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One Step Forward – One Step Back?

Gender Quotas and the 2013 Harmonised polls in Zimbabwe

07 October 2013

Introduction

Women's groups and activists campaigned for and celebrated the introduction of a series of gender quotas in Zimbabwe's new constitution particularly in anticipation of the July 31 polls. The hope was that the quotas would lead to an increased representation of women in parliament and by extension into other political decision making positions. However soon after the election, women's groups pronounced themselves disappointed at the showing of women in the July 31 poll even though women's representation in the legislature had effectively doubled. The new cabinet announced by the President Mugabe on 10 September shows a lower level of representation for women in comparison to the previous cabinet. This begs the question: Have the quotas failed?

This paper is an analysis of the quota system applied in Zimbabwe. The paper examines its proposed and actual impact. It examines the notion of quotas in general and looks at the purposes and the intents of the quotas which were applied and measures them to see how they compare with the implementation of quotas elsewhere. The current and future implications for the political representation of women in Zimbabwe is analysed and recommendations are made for the way forward.

Limited women's participation in the public sphere

Elections are the cornerstone of representative democracy. In a representative democracy, the majority of interests are represented in political decision making in an equitable manner¹. Thus elections will allow people to elect representatives that reflect their ideals and defend their interests. However since gaining formal political rights through the right to vote at the beginning of the 20th century, women have failed to fully break through to the next level, by gaining seats at the political decision making table especially in parliament and in the executive. The countries which are regarded as world leaders in democracy where women first got the vote such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France have not yet reached gender parity in their own parliaments². Women make up on average only 20, 9% per cent of parliaments worldwide³.

The reasons for women's low representation include culture and tradition which do not allow women to enter politics either because they are perceived as being incapable of political leadership and more suited to the domestic or private sphere. Also political campaigning requires time and money. In many instances women's lower economic status may militate against women's full participation in campaigning as will their time commitments within the realms of their "defined" gender roles in the domestic sphere. The political environment, attitude of political parties, biases of electorate, family expectations, and openness of political leaders plays a big role in hampering, or aiding women's crusade for political participation⁴.

Often the greatest biases against women are those held by voters and not by parties. Research has shown that women's political representation improves the lives of women because it creates

¹ 'Electoral Politics: Making Quotas Work for Women' Homa Hoodfar and Mona Tajali, 2011

² France is at 26.9%, United Kingdom is at 22.5%, United States at 17.7% in the lower house of parliament – Inter parliamentary Union at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

³ Inter parliamentary Union- Women in national parliaments at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

⁴ Quotas: African Women Navigating a Man's World at <http://www.fokuskvinner.no/en/News/2012/Quotas-African-Women-Navigating-a-Mans-World/>

situations where laws are promulgated that promote the interests of women. Many political ideologies also recognise that the empowerment of women is directly linked to the improvement of the general well-being of men, women and children across the board and therefore the increase representation of women should be encouraged as much as possible.

Defining Women's Representation

The representation of women refers to the presence of women in positions of power and influence including but not limited to in parliament. In discussing women's political presence we also examine their positions in government, heading state institutions and in the judiciary. This paper looks mainly at elections because this is the area which lends itself to more organised interventions such as quotas.

It is hoped that the representation of women will also trickle through to other arms of government such as the executive and the judiciary. Most would argue that using the principle of representativeness, political representation of women should be at parity with men in order to reflect their proportion of the population.

The SADC Gender Protocol on Gender and Development calls for parity in decision making positions by the year 2015⁵. However it is widely believed that women need at least 30 per cent representation so as to enable them to influence policy. This is because it is often challenging to raise women's issues in male dominated legislatures when they are few in number⁶. In addition, at 30 per cent representation of women becomes easier to replicate and build on exponentially. In 2012, ten countries in Africa had at least 30% representation in parliament⁷.

What are quotas?

A gender quota is where a certain portion of seats in parliament or candidatures are reserved for women in order to increase their representation or to increase their chances of being elected. Quotas, also known as affirmative action are often applied to redress an entrenched historical imbalance that appears to be immune to change or is changing too slowly⁸.

