



Zimbabwe
Gender
Commission

WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

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IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PROMOTING WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR	4
3. PRIVATE SECTOR AT A GLANCE AND GENDER DIMENSIONS	5
4. FACTORS DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING POSITIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR	8
4.1. Partriarchal nature of Zimbabwean culture and society	8
4.2. The historical dual and enclave economy of Zimbabwe	8
4.3. The status of employment of women in the labour market	9
4.4. The level of education of women	10
4.5. The skill levels among women	10
5. SELECTED PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR	11
6. PROPOSED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE SHARE OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR	12
6.1. Elimination of stereo types based on partriarchy, culture and subordination of women	12
6.2. Evidence-based and policy-oriented research	12
6.3. Review and enforcement of legislation	13
6.4. Political will, leadership and coodination	14
6.5. Increased public expenditure on social services (education, health care, public utilities) to reduce burden of care economy	14
6.6. Identifying champions for women in decision-making in the private sector	15
6.7. Ensuring good cooperate governance in the private sector	15
7. SUMMARY OF THE KEY INITIATIVES BY VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS	16
8. REFERENCES	20

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, women's participation in decision-making in the private sector has garnered growing attention in the recent past. Women's representation in top positions in the private sector as managers, chief executive officers, board members is now widely perceived not only as a fairness and equality issue but also as a performance issue (UN, 2015). Globally, investors are starting to demand gender diversity as a factor for investing.

Several studies have demonstrated that private sector boards on, which women are represented are more likely to improve performance and be financially successful, have less likelihood of governance scandals and are less likely to operate in tax havens (The Commonwealth, 2015; UN, 2015). Another study by McKinsey (2007) highlighted that companies with three or more women in top management functions delivered 10 times better return on equity. A Grant Thornton study revealed that in 2013 companies with more women in top positions achieved 16 times higher return on sales and 26 times higher return on invested capital and Alexander Mann estimated the value of improving the talent pipeline for women to be worth around £5 billion per year to the United Kingdom (The Commonwealth, 2015). Additionally, Wilson (2009) concluded that having only one woman in a board reduces risks of bankruptcy by 20 percent, and boards that have more women surpasses all male boards in audit and risk control.¹ All these research findings present unquestionable evidence of the constructive role that women play in decision-making positions in the private sector.

Furthermore, the Global Gender-gap Report (2016) clearly highlighted the necessity for promoting gender parity given that women are one-half of the world's population and that women deserve equal access to health, education, economic participation and earning potential, as well as decision-making power.

In pursuit of promoting gender equality, and bringing more women into the mainstream economy and in decision-making positions in both the public and private sector, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) has implemented various initiatives. These include establishing the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (now called the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community Small and Medium Enterprise Development), gender focal desks within Ministries, and the Zimbabwe Gender Commission. The Government also facilitated the development of the National Gender Policy and adopted legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act. In addition, various economic blueprints and national development plans have clearly articulated gender equality in order to address the historical social injustices. More recently, the Government prioritised Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 which seeks to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' amongst its national priority list of 11 SDG. Furthermore, various NGOs and CSOs have been highly active in championing gender equality at all levels.

Whilst implementing these initiatives, there has been a growing consensus of women as key economic agents and improvement in women's access to economic opportunities. However, the focus has mainly been on the public sector and less consideration has been given to gender dynamics in the private sector (corporate world). In fact, despite the many initiatives in recent years to bring more women into leadership roles, gender-based barriers are still prevalent in the corporate world. Whilst progress in the political sphere is stuttering, progress on women's progression into decision-making positions in the private sectors remains sluggish and moves slower than expected. The AfDB report of 2015 concurs with McKinsey & Company's finding that most women in corporate organisations are frozen at the periphery.²

1. <https://phys.org/news/2013-03-women-decisions-companies-men.html>

2. Corporate boardrooms: where are the women? *The Zimbabwe Mail*, February 8, 2018 <https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/columnist/corporate-boardrooms-women/>

This paper provides a critical analysis of the state of women in decision-making positions in the private sector in both the formal and informal economy. It further unpacks what factors define or shape the proportion of women in decision-making positions such as (senior) management and boards of directors. The paper articulates what needs to be implemented in order to realise an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions in the private sector. The paper covers both formal and informal economy dynamics, as well as the rural and urban dynamics of the private sector in Zimbabwe. It also presents the dimension of women as workers and women as entrepreneurs in the investigation of the share of women in decision-making positions in the private sector.

2. DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PROMOTING WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING POSITIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Zimbabwe has undertaken various initiatives to promote women's participation in all spheres of the economy. These include:

- i. Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- ii. Zimbabwe Constitution: Section 17 which mandates the Government to promote gender balance taking into cognisance full participation of women in political, social and economic spheres.
- iii. National Gender Policy:
 - a. Section 5.2 on Gender and Economic Empowerment has a policy strategy on instituting mechanisms to advance equal representation in key economic decision-making positions in all sectors including equal representation in community trusts and other grassroots structures.
 - b. Section 5.3 on Gender, Politics and Decision-making has a policy strategy on developing and strengthening legal instruments, policies and programmes, to ensure attainment of a 50:50 representation of men and women in politics and other key decision-making positions in line with the Constitution.
- iv. Prioritisation of SDG Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls:
 - a. Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

All these initiatives indicate the Government's commitment to gender equality and provide a framework for various stakeholders and economic agents to use in ensuring gender equality in all spheres of the economy.

