (15% at National Assembly and 17% at local Government). In the actual election, the results show that only 12.4% women were elected outside the women's quota for National Assembly and 13.3% were elected into local government.
- The conscious negative targeting of women candidates in mainstream and social media was documented; i.e. hate speech, inflammatory language and cyber bullying. Although there was a welcome increase in female presidential candidates, the GO noted that they were subjected to unfair media and public sexualised scrutiny compared to the males candidates.
- Most of the assisted voters were women, some of whom were reported to be illiterate or could not see properly. However, this needs further interrogation, which this assessment could not carry out because of capacity limitations.

Polling personnel

- While women were the majority in terms of numbers, more men occupied decision making positions across levels, e.g. Constituency Elections Officers and Presiding Officers within the election management system, while women occupied mostly administrative and support functions. Similarly, there were fewer women police officers as security details compared to men. The hierarchy, the GO understands, is determined by in-post positions in government institutions.
- There was poor sanitation, i.e. toilets were not flushing and there were no adequate facilities for bathing at polling stations, which did not consider the specific needs of women polling personnel over the week they were in camp.

Recommendations

ZGC

- The Zimbabwe Gender Commission needs to increase its visibility outside Harare to fulfil its national mandate.
- Carry out public education on gender and elections on an ongoing basis, because the electoral cycle does not end with the completion of a poll.
- Set up an election campaign fund for women, which would incrementally raise the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions.

ZEC

- In future elections, ZEC should include in its budget costs of infrastructure at polling stations that considers gender differences and basic needs of election officers, e.g. ablution facilities including proper disposal of sanitary wear, and, provision of sufficient lighting with safety considerations for night access.
- ZEC should also review its recruitment approach of short term election staff through existing institutions and take measures to ensure 50-50 gender representation across all levels.

Political Parties

- Support the enactment of legislation to compel political parties to ensure equal representation of men and women in politics.
- Political parties should observe the gender parity principle as enshrined in the Constitution by mainstreaming gender in their party constitutions, policies, strategies, structures and processes.

Government

- All perpetrators of politically-motivated violence, especially violence against women, including hate speech, inflammatory language and cyber bullying, should be arrested and prosecuted.

CSOs/ CBOs

- Capacity building for women leaders on leadership and confidence building so that they can effectively discharge their duties;
- Continue to advocate for 50-50 representation in all sectors;
- Facilitate the mentoring of women to stand as candidates.

The Media

- The media should treat men and women equally whether as voters, candidates and election officials in their reporting;
- There should be an effort to end gendered hate speech, inflammatory language and cyber bullying.

All

- All stakeholders should continue to collaborate and adopt measures to increase participation of women as candidates in future elections.
- All Zimbabweans, individually and collectively should opt for non-violent means of resolving conflict to avoid loss of life.

Introduction

In 2013 Zimbabwe adopted a new constitution which goes a long way to promote gender equality, through primarily Sections 17, 56 and 80. These sections place an obligation on the State to promote full gender balance through promotion of full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society; to take all measures including legislative to ensure this; guarantee women the right to equal treatment as men; and ensure that women have equal opportunities with men. However, slow progress in this regard has been achieved in the last five years, particularly in politics.

The political space is not designed to encourage women to participate, because of several interrelated factors: patriarchy, the attitudes towards women in politics, domestic responsibilities, lack of resources/finances for campaigning, fear, intimidation and violence (both real and perceived), to name a few. Politics is considered a man's domain and any woman who enters politics is regarded negatively. These factors have led to low political participation and representation of women in Zimbabwe.

In keeping with Section 232 of the Constitution, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) was established as one of the five Independent Commissions established by the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The full details of the establishment, functions and reporting mechanisms of the ZGC are provided for in Sections 245, 246 and 247 of the Constitution, as well as the Zimbabwe Gender Commission Act [Chapter 10:31]. Through its women in politics and decision-making cluster work in 2017, the ZGC noted low levels of participation of women in politics and leadership, and was concerned about other factors hindering women's effective participation such as violence against women in elections (VAWE). It is mandated to do all that is necessary to promote gender equality in the country and this included putting in place measures to address the challenges women face in politics and decision making.