Whilst many hail the political position of women in Northern Europe, it took many years to achieve that level of representation and even then, it was partly aided by deliberate action on the part of political parties through voluntary quotas mainly as a way of seeking the women's vote. Even where women are educated and professionally successful, their qualifications and accomplishments may be undervalued relative to their male counterparts.

Most quotas seek to counter discrimination and the thresholds are designed to secure enough women in power to challenge male privilege and allow women to have enough of a critical mass to influence policies and decision making.

⁵ SADC Protocol on Gender and Development , Article 12.1

⁶ Electoral Politics- Making Quotas Work for Women

⁷ Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda – 'Africa - Quotas are not enough' at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201308050994.html>

⁸ SADC Gender Protocol Article 5

Electoral Systems and women's representation

Research has shown that a country's electoral system has a determining effect on the levels of female representation in parliament. An electoral system is the manner in which votes cast are translated into seats in parliament. There are three main families of electoral systems.

a) Plurality- majority

This is based on individual candidatures for office within designated electoral districts such as wards or constituencies. A district may have one or multiple candidates. Where there is one candidate, this candidate is elected on the basis of having received the highest number of votes. This can be determined in a first round simply by choosing the candidate or candidates with the highest number of votes (plurality) or by choosing a candidate with the majority of the votes (majority). Majority systems may require a second round or run off process so that voters choose the most preferred candidate.

In the case of plurality majority systems, candidates stand as independents or on behalf of political parties. Even though the candidates have been chosen by the parties, the final choice is in the hands of the voter. The challenge for women in this system is that voters may have their own traditional biases against women which may cause them to reject women candidates. These systems are also known as First Past the Post (FPTP) and they promote accountability of elected representatives to their constituents.

b) Proportional representation (PR)

In this system, seats are allocated to parties according to the proportion of the total vote that the party has won. A particular number of seats in the national legislature may be allocated to a province and parties receive seats in that province based on the proportion of the vote that the party has won in that province. If done nationally parties will receive the number of seats in the country based on the proportion of the total national votes which they have received. Parties allocate the seats based on a list that is prepared and submitted to the electoral management body before the election with names for each of the seats available in the legislature.

For example in a legislature of 100 seats each party will have a list with a 100 names and if the party wins 100% of the total votes they get 100 seats in the parliament. However if the party receives 57 per cent of the total number of votes in the legislature then they receive 57 seats. The first 57 people on the party list get into parliament. If the legislature has 200 seats the party receives 114 seats. In a closed list it is the party which has the final say. In an open list the voter chooses first the party, but because the list is open, the voter has a choice of candidates within the same party and therefore the voter has the final say.

Again where women are competing against men, pre-existing voter bias may negatively affect choice. The advantage of the PR system is that the voter just votes for a party and it is the party that determines who gets into power. Where parties are committed to promoting women politicians they can use the list to achieve this purpose. The key however is where women are on the list.

In the example given above if a party has 40 women on a list of 100 people but the women are all at the bottom of the list, even if the party wins the 57 per cent, none of the women would have been elected. So parties must work out how to increase the chances for women. In South Africa which uses

a closed list PR system when the party’s female candidate quota was 30 per cent, every third candidate on the list of the African National Congress (ANC) list was a woman. The party has now adopted a 50 per cent quota for women. In some countries parties use the zebra formula where male and female candidates alternate on the list.

c) Mixed systems

A mixed system combines both FPTP and PR systems. The intent is to ensure that parties are proportionately represented in the legislature whilst ensuring that there are parliamentarians aligned to constituencies and maintain accountability. The two systems can be combined in a number of ways.

The first is a parallel system whereby certain proportions of the seats are simply allocated to each electoral system and they operate separately from each other. In this case our 100 seat chamber would have 50 seats chosen through the FPTP system and the other 50 using the PR system. The other combination is where two systems are used but the allocation of seats under the PR component is derived from the performance of the parties in the FPTP component. There are different ways of combining the seats.

Research on electoral systems and women’s representation shows that it is easier for women to get into parliament in countries that use a proportional representation (PR) electoral system⁹. Even quotas are better applied in combination with a PR system. Parties in proportional systems are more inclined to consider candidates with ties and appeal to different groups and different sectors of society in order to attract more voters to their party. Parties may be afraid to lose some of their voter base if they fail to provide some balance by nominating only men.