3. THE PRIVATE SECTOR AT A GLANCE AND GENDER DIMENSIONS

The private sector is defined as that part of the national economy that is not under direct state control and is run by individuals and companies. In most cases, the private sector is run with the intention of making profit. In the case of Zimbabwe, the private sector encompasses the formal and informal economy in both urban and rural areas.

Before analysing women in decision-making positions in the private sector, it is critical to locate women in the labour market by institutional sector. Table 1 shows the share of employed persons by institutional sector and sex.

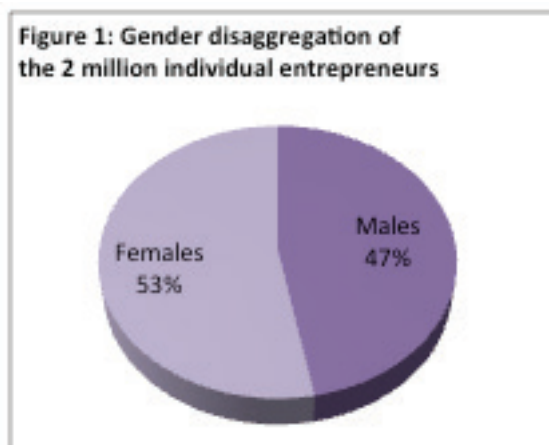
Table 1: Percentage distribution of employed Aged 15 years and above by institutional sector and sex, 2014

Institutional Sector	Male	Female	Total
Central Government	59.5	40.5	100
Local Government	50.3	49.7	100
Parastatal Financial	51.6	48.4	100
Parastatal non-financial	77.2	22.8	100
Private Households	44.1	55.9	100
Private Enterprise - financial	65.1	34.9	100
Private Enterprise – non-financial	59.2	40.8	100
Cooperatives	71.9	28.1	100
NGOs	65.6	34.4	100
Other	65.9	34.1	100
Not stated	61.1	39	100

Source: ZIMSTAT, 2014

Table 1 shows that women were over-represented in private households at 55.9 percent, indicating a vast pool of untapped economic potential and under-utilisation of women's talent. Women were under-represented in both the private financial and non-financial sectors. For instance, women make up 34.9 percent of the private financial sector and 40.8 percent of the private non-financial sector. That women are in minority in the key private financial and non-financial sectors corresponds with the under-representation of women in decision-making positions in the private sector.

Figures 1 and Figure 2 further unpacks the position of women in the informal economy which also constitutes the private sector.



Source: World Bank FinScope Survey, 2012

The FinScope Medium to Small-Scale Enterprises (MSME) Survey of 2012 revealed that 5.7 million people were working in the MSMEs. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the breakdown of 2 million entrepreneurs by gender. Out of the 2 million individual entrepreneurs, 53 percent were female, whilst 54 percent of the 800 000 business owners with employees were female. This shows that some women have made it into decision-making positions through starting and running their own private businesses.

Table 2 shows the gender composition of boards of selected (formal) companies in the private sector that are listed on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange. From the 64 listed companies, only 42 had clear gender disaggregation of data. The rest either had no listing of board membership, or did not specify the gender of the board members.

Table 2: Percentage of Women in Company Boards, 2018

	Company Name	Total board members	No. of males	No. of females	% females
1	Nicoz Diamond	9	4	5	56
2	Hippo Valley	-	-	-	45
3	Hwange Colliery Company Ltd	5	3	2	40
4	Pretoria Portland Cement	10	6	4	40
5	OK Zimbabwe Ltd	9	6	3	33
6	Dairibord Holdings	10	7	3	30
7	CBZ Holdings	7	5	2	29
8	First Mutual Properties	7	5	2	29
9	Old Mutual	18	13	5	28
10	British American Tobacco Zim Ltd	11	8	3	27
11	National Foods Ltd	4	3	1	25
12	Econet Wireless Zimbabwe	12	9	3	25
13	Zb Financial Holdings	9	7	2	22
14	Edgars Stores Ltd	9	7	2	22
15	NMBZ	9	7	2	22
16	Rainbow Tourism Group	10	8	2	20
17	FBC Holdings Ltd	11	9	2	18
18	Seed Co	11	9	2	18