Background

During the ZGC's participation in the July 2017 Chiwundura By- Election, the Commission received complaints from women who revealed that in previous elections, particularly the 2008 Elections, women were intimidated and sexually violated. These acted as barriers to women's participation in politics, especially as candidates.

Further, during the Provincial Dialogues, which culminated in the National Dialogue in September 2017, women highlighted their political participation constraints as inadequate financing, poor support systems, fear and politically motivated violence. Resolutions from this meeting included ensuring that political parties align their party constitutions to the National Constitution; the need for electoral reform to align all laws to the Constitution; and calls for the extension of the quota system to local government.

Within its broad mandate of monitoring and ensuring implementation of gender equality provisions in the Constitution, the ZGC carried out a pre-election assessment of the July 31 poll. This was done through the first ever Gender Observatory(GO), including other independent commissions, i.e. the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, as well as the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprise Development (MWACSMED), the Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus, civil society organisations, the security sector, academia and women's peace committees. The GO gathered information from women-led grassroots organisations and civil society organisations to support effective reporting of cases on election-related issues, to act in response to identified gender and election-related issues, and to promote the implementation of strategies to promote women in politics and decision making.

The assessment was done between the 2nd – 6th July 2018 in five provinces namely: Bulawayo Metropolitan, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Midlands and Matabeleland North. This was followed by the monitoring of the election from 27 July to 2 August 2018 in all the ten Provinces.

The information gathered by the Gender Observatory will inform advocacy and lobbying, as well as identification of necessary interventions for improvement of women's participation in politics and electoral processes in the next electoral cycle of 2023.

Objectives of the Gender Observatory

The overall objective was to carry out a gender analysis of the electoral processes. The specific objectives were as follows:

- i. To collect evidence, analyse trends and emerging issues on women's participation within the electoral space.
- ii. Gather information from women-led grassroots early warning systems, election observation missions, situation rooms and courts to support effective reporting of cases on election-related issues prior to, during and after elections.
- iii. Act in response to identified elections related issues.
- iv. Produce and disseminate knowledge on women's experiences throughout the electoral cycle using various platforms such as social media, political parties and civil society.

ELECTION MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring teams were comprised of ZGC Commissioners and members of the Gender Observatory. In conducting the monitoring mission multiple techniques for gathering data such as individual interviews, administering of questionnaires and participant observation were adopted. This was done in order to have a holistic approach in monitoring of electoral issues in relation to women, in an effort to come up with informed and balanced recommendations. The deliberations with the various stakeholders were participatory.

Interviews: One-on-one interviews were conducted with members of the public in public spaces such as marketplaces, beer halls, hospitals and commuter omnibus ranks. The interviewees included vendors, commercial sex workers, shop assistants, shop owners, drivers and the unemployed. Men and women, including people living with disabilities, were targeted to ensure that the process was inclusive.

Key informant interviews: These interviews were carried out with stakeholders such as Provincial Ministers, Senior Government Officials, Independent Commissions, Traditional and Church Leaders, Special Police Liaison Officers (SPLOs), candidates, election agents, Presiding Officers, District Election Officers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs)

Observations: The teams conducted passive observation in the targeted districts at political meetings, workshops and market places by focusing on the activities which were going on, without active interaction with the participants, in order to effectively assess the electoral environment.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS GOVERNING MONITORING OF ELECTIONS

The election monitoring was guided by the following national, regional and international instruments that provide a basis for the holding of free, fair and credible elections.