Types of Quotas

There are three main types of gender quotas. These are political party quotas, legislative quotas and reserved seats

Table 1: Types of Gender Quotas

Political Party Quotas	Legislative	Reserved Seats
Party specific measures, usually adopted voluntarily, to increase the proportion of women among party candidates or elected representatives, mostly through setting a percentage, proportion, or numeric range for party lists.	National binding policies embedded either in the national constitution or electoral laws, requiring all political parties to nominate a certain percentage or proportion of women among their candidates. Can be strengthened by sanctions for non-compliance.	A national policy that sets aside a certain number of seats in parliament for women. If not enough women are directly elected by the public or chosen by the party, they are then appointed, generally by the executive branch

⁹ The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences International IDEA at http://www.idea.int/publications/quotas_africa/upload/IDEA_no3.qxd.pdf

a) Political Party Quotas

These are quotas that are adopted by parties with regard to the proportion of candidates who are women. A party may decide that for instance 30 per cent of all candidates should be female. In a FPTP system, the individual candidates in the different electoral districts (wards or constituencies) when combined make up 30 per cent of party's candidates. In a PR system 30 per cent of the list is female. The success of these depends on the electoral system. In the first instance where there is a FPTP system, parties knowing voter biases must decide for each constituency and each candidate whether the party's female candidate can overcome the voter biases and defeat a male opposition candidate. In the case of a PR system, parties have to choose where to place the 30 per cent candidates on the party list depending on each party's own needs and considerations. To avoid relegating women to the bottom and making them mere tokens, this can be countered by the parties deciding to put candidates in a particular order on the list. Political party quotas are voluntary and there are no enforcement measures and it depends on the good will of the party and commitment to promoting women candidates

Voluntary party quotas are partly responsible for the high levels of female political representation in Northern Europe. In Africa, parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) in Mozambique have been successful at applying this type of quota. South Africa currently has 42.3 per cent female representation in the national assembly whilst Mozambique has 39.2 per cent.¹⁰

However voluntary quotas also work best if implemented by the ruling party as in the case of ANC and FRELIMO above. The success of voluntary quotas depends on the strong will and commitment of the party leadership to promote women in politics. Therefore, it is crucial that women party members and women's organizations constantly work with party leaders to ensure their commitment by actively recruiting women to their party membership, seeking the nomination of women candidates in their election lists, and promoting women within their party machinery to serve in leadership positions.

b) Legislated quotas

These also require action at the candidate level, the difference being that they are legislated and therefore there are legal requirements and potentially enforcement mechanisms. Legislated quotas require that parties contesting elections ensure that a legislated minimum proportion of the candidates should be women. These quotas can be strengthened through enforcement mechanisms. For instance in some countries a party list will not be accepted if it does not comply with the legislation. In other cases parties may be fined¹¹.

However it has been observed that parties will often pay fines rather than abiding by this requirement. In the case where the legislation merely requires that a certain proportion must be female these quotas are weakened if there are no placement mandates which designate where women should be placed on the list¹². On the other hand, even if there are placement preferences by law, these

¹⁰ Inter Parliamentary Union- Women in National Parliaments at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

¹¹ Making Quotas Work: The Effect of Gender Quota Laws On the Election of Women - Leslie A. Schwindt-Bayer at http://ns.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/schwindtbayer2009_lsq_en_pdf.pdf

¹² Ibid

legislated quotas are still weak where there are no sanctions for non-compliance. Countries such as France use legislated quotas as do many countries in Latin America.

c) Reserved seats

These types of quotas set aside a specific number of seats in the legislature for women. How they are allocated differs. In some instances the allocation is based on party lists determined by the proportion of the vote that the party received. Here reserved seats work together with a PR electoral system. This is the system in use in Rwanda. In other cases, such as in Kenya and Uganda, women compete against each other in women's only electoral districts which have been chosen as a source of electoral competition. Reserved seats are regarded as a fast track measure to increase women's representation. They have become popular in Africa because they offer the quickest and best chances for women to increase representation in the legislature.