19	Delta Corporation	12	10	2	17
20	Fidelity life Assurance of Zimbabwe	6	5	1	17
21	Innskor	6	5	1	17
22	Masimba Holdings Ltd	6	5	1	17
23	Padenga Holdings	6	5	1	17
24	Axia Corporation	6	5	1	17
25	Mashonaland Holdings Limited	6	5	1	17
26	African Sun	7	6	1	14
27	Ariston Holdings Ltd	7	6	1	14
28	First Mutual Holdings	7	6	1	14
29	Unifreight Africa	8	7	1	13
30	African Distillers	9	8	1	11
31	Lafarge Cement	10	9	1	10
32	ART Corporation	5	5	0	0
33	Zimplow Holdings	9	9	0	0
34	Simbisa Brands Ltd	8	8	0	0
35	Power Speed Electrical Holdings	6	6	0	0
36	Rio-Zim Ltd	8	8	0	0
37	Star Africa Corporation Ltd	5	5	0	0
38	Dawn Property Consultancy	5	5	0	0
39	Zimre Property Investments	6	6	0	0
40	TSL Limited	6	6	0	0
41	Truworhs	7	7	0	0
42	Proplastics	2	2	0	0

Source: Data derived and calculated from Zimbabwe Stock Exchange, October 2018

Table 2 reveals that only Nicoz Diamond managed to surpass gender parity in its board composition with 56 percent females. Other companies, which were doing better but had not yet achieved gender parity on board composition include Hippo Valley (45%), Hwange Colliery Company Ltd (40%) and Pretoria Portland Cement (40%). Half of the companies in Table 2 had only one or two women in their board structure, meaning that women make up around 25 percent. A total of 26 of the companies in Table 2 were highly gender-insensitive, with no woman on their boards. This shows, that most of the big corporates in the private sector are still far from reaching gender parity in their company board of directors.

4. FACTORS DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

There are several factors that undermine the rise of women in decision-making positions in the private sector. These include the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean culture, economy and society; the status of employment of women in the labour market and the level of education and skills of women.

4.1 Patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean culture and society

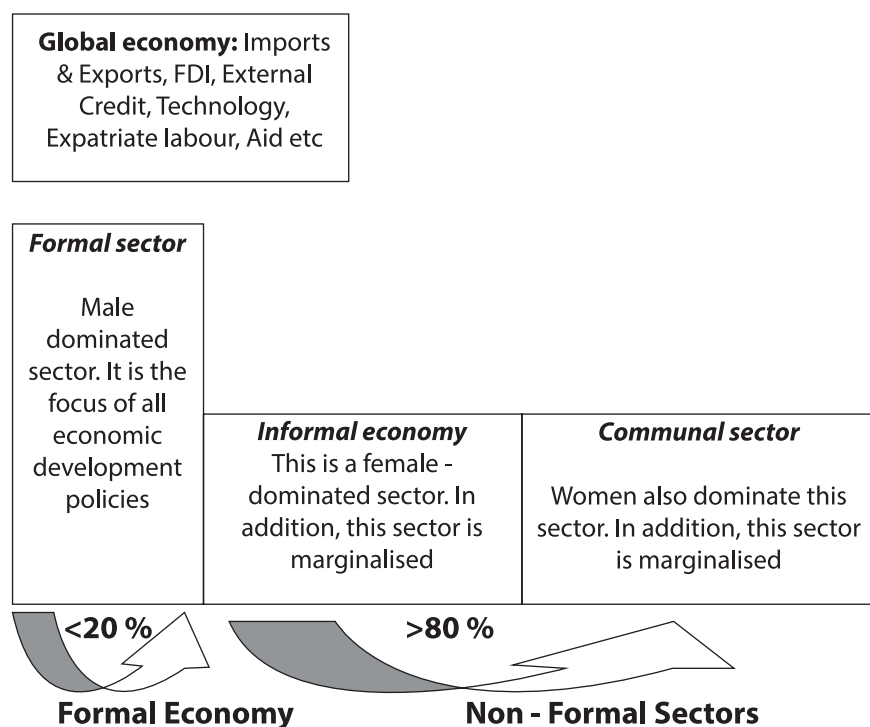
The under-representation of women in decision-making in the private sector can be traced back to the historical and patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean culture and society which prevented women from (i) participating in the formal labour market; and (ii) accessing the key resources necessary for the expansion of their capabilities, thus undermining their rise in decision-making positions particularly in the formal private sector (LEDRIZ, 2011). Patriarchy, the ideology of male precedence and domination over women prescribed by tradition, culture, and religion relegated the role of women to the household and not in the labour market, as evidenced by the over-representation of women in the private households in Table 1. Men were able to enter the labour market (paid employment), while women were relegated to subsistence farming in rural areas and the informal economy.

Today, even women who have made it into the formal labour market still encounter patriarchal tendencies from their male counterparts acting as 'glass ceilings', inhibiting women from occupying positions of decision-making in the private sector. Stereotyping that 'women cannot handle leadership roles' and 'boardrooms are for men' continues to exist and limits ascension of women into decision-making positions, especially in the private sector. At times, women aspiring to enter decision-making positions are referred to as 'loose', 'not-lady like', 'loud-mouthed' and 'uncultured', among others. Such naming instils stigma, and some women end up shunning leadership positions (FES, 2018).