Constitutional and domestic legislative frameworks

i. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment No. 20) Act 2013

In terms of Section 3 (1) (g), gender equality is one of the founding principles of Zimbabwe. The following sections of the Constitution are also relevant:

Section 17, provides for full gender balance and full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society on the basis of equality with men, and Section 67 (2), provides for every Zimbabwean's right to participate in the activities of a political party or organisation of their choice.

ii. The Electoral Act [Chapter 2:13]

The legislation governing elections in Zimbabwe is the Electoral Act [Chapter 2:13]. The Act provides the framework for the holding of free and fair elections in Zimbabwe.

Regional legal framework

The main regional instruments that were used to guide the monitoring of the electoral environment were the: Southern African Development Community (SADC) Guidelines for the holding of free and fair elections, The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance; and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).

International human rights standards guiding elections

Internationally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) were the guiding instruments for assessing the electoral environment with gender lenses.

Pre-election Research Findings

Voter Registration

The voter registration process was conducted in four phases, which were carried out as follows:

- First Phase: 10 – 25 October 2017
- Second Phase: 29 October – 13 November 2017
- Third Phase: 16 November – 1 December 2017
- Fourth Phase: 4 – 19 December 2018

At the end of the 4th phase the voter registration exercise had not been completed due to financial constraints. After the release of additional funds to ZEC, the exercise was then extended as from 10 January to 8 February 2018.

The first phase of the voter registration process had low turnout of voter registrants as the communities did not understand the process and were sceptical of the use of technology in the electoral process. With progression of the phases there was increased turnout of registrants after a series of voter education programmes were carried out in the districts by ZEC and other stakeholders.

Of all the 231 interviewed respondents in the 5 Provinces, 95% were registered voters for the elections which were held on 30 July 2018. It was also noted that the majority did not encounter any challenges during the voter registration process, and the experiences of both men and women were the same. Voter registration centres were located at reasonable distances such that even persons with disabilities could access them.

On the other hand, some women working in the informal sector highlighted that they did not register to vote since they were not going to vote on the actual polling day due to the nature of their vending businesses, which require them to be at their stalls every day. They indicated that ward-based voting was a disadvantage to them, because they sell their wares in other wards and at times travel to neighbouring countries to source their stock. There was high probability that on polling day they would be away from the centres where they live. They also stated that they were not attending any rallies, because the previous elections did not transform their lives in any way, so they saw no reason to bother themselves with attending the rallies and voting. To them it was a waste of time.

Voter Registration Challenges

Some of the challenges which were encountered during the voter registration process included the following:

- Lack of birth certificates and identity cards;
- Mobile registration centres which were issuing national identity documents were not easily accessible in some rural districts;
- Forced/coerced voter registration and demand for voter registration slips by some political parties;
- Ward-based voter registration meant that people had to travel long distances to go and register to vote at the nearest centre;
- The ward-based system posed challenges to people who were registered in one ward but working or

- schooling in a different ward. This affected women primarily as they were cross border traders or vendors working in different wards or towns;
- The voters' roll inspection period was said to be too short especially for rural women who had numerous household chores to carry out from morning to late afternoon when the voter registration process took place;
 - When it came to the inspection of the voters' roll, rural communities without cell phones did not timeously get the messages to go and inspect the voters' roll. Some of them also had limited access to the media so their access to this information was affected.

Participation

Participation entails voluntary activities which are provided for in Section 67 (2) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, i.e. to form, to join and to peacefully participate in the activities of a political party or organisation of one's choice. From our assessment, women constituted the majority of the voters but their participation as candidates was limited as evidenced by the low number of women who succeeded in the primary elections of different political parties. For example, ZANU (PF) had 11% women for the National Assembly and MDC Alliance had 8%. Political parties made public proclamations about equal participation in the electoral processes but there was minimal implementation.

In terms of support for women's participation in politics, 84% of the respondents indicated that women had not received any support from their political parties and those that had contested at the primary elections had used their own resources to campaign. Sixteen percent pointed out that support had been rendered at community level for the participation of women in politics in the form of projects such as internal savings and lending, "mukando" and poultry rearing.

