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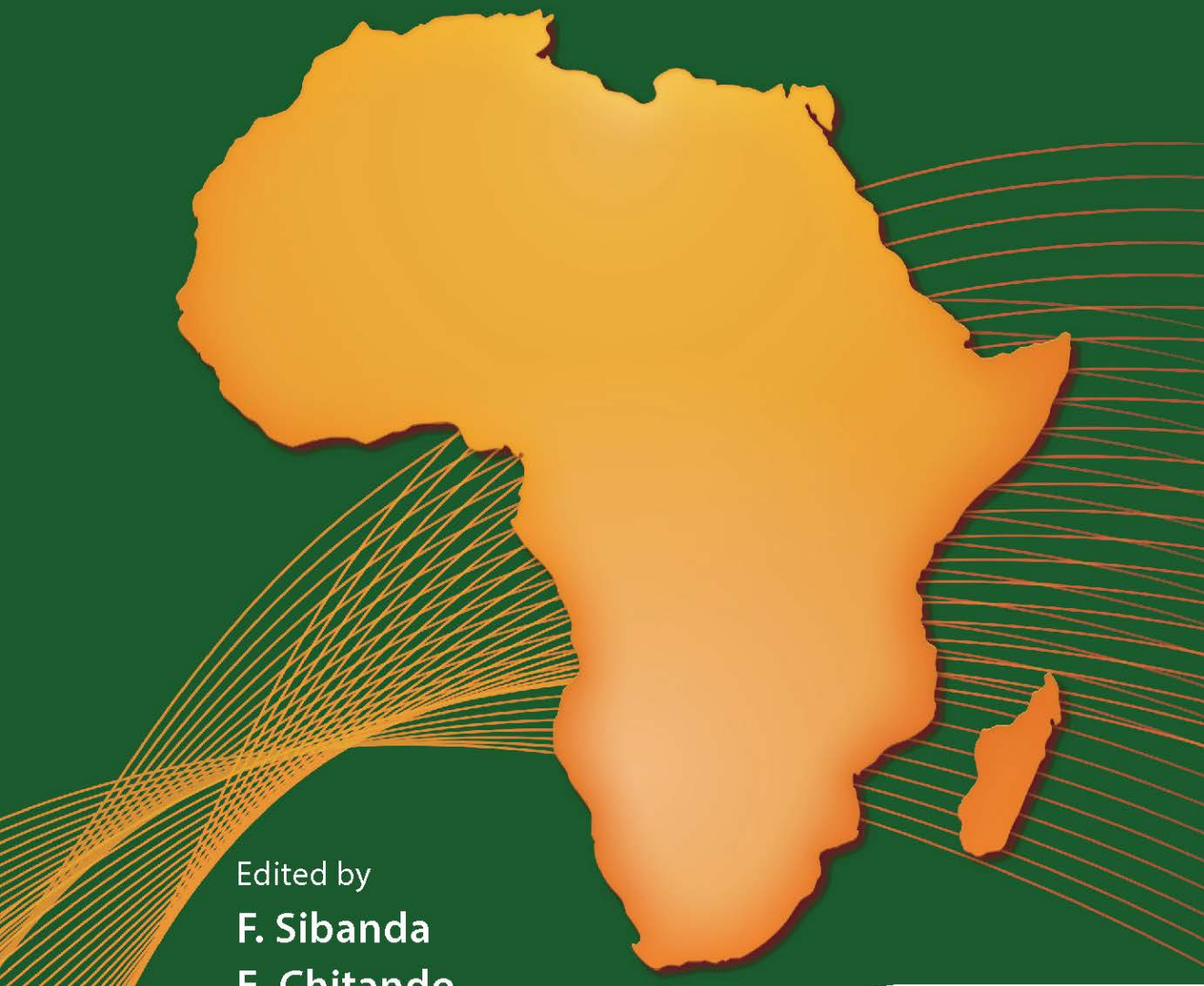

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27 The Influence of law and religion on the status of women's leadership: The case of women in politics in Zimbabwe