4.2 The historical dual and enclave economy of Zimbabwe

At independence in 1980, the government did not structurally transform the dual and enclave economy (Figure 3) that it inherited. This became the foundation of the economic superstructure that continues to marginalise economic sectors and activities dominated by women. The duality of the economy was explained by the fact that a well-developed, modern and male-dominated formal (private) sector co-existed with an underdeveloped and backward non-formal sector comprising of the informal and rural economy where most women were found (LEDRIZ, 2011). Enclavity was explained by the fact that the male dominated formal economy had a growth momentum of its own due to its linkage with the global economy and it was isolated from the activities that took place in the non-formal (informal and smallholder) sector where the majority of women were found (ibid). Sadly, government failed to address this dual and enclave nature of the economy as most government's economic policies and support over the years, even up to the new millennium, was geared mostly towards the formal economy. This, despite that the latter has been deteriorating for the past two decades, due to structural adjustment programmes, economic crisis and de-industrialisation. As a result, most women remain trapped in the under-developed, non-formal sectors. Women are not well-absorbed in the formal labour market, particularly the formal private sector. This is a reason why women are also under-represented in the decision-making positions in the formal economy.

Figure 3: The dual and enclave structure of the Zimbabwean economy



Source: LEDRIZ, 2011

4.3 The status of employment of women in the labour market

The status of employment of women in the labour market has significant implications, on both their share in decision-making structures of companies, and their rise to decision-making positions in the private sector. Table 3 analyses the gender dynamics in relation to the status of employment in the labour market.

Table 3: Status of employment by gender

Status of employment	2004			2011			2014		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Paid employee-permanent	70.8	29.2	100	70.1	29.9	100	66	34	100
Paid employee casual/temporary/seasonal	60.2	39.8	100	61.2	38.8	100	64.5	35.5	100
Employer	82.1	17.9	100	69.8	30.2	100	75	25	100
Own account worker (communal, resettlement & peri-urban farmer)	38	62	100	43.2	56.8	100	43.1	56.9	100
Own account worker (other)	47.9	52.1	100	48.3	51.7	100	47	53	100
Unpaid contributing family worker	51.9	48.1	100	34.6	65.4	100	39.8	60.2	100
Member of producer cooperative	0	0	0	0	0	0	83.5	16.5	100
Not stated	0	100	100	52.8	47.2	100	31.4	68.6	100
Total	51.4	48.6	100	49.8	50.2	100	49.3	50.7	100

Source: Calculated from 2004, 2011 & 2014 Labour Force Surveys, ZimStat.

It is clear from Table 3 that there exist stark gender disparities in relation to status of employment, a critical issue affecting the share of women in decision-making positions in the private sector. Having a more stable and permanent job can increase the chances of women to occupy a decision-making position in a company and vice versa. In 2014, the percentage share of women in paid permanent employment was only 34 percent. Similarly, women were under-represented in paid casual/temporary/seasonal work at 35.5 percent. Women were on the other hand, over-represented in the categories of own account workers (communal, resettlement and peri-urban farmers), unpaid contributing family worker and those not stated. Fewer women were employers – at 25 percent, which means less chances of occupying decision-making structures of a company.

4.4 The level of education of women

Another critical factor in determining women’s participation in the labour market, and particularly, decision-making positions in the private sector is the level of education. The private sector is highly competitive, and education is a key consideration. Table 4 presents gender dynamics in educational attainment between 2004 and 2014.

Table 4: Gender dynamics in level of education (employed persons aged 15 years and above), 2004, 2011 & 2014

Level of education	2004			2011			2014		
	Male	Female	Total %	Male	Female	Total %	Male	Female	Total %
No primary education	29.7	70.3	100	25.3	74.7	100	23.2	76.8	100
Primary	46.2	53.8	100	44.0	56.0	100	44.9	55.1	100
Secondary	57.2	42.8	100	53.8	46.2	100	53.0	47.0	100
Tertiary	61.0	39.0	100	62.0	38.0	100	57.9	42.1	100
Not stated	30.4	69.6	100	28.0	72.0	100	28.3	71.7	100
Total	51.4	48.6	100	49.8	50.2	100	49.3	50.7	100

Source: Calculated from 2004, 2011 & 2014 Labour Force Surveys, ZimStat.

Table 4 shows that the percentage share of women is higher at primary level than men’s, but this trend shifts dramatically for secondary and tertiary levels. For instance, in 2014, the share of girls at primary level was 55.1 percent. This share dropped drastically at secondary level to 47 percent and further downwards to 42.1 percent for tertiary level, clearly indicating that there is a lower transition rate for female students from primary to secondary and from secondary to tertiary levels. As a result, the chances for women to get into the labour market, and more so in the private sector and decision-making positions become constrained due to the education-gender-gap.

However, more recently, there has been an increase in women enrolling in universities and passing with good grades compared to men. The question that then arises is why women are still under-represented in decision-making positions in the private sector, despite the increase in the enrolment at tertiary levels. This means that there must be more deep-seated constraints for women to break the “glass ceiling”.

4.5 The skill levels among women

Additionally, skill levels determine the chances of women to get into decision-making positions in the private sector. Table 5 shows the gender dynamics in terms of skill level.