In addition, women also faced insidious types of psychological violence during election time, including slurs regarding their marital status or sexuality, harassment as well as physical and psychological abuse. Questions were therefore asked to assess the types of violence and discrimination experienced by women within political spaces. Seventy percent of the respondents indicated that hate speech was used against women. Statements such as "haanamurume", meaning she does not have a husband or "vakadzi vanoita politics vanohura", meaning women who engage in politics are prostitutes were cited as examples. Some were accused of overstaying in power and corruption yet they had developed their wards more than their male counterparts through construction of primary schools, dip tanks, toilets as well as rehabilitation of boreholes.

In terms of inter-party relations, there were minimal incidents of violence against candidates and community members. The majority of respondents (89%) pointed out that the election period was generally peaceful unlike in the previous elections. Where incidents of violence were witnessed, the respondents cited intra-party conflicts in the form of coercion, physical assault and verbal abuse as opposed to inter-party violence which characterised past polls.

Challenges affecting women's participation in politics

Respondents indicated that:

- Patriarchy still relegates women to domestic and reproductive roles so women's participation in politics is not acceptable in most rural communities.
- Women also highlighted that being a politician was cumbersome and involved spending a lot of time away from home, which was not ideal for married women.

- The other challenge that hampered women's participation was lack of support for women candidates by fellow women. Both male and female respondents pointed out that women do not support each other.

Another problem which was cited was sexual harassment whereby women were coerced into sexual relationships by senior members of their parties to receive political backing and financial support for campaigns.

Voter Education

Section 40 (1) (a) of the Electoral Act calls upon ZEC to provide adequate, accurate and unbiased voter education and to ensure that voter education by other persons is adequate and not misleading or biased towards a certain political party. Information on voter education was therefore obtained to assess the following:

- Level of understanding of voter education
- Stakeholders involved in voter education
- Methods used to conduct voter education
- Convenience of schedules for voter education
- Content of voter education
- Expectations for future voter education content

Sixty-six percent (66%) of the respondents understood what voter education meant. The respondents explained that it involved awareness on the right to vote, and the accompanying processes from voter registration, inspection of the voters' roll, nomination of candidates, voting, counting of votes and transfer of power. Respondents highlighted that voter education was mainly conducted by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) but other stakeholders such as the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), Election Resource Centre (ERC), traditional leaders among others complemented the efforts of ZEC. Various methods were used to conduct the voter education. These included distribution of pamphlets, television advertisements, door to door interaction and community meetings. In terms of timing of the voter education, it was said that the processes took place throughout the day and if one was busy they could just get the reading material and read at convenient times. On expectations for future voter education content, the respondents recommended the following:

- Dissemination of information on complaints mechanisms for election related violations.
- Dissemination of information in braille and in indigenous minority languages.

Challenges which affected voter education

Some of the challenges which were cited were as follows:

- The venues for voter education were said to be far and this affected attendance by women who have multiple household chores during weekdays;
- Low literacy levels also affected the uptake of the voter registration processes due to limited understanding of the benefits of voting;
- Lack of transportation limited geographical coverage of voter education by voter educators who were elderly and middle aged. Some of them had difficulties in walking so they failed to cover all areas, causing prejudice to people who were supposed to benefit from voter education;
- ZEC conducted voter education during school learning time so students were not afforded the opportunity to attend;
- Some persons with disabilities failed to attend voter education sessions due to mobility challenges.

Nomination Court

Section 46 of the Electoral Act provides for nomination of candidates. Nomination is part of the process of selecting candidates for election. Nomination rules regulate the conditions under which a candidate or political party is entitled to stand for election. During the monitoring exercise, it was noted that only the political candidates and sitting politicians were aware of nomination court processes. Aspiring candidates indicated that the process was not complicated since there were clear requirements such as copies of birth certificate, national identity cards, proof of residence, nomination fees (except for councillors) and signatures of registered voters nominating them. If one complied with the requirements, there were no chances of rejection of nomination papers. It was also highlighted that ZEC went around the provinces educating aspiring candidates on the requirements for nomination to prevent last minute rejection.