Voluntary quotas are just that, voluntary so there is no guarantee that parties will be implemented. Where there are no strong enforcement measures, legislated quotas do not always achieve their purposes. As an affirmative action measure quotas are at least in principle temporary measures to address entrenched and seemingly intractable imbalances. They are not designed to be permanent. Once women are in parliament in sufficient numbers, the politics of presence is supposed to come into play. That is, it should be easier for people (as voters and as potential female candidates) to relate to the idea of female representation once they themselves actually see other women who are in power. Understandably there are strong arguments for and against quotas as enunciated by Hoodfar and Tajali¹³.

The case for quotas

- Quotas end the exclusion of women from political power quicker than the normal historical and political processes.
- Quotas will force political parties to recruit and include more women in their leadership structure in order to rationalise nominating candidates for the legislated quotas.
- Party gender quotas correct the patriarchal bias of most parties.
- An increase in women's representation in parliaments facilitates and supports the introduction of policies that serve the interests of women.
- Women constitute half of the population – thus it is a democratic right for them to hold 50% of parliamentary seats.
- It is good for the image of parties as quotas can be used as a strategic measure to gain votes.

Some argue that putting more women in parliament is not enough. Although some African countries have attained greater representation of women in parliament sexist laws and cultural beliefs infringe many of freedoms that women have attained¹⁴. In Tanzania where representation of women in parliament is over 30 per cent legislators have failed to ban child marriage whilst in Uganda with the same level of female representation women still do not have equal property rights mainly due to widespread male opposition. Having more women parliamentarians does not always change society's

¹³ 'Electoral Politics: Making Quotas Work for Women' Homa Hoodfar and Mona Tajali, 2011

¹⁴ 'Africa:-Quotas are not enough' at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201308050994.html>

attitudes towards women. For example South Africa has had over 30% representation of women in parliament since 2004 but still has one of the world's highest rates of gender based violence. Therefore quotas are not the panacea¹⁵. However they are important because they enhance women's access to political power, and give woman the space in which to grow and the space to grow from.

Arguments Opposing Gender Quotas

- Quotas violate the principle of merit as unqualified women may displace qualified men and this will reduce the quality of political representativeness. However it should be noted that it is not only education that constitutes merit. It is also familiarity with day to day experiences and struggles of the ordinary people.
- Quotas emphasize the gender of politicians over their qualifications and political beliefs. The counter to this is that gender is something that one cannot get away from. It has been used to obstruct women and must now be used to redress a grave distortion.
- Quotas are undemocratic in that they limit voters' electoral choice. However the level of limiting of choice depends on the proportion of or candidates seats that are determined by the quotas. Also realistically speaking very few voters or even party supporters are involved in the determination of a party's candidates as this is often done by the party leadership.
- Quotas discriminate against men. This is true basically, however, it should be noted that the language of quotas has become increasingly gender neutral where it is phrased that no one gender group should have less than 40% or more than 60% parliamentary representation.
- Women do not constitute a single interest group. Not all women are the same and it is not correct to lump them together as one group. However even as women are not at least they are half the population and are affected by culture, tradition and law differently than men especially in societies heavily dependent on family law¹⁶.
- Quotas may actually act as a maximum threshold for female representation as governments and parties may nominate or elect enough for the quota and ultimately limit the number of women. This is a risk that comes with all quotas although there are more cases of successful quota implementation than failures.
- Quota implementation is too unreliable as it requires a specific and contextual machination and design. This can be addressed by designing a carefully drafted quota provision that is a good fit with existing political and electoral structures.

Background to the July 2013 Elections in Zimbabwe

The July 2013 elections were held to end a four year political transition in which Zimbabwe was governed by a government of national unity made up of three parties who signed a power sharing agreement that was signed in September 2008. The agreement was brokered after years of political conflict around contested electoral processes which began in 2000. Zimbabwe was virtually a one-party state from Independence in 1980 until 2000. Although periodic challenges to ZANU-PF had been

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

experienced since 1990, the opposition became even stronger in 2000 when the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed and then won almost half of the seats in the lower house.