Table 5. Gender dynamics in skill level (employed persons aged 15 years and above), 2004, 2011 & 2014

Skill Level	2004			2011			2014		
	Male	Female	Total (%)	Male	Female	Total (%)	Male	Female	Total (%)
Professional	59.7	40.3	100	59.3	40.7	100	57.3	42.7	100
Skilled	73.5	26.5	100	74.7	25.3	100	73	27	100
Semi-Skilled	73.5	26.5	100	69.1	30.9	100	69.1	30.9	100
Unskilled	46.4	53.6	100	46.4	53.6	100	45.9	54.1	100
Not Known	61.1	38.9	100	46.4	53.6	100	55.3	44.7	100
Not Stated	38.8	61.2	100	45.9	54.1	100	31.1	68.9	100
Total	51.4	48.6	100	49.8	50.2	100	49.3	50.7	100

Source: Calculated from 2004, 2011 & 2014 Labour Force Surveys, ZimStat.

Table 5 clearly shows that there were significant gender differentials in professional, skilled and semi-skilled workers, with women having less skills than men. However, the percentage share of females, although lower, exhibited an increasing trend between 2004 and 2014. For instance, the percentage share of female professionals increased from 40.3 percent in 2004, to 40.7 percent in 2011 and further to 42.7 percent in 2014. Similarly, the percentage share of skilled females increased from 26.5 percent in 2004 to 27 percent in 2014. However, these rates remain very low and requires redress if women are to get higher chances of occupying decision-making positions in the private sector. The private sector is a highly competitive sector, thus strategies are needed to improve transition between school levels as well as skill development in order to increase women's chances of attaining decision-making positions in the sector. More recently, ambitious women have been willing to invest in professional education in order to ascend within the corporate sector. However, these women are still inhibited in their career advancement due to the 'glass ceiling', despite comparative high qualification and skills.

5. SELECTED PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

There are some notable initiatives that have been implemented by selected institutions, and companies in the private sector in order to increase the number of women in their company boards. For instance:

- i. The Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) is compiling a directory/data base of women in leadership positions. The database identifies women and their qualifications and skills.
- ii. ZB Bank has introduced a new gender balance policy of recruiting 52 percent women in entry-level positions. The initiative is intended to increase ZB's pool of eligible female executives because women tend to drop out as they move up the career ladder.³ In one instance, it was noted that a woman turned down a managerial promotion because she did not want to deal with company politics. This indicates that the work environment must change in order to accommodate gendered differences in experiences in leadership positions.⁴
- iii. The Institute of Directors Zimbabwe (IoDZ) launched the Women on Board Zimbabwe (WoBZ) initiative in 2016, which seeks to promote 50 percent representation of women in company boards.
- iv. Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) has a Women's Desk which undertakes mentorship programmes for women in business.
- v. PROWEB has developed a database of professional women, female executives, and business women and

3. *Why do we have a few female board members? – The Zimbabwe Independent September 7, 2018. Accessed 13 October 2018 <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/why-do-we-have-a-few-female-board-members/>*

4. *Why do we have a few female board members? – The Zimbabwe Independent September 7, 2018. Accessed 13 October 2018 <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/why-do-we-have-a-few-female-board-members/>*

undertakes various programmes to assist women operating in the private sector.

- vi. Lafarge Cement Company established a Lactation Policy for female workers which led to (i) the establishment of a “Lactation Room” where mothers can take a break from work to breastfeed their babies or to express and store breastmilk; and (ii) a day-care centre for babies and children from one year old where mothers can leave their babies and go and breastfeed them during their breaks. This ensures women workers can undertake their work duties with less constraints.

6. PROPOSED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE SHARE OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

“Making gender diversity a top board and CEO priority.”

Several studies have shown that rectifying gender imbalances and increasing women in private sector decision-making positions is possible, but it requires work and there is no ‘quick fix’ solution. Change often results in resistance because ‘the change’ challenges and disrupts existing and institutionalised norms and values, and informal rules and male privileges in the world of work. The following are some of the recommendations for consideration to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in the private sector.

6.1 Elimination of stereotypes based on patriarchy, culture and subordination of women

“... boardrooms are traditionally a male environment where women are not considered if a position opens up so male directors look for another male director.”⁵

Whilst the Government, NGOs and CSOs have implemented various programmes to eliminate various stereotypes against women, more needs to be done especially in the private sector.

Although, quotas or targets are necessary on their own, they are not the panacea to progressively increase women representation in company boards of directors or any other senior management level positions. It also requires elimination of the stereotypes embedded in patriarchal and gendered social norms as well as interruption of the status quo and elimination of unconscious as well as conscious biases that prevent women from taking up decision-making positions.

6.2 Evidence-based and policy-oriented research

Whilst data and information on women in decision-making in the public sector exists, the research for the private sector is insufficient and fragmented. Reliable and recent data is critical to inform and demonstrate benchmarks for policy and legislative reform. Thus, there is need to continually undertake evidence-based and policy-oriented research on the gender dynamics in leadership in the private sector. Continuous undertaking of gender audits which focus on inventory of gender initiatives in the private sector and their impact is pertinent to improve increase of women’s participation in decision-making in the private sector.