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, the participation of women in leadership positions is still of major concern. For example, gender and politics researchers, Ionica Berevoescu and Julie Ballington, in a report for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) observe that "very few countries have reached gender balance in local decision-making bodies; in the majority of countries, women's underrepresentation is severe." [3] In Zimbabwe, there has been an outcry from women's organizations working on issues of women's participation in leadership positions and decision making. This chapter employs a feminist lens to critically explore the influence of law and religion on the status of women's leadership participation in different spaces such as politics, strategic decision making and governance in both the private and public domains. Demographic data for most African countries including Zimbabwe show that the highest population proportion comprises women and children. It also shows that women constitute a little over half of Africa's growing population.[4]

In their UN Women report, Berevoescu and Ballington further observe that in the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) region, women continue to be under-represented in leadership positions, decision-making institutions and processes that guide critical development, planning and policy actions.[5] Berevoescu and Ballington further observe in their report, "There are only five African countries which are among twenty-five countries globally with the highest number of women in parliament and that have attempted to achieve gender balance of at least over

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3 Berevoescu I and Ballington J. 2021. "Women's Representation in Local Government: A Global Analysis", UN Women Working Paper. New York: UN Women Governance and Participation Section.

4 Maphosa M, Tshuma N and Maviza G. 2015. "Participation of Women in Zimbabwean Politics and the Mirage of Gender Equity", *Ubuntu: Journal of Conflict and Social Transformation* 4(2):127-159.

5 Berevoescu and Ballington, "Women's Representation in Local Government".

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40% women's representation. These are Rwanda (61.3%), South Africa (46.7%), Namibia (44.2%), Mozambique (42.4%) and Ethiopia (41.5%)."[6]

Zimbabwe stands out for having only 22 per cent women's representation in political leadership; yet women constitute more than half of the population.[7] We argue that the glaring underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions might affect the national development strategy and the attainment of Vision 2030.[8] This is mainly because the underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions also implies the exclusion of women from participating in the formulation of policies on matters affecting their social and economic wellbeing. Despite the efforts and initiatives by feminist organisations such as the Zimbabwe Women Resource Centre and Network and the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, participation of women in political leadership positions is at the barest minimum.[9] Some Zimbabwean feminists, such as Tapiwa Praise Mapuranga,[10] have argued that several instruments can be employed to improve the participation of women in political leadership. In the present study, it will be established that two instruments can be used to influence the status of women's participation in political leadership: law and religion.

Feminist philosophy and feminism in general aims to create a socially just world, particularly for women, the oppressed and the marginalized groups in society.[11] For this chapter, a Critical Feminist Theory (CFT) lens was adopted to enable the study to unpack and explore issues affecting women's participation in leadership positions from a broader perspective so as to find alternatives in which law and religion can influence women's participation in leadership spaces. As espoused by feminist theorist Bell Hooks, CFT challenges dominant power structures and explores how women's experiences and perspectives can transform leadership and organisational cultures.[12] In terms of methodology, data for the study was collected through qualitative research methods, including descriptive and exploratory approaches. On one hand, the descriptive approach focused on an in-depth of a

6 Berevoescu and Ballington, "Women's Representation in Local Government", UN Women Working Paper.

7 Kapoor K. 2019. *Gender analysis of the governance architecture/infrastructure in Zimbabwe.* Harare: Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe.

8 This is the Zimbabwe government's mantra and strategy which aims to achieve a prosperous and empowered upper middle-class society by the year 2030. See Republic of Zimbabwe. 2018. "Vision 2030 "Towards a Prosperous & Empowered Upper Middle Income Society by 2030", September 2018.

9 Kapoor, *Gender analysis of the governance architecture/infrastructure in Zimbabwe.*

10 Mapuranga TP. 2010. *A Phenomenological investigation into the effects of traditional beliefs and practices on women and HIV and AIDS, with special reference to Chipinge District, Zimbabwe*, PhD Thesis, University of Zimbabwe.

11 Rukuni T, Shanyisa W, Madhuku J and Musingafi M. 2016. "Enhancing women participation in peacebuilding and decision making processes in Zimbabwe", *Journal of Peace, Gender and Development* 13(2):34-53.