There began a decade of political fighting between the two parties then three when the MDC split in 2005. This crisis led to violence which was settled through the aforementioned power sharing agreement in 2008. Although the GNU process was conflict ridden, arguably one of the improvements that it brought for women was the introduction of gender quotas in the new constitution. As in the cases of South Africa, Rwanda and South Sudan, the negotiations and processes of transitioning from a political crisis gave the women’s movement and women politicians a unique opportunity to influence the electoral law through introducing legislated gender quotas.

The case for quotas in Zimbabwe

Women in Zimbabwe received formal voting rights at independence in 1980. This was bolstered by several women friendly laws notably the Legal Age of Majority Act (1983), laws against domestic violence, as well as a progressive marriage and family laws. However women are still poorly represented in economic and political decision making positions. Following the 2008 elections, women’s representation in the parliament was at 19.95 per cent. Whilst this in itself was a cause for concern, what was even more worrying was the fact that the levels of women’s representation were actually declining as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Representation of Women in Zimbabwe’s Parliament 1995-2012¹⁷

Year	Total Seats in the lower house	Number of women	Percentage	Total in upper house	Women	Percentage	Average	World Ranking ¹⁸
1995	150	21	14.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
2000	150	14	9.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	63
2002	150	15	10.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	78
2005 (Election Year)	150	24	16.0	66	21	31.8	23.9	68
2006	150	25	16.7	66	23	34.8	25.75	65
2007	150	24	16.0	66	24	36.4	26.2	75
2008 (Election Year)	210	32	15.2	93	23	24.7	19.95	77
2009	214	32	15.0	99	24	24.2	19.6	81
2010	214	32	15.0	99	24	24.2	19.6	78

¹⁷ Zimbabwe has a bi-cameral legislature with a lower house, the National Assembly and an upper house, the Senate.

¹⁸ This ranking is derived from comparisons of lower houses of parliament.

2011	214	32	15.0	99	24	24.2	19.6	86
2012	214	32	15.0	99	24	24.2	19.6	90

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union-¹⁹

There has always been a strong and vocal core of influential female politicians in Zimbabwe particularly in ZANU-PF, the country's ruling party for more than 25 years. Admittedly though, this core group of women has not changed much in the last 25 years. All of the three parties in the Government of National Unity had women in significant positions in the party²⁰. In parliament whilst the representation of women was low, Zimbabwe has, recently had a female President of the Senate and a female deputy speaker of the national assembly. At July 31, 2013, Zimbabwe's nine member constitutional court, the country's highest court had three female judges. The Electoral commission chairperson and deputy chairperson are both women. This shows progress.

Whilst Zimbabwean women have occupied seats in government, these have tended to be in the 'softer' ministries such as women's affairs, social services and occasionally education. This is unlike neighbouring South Africa which since independence has had women in key government portfolios such as foreign affairs and defence. During the tenure of the GNU, one of the country's two Vice Presidents was a woman as was one of the two Deputy Prime Ministers.

Table 3: Women in Zimbabwe's Executive 2008-2013

Branch of Government	Total	Number of Women	Percentage
Presidency	3	1	33
Prime Minister Office	3	1	33
Government Ministers	32	5	15.6
Provincial Governors	10	2	20
Total	48	9	18.75

Despite these strong positions at the top of the leadership, judging from the low levels of women contesting and winning competitive elections since 2000 however there is still a lot more to be done in terms of cementing women in political power.

Zimbabweans combine modernity with a traditional and religious culture that has strong patriarchal undertones. This has often acted as a hindrance to women's participation in decision making positions. Negative perceptions of women politicians and domestic and family responsibilities also prescribe the participation of some women in politics.

The low level of women in Zimbabwe's parliament has been a function of the country's electoral system. Until the 2013 elections, Zimbabwe used the First Past the Post system where voters choose candidates for electoral districts on Election Day. As noted previously this kind of system is susceptible to voter bias and does not support the election of women to power. Thus even as women campaigned

¹⁹ Women in National Parliaments at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

²⁰ Notably, Priscilla Misihairambwi- Mushonga Secretary General of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Thokozani Khupe Deputy President of the Movement for Democratic Change formation led by Morgan Tsvangirai formation (MDC-T) and Joice Mujuru, Vice President of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)

for gender quotas, they also campaigned for changes in the electoral system. The hope was for women to achieve least 50 per cent representation in the legislature and benefit from the subsequent knock on effect on cabinet positions²¹.