In addition, international good practices and experiences of increasing women in company boards and senior management levels in both the formal and informal private sector is under-explored in Zimbabwe and would benefit from extended research. Such evidence-based research should be undertaken, and evidence compiled and used to promote good-practice approaches at the company and national level in Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, companies should publish gender-disaggregated data in their annual reports and corporate governance

5. *Why do we have a few female board members? – The Zimbabwe Independent September 7, 2018. Accessed 13 October 2018. <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/why-do-we-have-a-few-female-board-members/>*

codes should impose quotas for women's representation on boards.⁶ Reporting should be transparent and include monitoring as well as collection of qualitative information from women. This should cover all levels and opportunities, including:

- i. appointments;
- ii. promotions;
- iii. allocation to important projects and opportunities,

This will also ensure that women are not losing out on opportunities and chances for success when applying for executive roles. To support this, companies should adopt a "fact-based gender diversity strategy," which involves using the above data to understand women's contributions within a company.

6.3 Review and enforcement of legislation

The evidence reveals that legislated change, especially when underpinned with penalties, brings results. A starting point could therefore be the Zimbabwe's Companies Act (Chapter 24:03)⁷ which should be amended to require gender diversity in company decision-making bodies. Already, the Parliament has gazetted the Companies and Other Business Entities Bill, 2018, which will, among other issues, update the existing Companies Act.⁸ However, among the list of areas being reviewed there is no mention of gender-related issues or promotion of gender diversity in companies, an area which requires urgent attention.

Critically, when reviewing the gender diversity issues in the Companies Act, companies should be given a transitional period for them to seek qualified women, train potential female candidates and prepare for conformity with the law. In the Norwegian case (see Annex 1), providing a transitional period for companies to adjust was highlighted as one of the key success factors in increasing the percentage of women on boards in the private sector from six in 2002 to 40 by 2009. This also avoids the need to disrupt existing boards whose tenure is still active.

Furthermore, there is need to enforce ZimCode. The ZimCode is a corporate governance instrument that guides companies in Zimbabwe to adhere to the code of "Best Practice" in organisational performance. Principle 94 of ZimCode states that every board should consider whether its size, diversity and demographics make it effective, whilst principle 126 states that appointment of the Chief Executive Officer must be based on merit, skill, leadership qualities and experience without losing sight of the need to promote gender equality. There is a need to enforce this code, implore companies to implement gender diversity strategies and make it mandatory for all companies to disclose their diversity policy in appointing directors, including measurable targets. As reiterated earlier, adopting policies and legislation that support women's leadership in companies in the private sector must be enforced, with accompanying penalties for non-compliance. Furthermore, whilst some of the companies listed on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange provide information on the gender composition of their Board of Directors, other companies do not provide such information. It should be possible to enforce that such information is provided.

Another important legislation is the Tripartite Negotiation Forum (TNF) Bill, which remained unfinished for more than three years. The TNF is a national social dialogue structure constituting three social partners – Government, Business, and Labour. The TNF's mandate is to ensure consultation, cooperation and negotiation on social and economic issues by the three social partners. In this case, the TNF's role would be to bring up issues of gender diversity in decision-making positions in all spheres of life, including public and private sectors as well as women's visibility in the TNF meetings. The TNF was signed into law in June 2019 by President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

6. *Corporate boardrooms: where are the women? The Zimbabwe Mail, February 8, 2018 <https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/columnist/corporate-boardrooms-women/>*

7. *The current Company's Act was legislated as far back as in 1951 and has undergone several amendments over the years.*

8. *Companies Act to be overhauled, Newsday, October 16, 2018. Accessed 16/10/18*

6.4 Political will, leadership and coordination

“The path to lasting performance improvement on any priority – like gender balance – starts at the top’. The critical factor in bringing about substantive change is solid leadership commitment that is visible in behaviour and practice. It is essential for top leaders to sustain their engagement in driving change, especially if it is to happen at a satisfactory pace.” (The Commonwealth, 2015)

“There is no shortage of aspiring, talented women for boards, but it is acknowledged that without a driven approach and the support of chairmen, search firms and businesses, many would not have been appointed to a board position – with the consequent loss of their talent to the economy.” (ibid)

Lack of political will, and leadership commitment is often identified as the main failure in making progress towards increased women’s leadership. The ‘will’ must be more than a statement of principled support; it must be a solid commitment that is evident in behaviour, practice and performance, in the public as well as the private sector (The Commonwealth, 2015). In Zimbabwe, the private sector usually follows developments in the public sector. Hence, the Government must lead by example in championing women in decision-making positions in line with the Constitution to encourage the private sector to follow-suite. However, this is not to say that the private sector cannot also take a lead in changing the status quo.

For instance, it should be noted that the Zimbabwe Women’s Microfinance Bank (ZWMB), the bank which was created by the then Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development has a female Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and a male as Chairperson of the Board.