However, challenges were also noted at the nomination court. The centralisation of nomination courts in provincial capitals posed logistical challenges especially for women who had to secure accommodation in the towns or cities and spent at least two days away from home since the processes were supposed to be held over a single day. Nomination court processes started early but there were delays in some areas since the voters' roll was delivered late and the verification processes took time resulting in late completion of the processes. As such people could not travel back home on the same day. Further, some nominees failed to find their names on the voters' roll.

Political Party Processes

With regards to political party processes, questions were directed to candidates only. On the issue of nomination of candidates for primary elections and compilation of party lists, respondents mentioned that each candidate was expected to submit their curriculum vitae and the selection process would be done based on the papers submitted. Those who were contesting at local governmental level responded that there were no clear guidelines on candidate determination. Whoever wanted to contest was allowed to express interest and avail themselves for candidacy. However, some of the female candidates felt that the selection process was not transparent since those affiliated to party senior members were assured of positive consideration. In the parties' primary elections female party members voted for men, resulting in poor performance by the female candidates. On the other hand, those contesting at National Assembly level explained that the rules that govern the process are stipulated in the constitutions of political parties which were said to be gender neutral, without provision for any female quotas.

The findings indicated that the following challenges were faced during the primary elections:

- Favouritism in selection of candidates in favour of those who were affiliated to senior members of the political parties;
- Curriculum vitae of some aspiring candidates were procedurally withdrawn without justification and did not reach the Commissariat for consideration. This applied to both male and female candidates, but most female candidates did not come forward to seek nomination due to fear of rejection by party structures;
- Tampering with cell registers and removal of names from the cell voters' roll;
- Lack of financial resources for campaigning especially for women;
- Non-consideration of requests for re-run of the elections in some cases;
- Interference with electoral processes, e.g. some candidates running away with ballot boxes in the presence of the police.

Campaign strategies

Campaigns were still sporadic since most parties had not started campaigning at the time of the pre-election monitoring. For those who had begun campaigning, the process was done peacefully. Respondents stated that the political environment was largely peaceful with isolated incidents, primarily defacing campaign posters. Opposition parties concurred that there was no violence and they were campaigning freely as compared to previous years. Police clearances for their campaign meetings were being processed quickly, and personnel from the security sector who attended their meetings, did not intimidate participants.

In as far as addressing women's issues during campaigns was concerned, it was highlighted by the respondents that political parties did not adequately address women's issues when campaigning due to male domination in the leadership. Respondents alleged that political parties discussed women's issues such as access to sanitary wear, clean and safe water, reproductive health services and economic empowerment issues, among others, to lure women to vote for them. However, after having been voted into power, the candidates did not make efforts to deliver on the promises made during campaigns. Female respondents also pointed out that when women's issues were addressed, focus was on micro-economic empowerment through projects such as clubs, loans and gardens.

To attract the votes of women some political parties were said to be using food aid and humanitarian assistance. Women went out in their numbers to campaign rallies where donations were made available. On support given to female candidates by the respective political parties, most female candidates indicated that they did not receive any material support from their respective parties in comparison with their male counterparts who got vehicles and funds for producing campaign materials.

With regards to access to the media, all the candidates who were interviewed, both male and female, complained about the limited media coverage of the smaller political parties in the state-owned media and alleged that ZANU PF party received more coverage. It was pointed out that in some instances, candidates had to resort to social media to enhance their visibility and communicate with their supporters without interference by any other party. However, there were fears of manipulation of information on social media.