12 Hooks B. 2000. *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics:* London: Pluto Press.

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small number of women leaders to gather detailed information on their experiences. On the other hand, the exploratory approach involved group discussions with women in leadership positions to gather information and explore their opinions.

To understand ways in which law and religion can influence women's participation in leadership positions, it is crucial that we interrogate the status of women's participation in leadership in general and then focus on religious and political institutions in Zimbabwe. According to William A. Cohen, an expert in management and leadership, "Leadership is the art of influencing others to achieve their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project."[13] Zimbabwe has a brilliant approach, the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) blueprint, which calls for all citizens to contribute towards the attainment of an upper middle-class economy by 2030. Our point of departure is outlined in three critical questions: (1) Given the definition of leadership above, how can women contribute towards the attainment of the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) goals if they are not participating in leadership positions? (2) Since women constitute the larger population percentage in Zimbabwe, how could it be possible to achieve economic development, let alone Vision 2030, if women are not participating in leadership position? (3) How might women influence others for the achievement of national development objectives when they are not in leadership? Throughout the chapter, focus is on the suggestion that law and religion could be used as instruments to initiate ways that might enhance women's participation in leadership positions in different spaces.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE PARTICIPATION OF ZIMBABWEAN WOMEN IN POLITICAL SPACE

This section provides a short analysis of women's political participation in Zimbabwe. This helps to frame the current status of women's leadership. Of Africa, in general, Berevoescu and Ballington note in their UN Women Report, "Participation of women in leadership positions in other regions have been enhanced by legislative quotas. For example, regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa and Western Asia, and the rest of Asia. However, this is not the case with Southern Africa."[14]

Yet women's equal participation in local governments and decision-making processes is equally critical for creating gender-sensitive policies and for promoting sustainable development. The reality, however, is that women's participation in electoral and governance processes is far from achieving that in many nations.[15] Zimbabwe is no exception after years of rapid expansion, especially in terms of

13 Cohen WA. 1990. *The Art of the Leader*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 9.

14 Berevoescu and Ballington, "Women's Representation in Local Government", UN Women Working Paper, 6.

15 "Still No Justice for Zimbabwe's 2018 Post-Election Violence", HRW.org. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2 August.

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politically inclusive legislation, the growth seemed to reach a stagnation period.[16] Hence, this justifies the need to critically interrogate reasons why women are not fully and equally participating and represented in leadership positions.

If issues affecting the participation of women in political leadership positions are not well articulated, the assumption is that even suggested national development strategies will not work out. Some scholars, such as development studies expert Teresa Mugadza and public administration experts Anella Machiridza and her colleagues, have dealt with similar issues and suggested possible strategies.[17] But the concern by feminist organizations such as the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network and the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe on levels of women participation in leadership positions has remained high on their agendas. Despite the effort made by feminist movements to push for a significant presence of women within political parties and state institutions, participation of women is at its barest minimum. It is, therefore, critical in this chapter to begin by unpacking issues that hinder women's participation in leadership positions.

Historical and structural unequal power relations, negative patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes contribute to limited women's participation in politics.[18] Discriminatory laws, policies and practices or insufficient implementation of laws and policies that protect and promote women's rights also exacerbate the challenges and undermine trust in governance and public life.[19] Berevoescu and Ballington further note in their UN Women report that violence against women in politics remains one of the major hindrances to women's engagement with the electoral processes and taking up leadership roles.[20] As a result, the institutions for decision-making and governance, such as election management bodies (EMBs) and political parties, become male-dominated, and women's access and participation is met by structural and ideological challenges. For example, ZANU-PF, the ruling party in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, has been criticized for its underrepresentation of women in its political leadership hierarchy despite having a quota system that allows for sixty seats in the parliament to be occupied by women, but women hold only a small percentage of senior positions in

16 Maphosa et al, "Participation of Women in Zimbabwean Politics", 120.

17 Mugadza T. 2016. "Women Empowered for Leadership: Zimbabwe Baseline". The Hague: Hivos—People Unlimited; Machiridza AT, Kihonge E and Ochieng PA. 2016. "Factors Influencing Women's Career Progression to Leadership Positions in Harare City Council, Zimbabwe", *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research* 5(5):95-102.