The Zimbabwean Gender Quotas

All the three main forms of gender quotas are in operation in Zimbabwe, with varying levels of impact. Whilst voluntary party quotas have been in operation for some time, the new constitution of May 2013 introduced legislated quotas for the senate and provincial councils and reserved seats for women in the National Assembly.

a) Voluntary Party Quotas

Two of the three parties in the GNU all claimed to use quotas in selecting their candidates. ZANU-PF has stated that it is committed to ensuring that one third of all its candidates are female and MDC–T has resolved that women should hold 50% of party positions and of elected offices²². However the application of these quotas has not been uniform²³. According to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission none of the three parties fielded 30 per cent or more women as candidates during the 2013 election.

In addition there is a tendency by political parties to field female candidates in constituencies where the party is weak and unlikely to win the seats. For instance ZANU PF will claim adhering to women representation by placing women candidates in urban areas where the party has traditionally been weak. And MDC-T would do the vice-versa, fielding female candidates in rural areas where the party has traditionally been weak.

Table 4: Proportion of female candidates by party

Party	Total Candidates	Female Candidates	Percentage
MDC	160	41	25.6
MDC-T	194	19	9.8
ZANU-PF	185	25	13.5

Source: Newsday Newspaper²⁴

b) Reserved Seats in the National Assembly

The new constitution provides in Article 124 (1b) that in addition to the 210 seats for constituencies elected through the First Past the Post system, there shall be in the national assembly, 60 additional seats for women only, six in each of the country's ten provinces. The number of seats each party receives in each province will be determined by the proportion of the total national assembly votes

²¹ Zimbabwean Women Protest Low Number of Cabinet Slots at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201309131113.html>

²² Zimbabwe - Quota project at <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=248>

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Makarau urges women to contest in elections in Newsday newspaper at <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2013/08/30/makarau-urges-women-participate-politics/>at :

that the party has won in that particular province. So in this case this system of proportional representation has 10 electoral districts with six seats each.

The Electoral Act as amended in 2013 provides detail in terms of the formula to be used to calculate the seats and also provides that the lists to be used are closed lists. Thus it is the party which chooses candidates for these seats and determines the order which they take on the list. This guarantees that out of the 270 members of the National Assembly at least 22 per cent are women which is a relatively high level of representation and higher than the world average.

However when combined with the electoral system for the other 210 seats whereby candidates are chosen by voters there is a risk that parties may rely on the reserved seats alone and not promote enough women to contest in the constituency elections. Indeed reports are that women were told that they were already catered for through the reserved seats and should not concern themselves too much with the constituency seats²⁵.

Fortunately the parties did field women in constituency elections as well and thus women's representation went above the 22 per cent guaranteed by the constitution. As the allocation of reserved seats in the national assembly is based on the performance of parties in the first past the post system, where there is a dominant party in the legislature then the reserved seats will mirror that and this minimises the plurality of the system because fewer parties are represented. Additionally Article 124 also limits the reserved seats to the next two parliaments after the effective date of the new constitution meaning that the reserved seats were only available for the 2013 and 2018 elections.

c) Legislated Quotas

Zimbabwe's Senate has 80 members out of which 18 are senator chiefs who are elected by their peer chiefs. There are also two senators for the disabled of which one must be a woman and one a man. According to Article 120 (2) of the constitution, the remaining sixty senators (six per province) are elected through a party list proportional representation system based on the votes cast in the general election for members of National Assembly in that province. In these lists male and female candidates are listed alternately. The import of this is the law requires parity on the party lists for the 60 senate seats. More importantly the lists have a placement mandate, as each list is headed by a woman so in the event that a party receives only one seat, it will go to a woman. This strengthens the quotas as it elevates the chances of women being elected. The constitution does not put in place any enforcement mechanisms such as penalties for non-compliance which is a potential weakness. However for the July 31 elections although not all parties which contested in the constituency seats submitted lists for the Senate, those that did followed the requirements as outlined in the law.