ELECTION DAY ASSESSMENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

Voting process

The ZGC teams witnessed the pre-polling formalities at polling stations such as the opening of ballot boxes, checking of necessary stationery, inspection of polling booths and the voting process started on time. It was also observed that women with children, pregnant women, the elderly and persons with disabilities were given preferential treatment. In addition, most of the polling stations were clearly marked except for a few which only had markings at the entrance to the venues. For accessibility purposes, the polling stations were strategically positioned at schools and business centres.

Polling Personnel

In terms of polling personnel, it was observed that while women were the majority in terms of numbers, more men occupied decision making positions across all levels, e.g. Constituency Elections Officers and Presiding Officers within the election management system, while women occupied mostly administrative and support functions. Similarly, there were fewer women police officers as security details compared to men. For example, in Gwanda, Matabeleland South Province, the gender disaggregated distribution of polling personnel was as follows:

POSITION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Supervisors	48	30	78
Coordinators	2	0	2
Constituency Election Officers	13	0	13
Deputy Constituency Officers	15	11	26
Ward Election Officers	133	34	167
Deputy Ward Election Officers	101	66	167
Presiding Officers	451	214	665
Polling Officers	1855	2742	4597
Data Capturers	147	177	324
District Logistic Committee	71	16	87
Casuals	37	8	45
District Support Staff	30	36	66
Provincial Logistic Committee	11	1	12
Provincial Support Staff	7	12	19
Provincial Data Capturers	1	3	4
Voter Education	308	438	746
Overall	3230	3788	7018

Ablution facilities

It was observed that at most polling stations there were poor sanitation facilities which did not consider the specific needs of women polling personnel, during the week they were in camp. In some urban areas, there was provision of mobile toilets. However, these toilets did not have provision for disposal of sanitary wear and room for bathing. In some instances, the personnel had to use the bucket system to flush toilets. In rural areas, some of the Blair toilets at the polling stations were not clean, which led the personnel to resort to the bush system.

Accommodation

With regards to accommodation facilities, the conditions were deplorable for polling officers and security personnel. Males and females shared facilities including tents and classrooms where women slept in one corner and males in the other corner. In the polling stations which doubled as sleeping quarters for the polling personnel, there was lack of lighting, so the personnel had to use gas lamps, torches and candles.

Disability friendly facilities

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission commends the ZEC for the provision of disability friendly voting booths at every polling station. However, in terms of accessibility of the polling stations there were limited ramps for wheelchair users. The makeshift ramps which were available at some stations were not safe for use and posed a risk of falling. There was also limited accessibility at some polling stations for the elderly and persons with disabilities some had walked for at least four kilometres.

Assisted voters

Most of the assisted voters were women, some of whom were said to be illiterate or could not see properly. This requires further interrogation as the GO did not delve into this issue, because of limited capacity.

Observations around the polling station

During the monitoring exercise, it was noted that for those who were turned away, the majority were women. The rejected prospective voters were turned away for various reasons such as:

- wrong polling station;
- not appearing on the voters' roll;
- torn/ old/ photocopied IDs;
- wrong ID (drivers' licence);
- not registered as voters.

Gender Roles

Deployment of polling officers outside their districts or provinces affects gender roles especially of women who have caring roles.

Legislation

Lack of legislation to compel political parties to ensure implementation of the parity principle creates a gap for promoting women's participation in politics.

Post-election Findings

The actual election results show that only 12.4% women were elected outside the women's quota for National Assembly (33.4% inclusive of the women's quota) and 13.3% at local government level. These figures show a continuous reduction in the numbers of women across the board in politics and decision-making process since 2008. This is taking the country further away from the 50-50 representation that the women's movement has been advocating.

Misogyny and patriarchy were the biggest challenges for women in this election. Women in politics were subjected to sexist comments within and out of their parties. These comments included publicly calling aspiring female candidates prostitutes and other denigrating names as part of the strategy to elbow out women systemically¹. Women presidential candidates were not spared, they also met sexist backlash in the mainstream and on social media showing that patriarchal attitudes towards women in politics are still very much a part of our politics².

