

WIPSU UPDATE

The International Women's Day— A Poem by Emiliah Chakatsva (Constituency Consultative Forum Coordinator Kuwadzana)

She is a woman!!!

The strongest being I can think of.

She is the Zimbabwean woman, so strong yet emotionally abused.

So strong yet physically ruined, where is her dignity? Where is her integrity?

Always a victim of every circumstance... "when the lions are fighting it is the grass that suffers and when they are happy it is the grass that suffers again."

When there is poverty in the home, it is she who struggles to make ends meet; whilst money is spent on the queens of the night.

Even in the workplace she is victimized and sexually harassed, whilst being accused at home for having an affair with her boss.

So humiliated yet so strong, confined to the house and not allowed out to social functions.

Do they know a woman has rights...I wonder?

During elections, political violence leaves the woman vulnerable.

So powerful and yet defenseless is she as when a man wants to climb the political ladder he uses a woman to fight another woman.

Oh God, when will this end? When will men stop using women as tools for their success?

My prayer to you our Redeemer is that one day somebody realizes the woman is an equal being to the man.

God help her understand she is capable of being a leader, a better leader.

She can be the best Financial manager of any company,

The woman is the think tank of most organizations.

Most women were born leaders, but who will give them the opportunity to showcase their capabilities?

Dear God help us one day achieve the 50/50, we know with you on our side we are more than conquerors.



Emiliah is also the Chairperson of the Kuwadzana Farmers Club



Congratulations to Minister Misihairabwi-Mushonga on being voted Secretary General of The Movement for Democratic Change

She is the first woman in Zimbabwe to hold such a position in Zimbabwe and the 2nd woman in SADC.

What Are Political Quotas and how Can They Be Implemented in Zimbabwe?



**Welcome back to
Parliament Hon O.
Muchinguri.
Hon Muchinguri takes up
the seat that was left
vacant by Vice President
Mujuru in Parliament at
the End of March**

In order to archive our benchmark in terms of women's quantitative and qualitative participation in politics there is a need to ensure that a quota is entrenched in the constitution through the COPAC processes that are currently ongoing.

There are 3 types of gender quotas used in politics. These are;

- Reserved seats (constitutional and/ or legislative)
- Legal candidate quotas (constitutional and or legislative)
- Political party quotas (voluntary)

Reserved seats regulate the actual number of women elected and legal candidate and political party quota set a minimum share of women on the candidate lists, either set by law or enshrined in the constitutions, manifestos and policies of political parties. In the 2nd instance it would therefore also be important that it be stated the order in which women appear on the lists or in our case, to push for the zebra listing, in order to ensure that women are not put at the bottom of the lists. This will be achieved by following in the footsteps of Argentina and Belgium who instituted legal requirements for double quotas. Double quotas is a quota system that not only requires a certain percentage of women on the candidate list but also prevents that the women candidates be just placed at the bottom of the list. This would work best in a situation where the electoral system is one which utilizes the proportional representative system. However in our case as Zimbabwe should the electoral system remain the same, this would translate into ensuring that certain constituencies are reserved for women candidates only, and more specifically 50% of the constituencies.

Once quota systems are in place the burden of ensuring that women are represented then lies with those who control the recruitment process, ie the political parties. The parties would therefore need to ensure that women are represented in all areas and at all levels of political party structures. Where minimum quotas are set at between 20-40% this sets the maximum number of men at between 80-60% however the 50/50 quota is gender neutral.

Where political parties institute voluntary quota systems like in the ANC in South Africa although they are the only political party to do so, this can increase the numbers of women represented in political office.

Therefore Zimbabwe needs to institute quotas at different levels that need to be binding on selection of candidates as well as the nomination of candidates by political parties. These are;

- A quota system in the constitution as done in Bukina Faso, Nepal and Uganda or a quota system in the electoral law as done in Bosnia, Belgium or France. This is binding on primaries, candidate quotas and reserved seats
- Voluntary quotas by the political parties, as currently done by Zanu PF and ANC
- Reserved seats(these can be appointed or as in Rwanda and Uganda are elected)

The quota system has its pro's and cons.

Cons

The disadvantages of political quota systems are as follows;

- Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference over men.
- Quotas are undemocratic, because voters should be able to decide who is elected.
- Quotas imply that politicians are elected because of their gender, not because of their qualifications and that
- more qualified candidates are pushed aside.
- Many women do not want to get elected just because they are women.
- Introducing quotas creates significant conflicts within the political party organization.

Quotas violate the principles of liberal democracy.

Pros

The advantages of quota systems are as follows;

- Quotas for women do not discriminate, but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats.
- Quotas imply that there are several women together in a committee or assembly, thus minimizing the stress often experienced by the token women.
- Women have the right as citizens to equal representation.
- Women's experiences are needed in political life.
- Election is about representation, not educational qualifications.
- Women are just as qualified as men, but women's qualifications are downgraded and minimized in a male dominated political system.
- It is in fact the political parties that control the nominations, not primarily the voters who decide who gets elected; therefore quotas are not violations of voters' rights.
- Introducing quotas may cause conflicts, but may be only temporarily.

Quotas can contribute to a process of democratization by making the nomination process more transparent and formalized.

Many countries have adopted quota systems in a bid to ensure that women are equally represented in politics. Zimbabwean women are not clamoring for anything new and unprecedented. The Zimbabwean women are asking for the compliance of its government to protocols that it has signed and ratified and to back up promises that have been made to women over the years by concretizing the promises in our electoral laws and in the country's constitution. Once we have achieved this we as an organization, working in partnership with our friends in the women's movement and in the donor community will ensure that the 50% women who are given positions of political leadership are women of quality and who represent the needs of the women of Zimbabwe.

Trends and Challenges in Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe—Margaret Svinurayi

In Zimbabwe, statistics reveal, women's representation in Parliament has reached 9% at its lowest and 22% at its highest – a far cry from the 30% minimum set by the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and even further from achievement of the 50% benchmark set by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the Millennium Development Goal 3.

Regionally, Rwanda is the only country to have surpassed the 50% mark with 56.3% women in its current Parliament. South Africa follows closely behind at 45% as at the 2009 elections. According to statistics from the Inter Parliamentary Union, given the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average of 17.8% women's representation in Parliaments, it will take some 25 years just to reach the a critical mass of 30% and another 25 years to reach 50%.

In WIPSU's experience, women face the following challenges in participating in politics:

- Lack of financial resources,
- Limited access to education and the same work opportunities as men,
- Negative stereotypes and social attitudes,
- The burden of domestic responsibilities,
- Violence
- Lack of access to information.

Women in Politics Support Unit

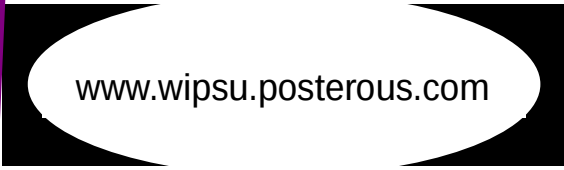
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Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU) is a feminist

non- governmental organization (NGO) that is non partisan, working with and providing support to women in politics with the aim to increase women ' s qualitative and quantitative participation and influence in policy and decision making.