Legislated Quotas for the Provincial Councils

Article 268 of the constitution also requires the application of the same formula as that used for the Senate to the provincial councils of the eight non –metropolitan provinces. Each party list has an equal number of men and women. Each list alternates between male and female but is headed by a female. However the text of the constitution does not provide for any sanction with regards to parties who do

²⁵ 'Constitution endorsement victory for women at http://www.sundaynews.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35491:constitution-endorsement-victory-for-women-&catid=42:features-news&Itemid=134#.UjjwAsZmim4' at

not comply with the gender parity requirement in the candidate lists for the Senate and that parties relied on the reserved seats system for their women representatives as opposed to using the competitive elections to beef up women's representation and increase the number of women parliamentarians overall.

The results of the 2013 elections for women

Candidacy

According to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission the proportion of female candidates for the elections in 2013 was smaller than in 2008. During the 2013 National Assembly elections, 90 women candidates contested as compared to 603 men, while the 2008 House of Assembly elections recorded 105 female contestants compared to 575 men, and the Senate 2008 elections recorded 58 female contestants as compared to 122 men²⁶. This is represented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Comparison of female candidature between 2008 and 2013

Source: Newsday²⁷

Chamber	Total candidates - 2008	Female Candidates 2008	Female candidates by percentage	Total candidates 2013	Female candidates 2013	Female Candidates by percentage
National Assembly	575	105	18.3	603	90	14.9
Senate	122	58	47.5	215	108	50.2
Parliament	697	163	23.3	818	198	24.2

Parliament

In addition to the 60 seats (22%) reserved for women in the 270 seat National Assembly, 25 women (9.3%) were also directly elected in the constituency elections. Combined together this makes total of 85 seats in the 270-seat national assembly which are held by women which makes 31.5 per cent of the total. This represents a doubling of representation of women in the national assembly from 15.2 per cent in the last election. Thirty-nine of the 80 senators are female. At 48.7 per cent, this is near parity and has also doubled the representation of women in the Senate from 24.7 per cent in the previous election. Combined together this means that 124 of the 350 members of the national parliament (both houses combined) are female representing 35, 4 per cent, nearly double the representation from the previous parliament.

²⁶ Newsday at ://www.newsday.co.zw/2013/08/30/makarau-urges-women-participate-politics

²⁷Ibid

Table 6: Representation of Women in the Zimbabwean Parliament 2008 – 2013.

Chamber	Total number of seats 2008	Number of Seats held by women	Percentage of seats held by women	Total number of seats 2013	Number of Seats held by women	Percentage of seats held by women	Change
National Assembly	210	32	15.2	270	85	31.5	+106 %
Senate	99	24	24.2	80	39	48.7	+101.12%
Parliament	309	56	18.12	350	124	35.4	+95.4%

Source: Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

This looks good and portends well for women in Zimbabwean politics. The country is now ranked at 28 in the world in terms of female representation in parliament²⁸. However the increase is partly due to reserved seats which are not a permanent feature of the electoral system and these guaranteed seats will be removed after the 2018 elections. The good news is that the legislated quotas for the Senate do not have a time limit. However it could be argued that the National Assembly is where the real business of the legislature takes place and it would have been preferable to maintain quotas here for as long as possible. In comparison to the previous election fewer women (9.3%) were elected using the FPTP system than in the last election in 2008 when 15.2 per cent were directly elected. In order to maintain or even to increase the number of women currently in the legislature much work will be required to ensure that women will have improved chances of election in direct competitive elections in the future. However attitudes take a long time to change.

At a workshop held soon after the elections, women indicated that they were unhappy with the performance of women in the just-ended elections. Clearly there is room for improvement so that more women can be elected into parliament and true parity can be achieved. One way would be to change the electoral system for 210 constituency seats to proportional representation and apply to these seats. Within the current electoral system however it will mean that women in political parties should push for the adoption and implementation of voluntary party quotas. Another step is raise awareness about quotas so that perceptions about women who are elected through quotas are challenged and changed.