Political will would also be reflected if the Government was to take a leadership role by ratifying and domesticating International Labour Organisation (ILO)’s Conventions focused on creating workplace environments that facilitate women’s engagement and participation in the labour market and in decision-making positions. The three ILO Conventions that the Government should focus on are Convention No. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation); Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection and Convention No. 156 on Women with Family Responsibilities.

6.5 Increased public expenditure on social services (education, health care, public utilities) to reduce burden of care economy

As alluded to earlier, women often spend twice as much time as their male counterparts undertaking care economy work. This reduces their time spent on economic activities and limits their chances in taking up decision-making positions. One of the most critical pressure points, especially for working women, often relates to the care infrastructure such as health care as well as availability and affordability of childcare facilities. Stronger care-related infrastructure and availability of quality childcare services reduces women’s time on domestic and care activities which could enhance women’s uptake of leadership roles in the private sector.

It was explained above, that education and skill development are critical factors when it comes to appointment to decision-making positions, as the private sector is highly competitive. However, girls have in average fewer mean years of schooling than boys. This is despite the fact that the Zimbabwean Constitution and other legislation stipulates equal access to education for both girls and boys. This gender-gap in education means that conditions that allow the girl-child to remain in school must be created. Greater public expenditures (through the national budget) in water and sanitation, health and electricity in both urban and rural areas will drastically reduce the care burden of the girl-child and allow for girls to be fully educated. This will consequently have positive bearing on their economic participation in the future. Furthermore, additional investment is needed to close the STEM education gender-gap which will contribute to prevent future gender-gaps in decision-making positions in private sector companies where such skills are required.

6.6 Identifying champions for women in decision-making in the private sector

Women champions who hold decision-making positions in the private sector, with connections to women's CSOs and women's business networks, should be identified. Such champions would help to increase mobilisation and advocacy on gender-balanced private sector leadership. These champions can implement various strategies focused on women's professional development by undertaking:

- i. mentoring and coaching programmes;
- ii. sponsorship programmes;
- iii. transformational peer networking and power networking (networking beyond the traditional women social issues to transactional networking);
- iv. sharing career stories and tactics for success;
- v. executive training programmes;

Media should be trained to be gender-sensitive, specifically in reporting about women in the private sector, to complement this process. This will assist in improving organisational culture, tackling unconscious bias and removing barriers in traditional workplace practices. Media, as an opinion leader, should be an instrument to speak truth to power within the private sector.

6.7 Ensuring good corporate governance in the private sector

“The method used to appoint board members doesn't favour women, Board appointments are made through old-boy networks, locking women out [...] and the process of choosing a nominee is not always transparent” Ms. Fraser-Moleketi.

Good corporate governance in the area of gender at company level means:

- i. meaningful disclosure of the proportion of women on boards and in senior management;
- ii. meaningful disclosure of search and nomination processes;
- iii. clear term limits for directors;
- iv. developing a company's gender diversity policy and monitoring and evaluating progress on meeting gender objectives;
- v. setting up committees for devising strategies for gender diversity;
- vi. regularly reviewing the ratio of women to men at all levels, including collective bargaining structures (workers committees, works councils and National Employment Councils);
- vii. use of advertising and outreach strategies to reach a wider audience of potential women candidates, and;
- viii. removal of gender oppressive practices at company level such as sexual harassment, and physical, psychological and emotional violence targeted at women within the workplace.

6.7 Promotion and support for Women-Owned Enterprises (WOEs)

As highlighted in Tables 1 and Table 3 most women are found in private households and in the informal economy. To address this, there is a need to create a strong culture for WOE as a viable option in order to increase the visibility, and recognition of women's capacity to lead companies and organisations. Special focus should be given to under-privileged rural women and women with disabilities. Graduation from small to medium and finally to large scale WOE, including formalisation of these WOE, will go a long way in raising the profile of women as proficient economic agents capable of holding decision-making positions and positively transforming businesses in the private sector. This process will also result in the transformation of the dual and enclave nature of the Zimbabwean economy. Furthermore, it is imperative to promote WOE through linking them with corporate business associations, facilitating exchange of good practices at the national, regional and international levels and upscaling trade fairs and promotional events showcasing women entrepreneurs as role models.

7. SUMMARY OF THE KEY INITIATIVES BY VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

Table 6 below summarises some of the key initiatives or activities that various stakeholders can undertake to improve the number of women in decision-making positions in the private sector.

Table 6. Women In Private Sector (WiPS) Intervention Areas

1. ZIMBABWE GENDER COMMISSION (ZGC)	
Objectives	Strategic interventions/ Activities
Timely and up-to-date statistics and information on women in decision-making positions in the private sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous update and digitalisation of the directory/data base of women in leadership in the private sector, including women's qualifications and skills. • Undertake gender audits in the private sector. • Probe gender issues in the private sector apex bodies. • Encourage private sector companies to develop company gender policies. • Coordinate a database and digitalisation of private sector businesses and organisations undertaking mentorship programmes for women.
Increase women's participation to a 50:50 ratio in national decision-making frameworks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish national forums where women associations and networks have access to policy makers and private sector actors.
Enhance workplace environments that increase the ratio of women in decision-making positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate ratification and domestication of the ILO Conventions Nos 183 on Maternity Protection, 156 on Women with Family Responsibilities and 190 on Violence and Harassment. • Undertake programmes that eliminate gender-based violence at company/workplace level such as sexual, physical, psychological and emotional violence targeted at women.