¹ <https://www.herald.co.zw/election-2018-women-fail-to-gain-ground/>

² <https://koliwemajama.co.zw/cyber-violence-makes-internet-use-gendered-issue/>

Recommendations

ZGC

- The Zimbabwe Gender Commission should embark on intensive awareness and conscientisation programmes for visibility of the Commission;
- Focus on community awareness to emphasise the importance of gender equality, as most people appeared ignorant when asked about the role of women as leaders;
- Carry out public education on gender and elections on an ongoing basis, because the electoral cycle does not end with completion of a poll. If limited to the run up to the elections, it will not be able to cover all areas because of limited financial resources and time constraints;
- To facilitate and monitor the implementation of the parity principle (50-50) in politics and decision making;
- Condemn political violence, especially against women;
- Receive and investigate complaints of men and women who have been unfairly treated in political processes.
- Recruit Public Relations Officer to engage with the media;
- Lobby for the application of the quota system in local Government, National Assembly and Senate.

ZEC

- Increase the scope of voter education from concentration in residential areas to other public places such as market places;
- To promote the secrecy of the ballot, ZEC should come up with tactile ballot paper with a provision for both the visually impaired and the sighted;
- Broaden the scope of eligibility for postal voting to include other groups of people who because of work commitments, are unable to vote in the wards they would have registered in;
- Resources like motor vehicles should be adequately availed to voter educators, budget permitting, to increase their geographical coverage and to save them from walking long distances;
- Increase the inspection period for the voters' roll to cater for those living in remote area;
- Decentralisation of voter registration centres especially in rural areas to prevent registrants from walking long distances;
- Voter education material from ZEC should clearly spell out redress mechanisms for violation of electoral rights so that the electorate and candidates are aware of where to seek services;
- ZEC should improve on infrastructure set up and accommodation for polling personnel at polling stations taking into consideration gender differences and basic needs;
- ZEC should review its approach to recruitment of short term election staff through existing institutions and take measures to ensure gender balance across all levels.

ZHRC

- Provide literacy on civil and political rights to grassroots communities so that they understand their rights and the importance of the electoral process.

ZRP

- The police should quickly respond to reports of electoral violence and take appropriate action;
- The police should be apolitical in the discharge of their duties.

THE COURTS

- The courts should expedite trials of political violence cases so that the culprits are brought to book.

POLITICAL PARTIES

- Political parties should observe the gender parity principle as enshrined in the Constitution from the development of their party structures and in the conduct of primary elections so that the constitutional numeric targets for participation of women in politics are achieved;
- Political parties should mainstream gender in their party constitutions, policies, structures and processes;
- Political parties should be compelled to support the enactment of legislation to ensure implementation of the parity principle in drawing up party list;
- Mobilise resources for female candidates.

GOVERNMENT

- Enactment of legislation to compel political parties to ensure equal representation of men and women in politics;
- Party primary elections should be monitored and run by independent bodies;
- Capacity building in leadership and governance to winning candidates;
- Implementation of the provisions of the National Gender Policy by political parties;
- Mobile birth registration and processing of national identity documents by the Registrar General's Office should be continuous and not limited to election periods.

MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS, GENDER, COMMUNITY, SMALL TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT

- Facilitate women's holistic empowerment through civic education and full participation in the mainstream economy to enable women to finance their political campaigns;
- Increase community awareness programmes on political and electoral rights.

CSOs/ CBOs

- Capacity building for women leaders on leadership and confidence building so that they can effectively discharge their duties;
- Continue to advocate for 50-50 representation in all sectors;
- Facilitate the mentoring of women to stand as candidates.

THE MEDIA

- The media should treat men and women equally whether as voters, candidates and election officials in their reporting;
- There should be an effort to end gendered hate speech, inflammatory language and cyber bullying.