Parties can also work to ensure that women on the party lists are not just tokens or there to serve some purpose of patronage. For example already in this election the wives of several senior ZANU-PF officials have made it to Parliament through the gender quotas²⁹. Whilst these women may be strong politicians in their own right it is necessary to manage perceptions of patronage. In the MDC, the party secretary – general won a Senate seat by being placed first on the list in a province where she allegedly does not reside, to the consternation of some senior party members. This may give the perception that the lists are a toll of political patronage.

²⁸ Women in National Parliaments at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

²⁹Including Tambudzani Mohadi (wife of Kembo Mohadi elected MP for ZANU-PF), Monica Mutsvangwa (wife of Chris Mutsvangwa elected MP for ZANU-PF) in the Senate and Sikhanyisiwe Mpofu (wife of Obert Mpofu elected MP for ZANU-PF) through reserved seats in the national assembly.

Provincial councils

All of the provincial councils in the eight non metropolitan provinces have achieved parity as there are least five women in each of the 10-member councils. Four provinces (Mashonaland Central, Midlands, Masvingo and Matabeleland North) have six women to four women. Since these councils are new there is still much to be learnt about how they operate and it will be interesting to measure the impact of parity in these councils on the lives of women.

The Executive

Although one of the two Vice Presidents is female, the appointment of the cabinet provided a strong reality check for those celebrating the increased number of women in the Zimbabwean parliament. Despite these increased numbers, President Mugabe appointed only three female ministers out of a total of 26 ministers. At 11.5 per cent this is a reduction from nearly 15.6 per cent in the last cabinet and well below women's proportion of the population which is 52 per cent. To add insult to this injury, there was no new blood as the three women appointed have been in the government the past 20 years. Furthermore there no women in the key ministries as they went to the normal 'soft' ministries usually occupied by women: Education; Gender and Women's Affairs and Small to Medium Enterprises.

The President's explanation that there are not enough educated women for him to be appointed deserves to be challenged by an audit of the educational qualifications of the men that he has appointed to the cabinet. However the president also noted that other criteria used to select members of cabinet were regional representativeness as well as years of party membership and demonstrated commitment and loyalty to the party. It however does provide a sign post for Zimbabwean women as they move forward and plan for the next election.

Recommendations

The low numbers of women candidates in the constituency elections is a cause for concern. Moving forward, Zimbabwean women are encouraged to continue to work hard within their party structures to increase their presence in party leadership posts. Thus when parties are looking for more 'qualified and experienced party cadres to stand in the constituencies after having fulfilled the quota requirements, they will not find it difficult to do so. And government leaders will not deny women seats in the executive due to their lack of party allegiance.

It behoves the women who have entered parliament through quotas, particularly the reserved seats in the national assembly, to perform well during the life of this parliament in order to justify their presence in parliament and to show the benefit of increasing the number of women in parliament. It may lead to the extension of the reserved seat system. If they perform poorly it will not only buttress the claims that women are unfit to lead but may also lead to calls to remove any form of gender quotas.

Women's groups and women politicians must work together to educate the public about the value of having women holding political office and to build the capacity of those women already in parliament to perform at the required level. Voter biases against women may change too slowly to absorb the removal of the reserved seats in 2018. Prospective female candidates should be supported in standing for parliament so that they can overcome some of the hindrances to them standing for political office.

Conclusion

As in other countries, Zimbabwe's introduction of gender quotas Zimbabwe's introduction of gender quotas has had somewhat mixed results. Whilst it has increased the number of women in Zimbabwe's parliament it has not had the long hoped for knock on effect on the executive and that in itself is a serious cause for concern. However it is early days yet and there is still nearly five years for Zimbabwean women to make good on their increased representation in the legislature and in public life and to show that having women in political power is of benefit not just to women but to all citizens of the country possibly through a nationwide programme of civic education and awareness raising.
//Ends

Contact//

Election Resource Centre

Email: erczimbabwe@gmail.com

Facebook: @Election Resource Centre Zimbabwe

Twitter/Skype: @erczimbabwe

Website: www.erc.org.zw

Phone: 0776347629