Alignment and enforcement of laws that enhance women's participation in decision-making in the private sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Company's Act to incorporate gender diversity issues and ensure mainstreaming of women-specific/friendly clauses (e.g. childcare facilities, breastfeeding issues, and transport for women on night shifts). • Facilitate alignment of the Labour Act [Chapter28:01] with the Constitution regarding women specific issues. • Facilitate enforcement of the ZimCode.
Enhance knowledge generation and sharing of experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake research on good practices and experiences in countries progressing in increasing women's share in decision-making positions in the private sector (e.g. Botswana and Norway). • Undertake education and awareness programmes and development of popular educational material that change socialisation and eliminate gender-based stereotypes at family level up to company level. • Simplification of gender-based instruments into local languages.

2. GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE RELEVANT MINISTRIES

Objectives	Strategic interventions/ Activities
Increase women's participation to a 50:50 ratio in decision-making positions in the private sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the low transition rate for girls in school. • Promote graduation from small to medium and finally to large scale WOE's, including formalisation of the businesses. • Prioritisation and ring fencing of public expenditure on social services (education, health care, and public utilities) to reduce burden of care economy for girls and women. • Institutionalisation and operationalisation of gender budgeting. • Strengthen ZIMSTAT to collect and analyse data on women's empowerment indicators e.g., women in leadership positions in private sector, access to resources including land, credit and inputs, occupational and skills segregation, and remuneration in the private sector. • Tertiary and vocational training institutions to implement an affirmative action strategy that strives for a 50% female student representation, including in STEM subjects.

3. WOMEN-BASED CSOs, GENDER-BASED CSOs & WOMEN IN BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS

Objectives	Strategic interventions/ Activities
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<p>Promote capacity building amongst women entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>Undertake:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship and coaching programmes targeting formal and informal businesses in both urban and rural areas. Programmes to be facilitated by either successful women and role-models or key men-champions for gender equality to improve confidence in women and sustain a pipeline of women leaders. • Transformative and transactional peer networking and power networking programmes. • Career sharing programmes by women holding decision-making positions in the private sector. • Transformational executive training programmes targeting women employed in private sector and potential women decision-makers. • Career guidance for girls and young women at community level. • Education and training programmes for the media to be gender-sensitive in order to improve organisational culture, tackling unconscious bias and removing barriers in traditional workplace practices. • Establishment of virtual women business centres responsible for providing women entrepreneurs with information (e.g. on training opportunities, tax information, best practices and mentoring). • Innovative branding of women already holding decision-making positions in the private sector.
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4. PRIVATE SECTOR COMPANIES

Objectives	Strategic interventions/ Activities
<p>Increase women's participation to a 50:50 ratio in decision-making positions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of women-friendly working environments e.g., childcare and breastfeeding facilities (compare Lafarge Company). • Developing a gender policy with quotas and measurable targets that make gender diversity in decision-making position (board of directors or any other senior management level) a priority. The policy should be backed up by budgetary allocations. • Transformational executive training programmes targeting potential women at company level. • Elimination of gender-based violence and stereotypes at company level such as sexual, physical, psychological and emotional. • Implementation of ZimCode Principles 94 and 126.

Annex 1: The experience of Norway in increasing women in decision-making positions in the private sector

Initiative	Strategies implemented	Results	Reasons for effectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Norwegian Government supported by other political parties took the lead. The Minister of Trade and Industry steered a quota law through Parliament in 2003 that amended the Companies Act to require companies to appoint 40% of the under-represented gender to their boards. Companies were given a two-year transition period. The strategy was supported by politicians, women's organisations, trade unions, selected businesses and the media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norwegian Employers' Association recruited companies to a Female Future programme where their CEOs identified talented women in their companies for training and networking opportunities towards leadership and board positions. Sector-specific databases were established, some by state directorates. Effective sanctions, identical to the customary sanctions for breaches of company law, were part of the legislative package, including forced dissolution of non-compliant companies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2002 and 2009 the number of women on company boards increased from 6% to 40%. A survey in 2009 indicated improvement in board functioning with new perspectives around the table, additional agenda items and more discussion and new competences that were formerly lacking. Some firms switched corporate status to avoid compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quota law provided the initial step up that women needed to break the cycle of exclusion from corporate ranks. The legal underpinning of government policy, particularly the inclusion of effective sanctions that encouraged compliance. The transition period gave companies lead-in time to seek qualified women, train potential female candidates and prepare for conformity with the law. The quota helped to overcome business prejudice by giving exposure to talented women and showed that fears of not being able to find qualified women candidates for boards were unfounded.

Source: The Commonwealth, 2015

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