18 Berevoescu and Ballington, "Women's Representation in Local Government", UN Women Working Paper.

19 Kiamba JM. 2006. "Women and Leadership Positions: Social and cultural barriers to success", *Wagadu* 6:2-26.

20 Berevoescu and Ballington, "Women's Representation in Local Government", UN Women Working Paper, 6.

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government, according to a report by Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, a Zimbabwean movement of men advocating for gender justice.[21]

This is a result of the patriarchal system that privileges men and places women in subordinate positions of power. In their UN Women report, Berevoescu and Ballington provided a gender analysis of the presidency and cabinet in 2020, observing that, in Zimbabwe, the presidential and vice presidential positions are occupied by men.[22] In the same report, the UN Women Report also Berevoescu and Ballington noted that, out of twenty-one cabinet minister seats, only five were occupied by women.[23] The position of a Minister of State for Provincial Affairs has ten (10) seats and five (5) are occupied by women. The Deputy Minister position consists of eighteen (18) seats and only four (4) are occupied by women. These statistical details clearly show that there is no gender balance when it comes to participation of women in political leadership positions. The Padare/ Enkundleni/ Men's Forum on Gender has concluded that Zimbabwe is a constitutional democracy supporting gender equality.[24] However, it further observed that, when it comes to women participating in political governance structures, civic, religious and customary laws often create barriers to the fulfilment of constitutional provisions on gender parity.

HOW RELIGION MAY HINDER THE PROGRESSION OF WOMEN TOWARDS THE APEX OF LEADERSHIP

In this section of the chapter, religion is interrogated insofar as it acts as a hindrance of women's participation in leadership. From a religious perspective, and using Christianity as an example of a religion, some churches are still promoting male domination doctrines that prohibit women from taking up leadership positions within the church hierarchy. The other defining dynamic related to women's political participation, as we see it today, can be traced to the churches that were established during the colonial period. The church, led by the missionaries who came on a civilisation mission, also preached the God-ordained supremacy of men and most Zimbabweans converted to Christianity adopted that position. Christianity largely believes in male domination and a privilege for men as sanctioned by God.[25] The church, as an institution, became an agent of gendered socialization whose impacts are still being felt to this day.

21 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender. 2022. "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe."

22 Berevoescu and Ballington, "Women's Representation in Local Government", UN Women Working Paper.

23 Berevoescu and Ballington, "Women's Representation in Local Government", UN Women Working Paper.

24 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender.

25 Bible, Genesis 2:16.

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Moreover, some churches still depict women as homemakers, caregivers and child bearers, while portraying men as breadwinners and leaders.[26] These gender roles are traced back to the Bible. For instance, in the book of Genesis, God created Adam and Eve and assigned different roles to them.[27] Adam was given the responsibility of caring for and cultivating the earth while Eve was tasked with the role of bearing children and being a helper to Adam. The Bible itself reflects traditional gender roles which are being followed literally by some churches, particularly the apostolic churches. One of the biblical texts used to silence women in the church is 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, which clashes with modern egalitarian overtures.

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission Act advocates for gender equality, but it appears that the existence of that law is not known by the majority of women.[28] Additionally, the Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, Sections 17, 56 and 80,[29] provides for gender equality and equity through the push for the General Laws Amendment Bill to align with the constitution and accommodate the 50:50 principle. There was also the introduction of gender quotas whereby the government approved a policy mandating boards of parastatals to have a 50:50 ratio of males to females.[30] However, the question of implementation has remained a sticking matter, as most women are unaware of these laws and quotas. Even when some are aware of the legal provisions, they have no influence to implement the law.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND LAW IN IMPROVING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

To influence the status of women's participation in leadership in positive ways, legal and religious institutions should provide technical and advisory services to regional bodies and other key governance and electoral stakeholders to develop policy frameworks that promote gender balance in all spheres of influence. Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender argues that Zimbabwe has actively expressed its aspirations through being a signatory to various regional and international human rights protocols on gender equality related to political representation.[31] International protocols that emphasise political involvement of women, to which Zimbabwe is a signatory, are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the

26 Kiamba, "Women and Leadership Positions: Social and Cultural Barriers to Success".

27 The Holy Bible; Genesis 2:18-24.

28 The Zimbabwe Gender Commission Cap 10:31, No. 7 of 2015, gazetted 12 February 2016.

29 The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013 (hereinafter Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013) of 2013.

30 Zungura M and Nyemba E. 2013. "The implications of the quota system in promoting gender equality in Zimbabwean politics", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3(2):204-212.

31 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe."

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Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.[32] The priority of the National Gender Policy launched in 2017, is on gender, politics and decision-making, yet women's underrepresentation in political participation has persisted.[33]

Be that as it may, there is a large gap in the representation of women in political leadership positions in Zimbabwe. For example, in 2018 only 17 per cent of women were actively involved in the 2018 elections and in the 2023 elections only 13 per cent of cabinet positions were taken by women.[34] This shows that there is still a long way to go when it comes to women's representation in politics in Zimbabwe. It is, therefore, apparent, that the law provides the foundation for women's participation in political leadership. However, the implementation of the law and policies is a cause for concern.

On the religious front, the church is not faring much better than government. There are very few women occupying significant positions, such as that of a bishop or president of a church organisation. Through its bodies and in collaboration with the local community leaders, the Church should organize regional and national training workshops that empower women, support programme development and implement and provide advisory services on advocacy campaigns and other initiatives. The church can also facilitate research initiatives that ensure that women receive adequate information so that they are able to contribute towards developing knowledge and policy briefs on women's leadership and political participation.

Churches are supposed to support and facilitate women's initiatives campaigns. For example, having noted the issues of violence in politics and gender stereotypes, the churches should create safe spaces for women so that they can share their opinions and encourage or motivate each other to participate in mainstream local and legislative elections. This can be done by creating women's groups within a church where women can share their experiences and support each other. The Church could also provide training for women on leadership and governance. In readiness for the 2023 harmonised elections in Zimbabwe, UN Women, in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission, supported the roll-out of an initiative, titled "Women Rise in Politics" aimed at building the capacity of women to run for

32 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe". See: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 52, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 999 U.N.T.S. 171, entered into force Mar. 23, 1976; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, G.A. res. 34/180, 34 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 46) at 193, U.N. Doc. A/34/46, entered into force Sept. 3, 1981; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 September 1995, A/CONF.177/20 (1995) and A/CONF.177/20/Add.1 (1995).

33 Republic of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, National Gender Policy 2013-2017. See also: Ministray of Women Affairs, Community, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development, "Improving the Situation of Women and Girls in Rural Areas". Revised Gender Policy 2017.

34 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe", 7.

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elections to occupy public office.[35] The initiative included mentorship of aspiring women political candidates and support in understanding the processes of running for public office. This initiative, provided them with the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to effectively participate in political decision-making processes and was ultimately, aimed at increasing representation and participation of women in politics in Zimbabwe. If such initiatives were replicated by churches, the results of women who participated in leadership positions in the 2023 harmonized elections would have been much better.

Religion and law are supposed to work hand-in-glove for the public common good, which includes increased women participation in political leadership and decision-making positions. According to development scholar Mandlekozi Maphosa and colleagues, the Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, stipulates that women should have equal opportunities as men in all spheres including in political participation.[36] In spite of the existence of these supportive instruments, Zimbabwe has not fared well in advancing the participation of women in governance. One can conclude that if churches had used these instruments to create support and advocacy campaigns for women, there could have been better results for women.

Religion can influence the participation of women in a positive way. For example, the Church can advocate for policies and programmes that promote gender equality and address the barriers that women face. The culture of equality can start within the Church. This creates a unique opportunity for churches to use legal instruments to achieve their objectives towards gender equality and participation. Furthermore, just like the voter education initiatives, churches can lead by example, using the law to make it mandatory for women to be elected to and participate in church leadership and decision-making positions. In connection with women's participation in elections, Zimbabwean gender and politics researcher, Bertha Chiroro maintains, "Voter education can be a critical factor in enhancing women's participation in elections, particularly if emphasis is placed on the right of women to be elected. It also helps women to make more informed and responsible choices. Voter education should include information on voting rights, the political system and candidates as well as information about where and how to vote."[37] In this regard, the Church can also help women to make more informed and responsible choices.

There is need for a policy that guides a political party on the number of women in its leadership positions for it to be recognized as a credible party. There should be a law that requires compliance with female participation quotas as a prerequisite to registering a political party. According to Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Constitutionally, the realization of equitable participation of women in

35 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe", 9.

36 Maphosa et al, "Participation of Women in Zimbabwean Politics", 127. See, e.g., Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, ss, 17, 56 and 80.

37 Chiroro B. 2005. "Persistent inequalities: Women and electoral politics in the Zimbabwe Elections in 2005", *Journal of African Elections* 4(2):91-106.

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politics is through political parties. Political parties are the gatekeepers to women's political participation in the public sphere as elected officials.[38] However, there is not much support for gender issues within any political party in Zimbabwe. To correct this anomaly, the Rural Areas Act of 2016 was propagated to ensure, among other things, that there is increased representation of women in rural district councils. Local Government Laws Amendment Act, 2016, to amend the Rural District Councils Act [Chapter 29:13].

The political framework in the country has, for a long time, been patriarchal and violent. Political parties have largely been operating outside the Zimbabwean Constitution. Even the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) admitted that in the 2018 harmonized elections, political parties failed to actively encourage or support women's representation to such an extent that, by the time political parties submitted names to the nomination court, the pool of candidates was heavily gender-biased in favour of men. For example, political parties did not follow the provisions of Section 17 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, which calls for equal participation of men and women in all spheres, including politics.[39] According to Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, Sakhile Sifelani-Ngoma of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) made the following detailed observations before the 2018 elections in July: "In the National Assembly, 47 political parties fielded candidates, and 20 of these did not field women candidates and two parties fielded only one woman each. A total of 84 out of 210 constituencies were contested by men only. In addition to that, in local authority elections, 40 political parties participated in the elections. Of the 6 796 local authority candidates contesting, 17% were women while 83% were men. In this regard, it appears that the only women that are in parliament are the 91 that are required by law."[40]

This clearly shows that political parties generally have no culture of respect for constitutionalism. Rather, most of them uphold patriarchal values and norms. Although many organisations are governed by their own internal rules and procedures, these cannot supersede constitutional provisions on gender parity and equal opportunities for men and women. However, patriarchy has remained widespread, and there seems to be a deliberate reluctance by organisations to appreciate the need for affirmative measures towards gender parity. It is observed that in most organisations, women are reserved for or pushed to positions that do not threaten men within the organisations. To further stress the point, Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender gives an analogy of the 2008 elections, where the opposition MDC fielded nine women in rural constituencies where it did not have strong support, whereas ZANU-PF fielded ten women in urban areas where

38 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe", 17-18.

39 Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, ss, 17, 56 and 80.

40 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe", 17.

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it did not have adequate support.[41] Political parties, thus, tend to field women in constituencies that they have little chances of winning. This becomes a deliberate ploy to exclude women from positions of political influence. It is important that political parties comply with constitutional provisions on gender parity when drawing up their party candidate lists for promotion of equal access to leadership and decision-making positions for women. To this end, Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender have observed that "there is no legal framework which imposes demands or requirements on the political party formation process." [42]

Furthermore, the law can actually move from the "quota system" to the "halve system, since, women participation in leadership positions is still a major concern globally. As Berevoescu and Ballington put it in their UN Women report, "[I]ndeed, very few countries have reached gender balance in local decision-making bodies; in the majority of countries, women's under-representation is severe. Legislated gender quotas have a significant positive impact on women's representation in local government, particularly in countries in Africa and Asia, and can disrupt the cycle of male dominated political leadership."[43] For the United Nations, the issue of women's participation in leadership positions requires new data collection tools, "to capture women's full and effective participation in local government." Be that as it may, one might conclude that the "half system" might yield better results than the "quota system".

For Antonetta Hamandishe, a prominent Zimbabwean gender and politics scholar, the "quota system" is also exclusionary to young women, mainly because it caters for older women already established in political circles.[44] There is also a serious problem in that the current application of the "quota system" seems to have been a way to appease the women's movement. The mere fact that a quota outside the 210 constituencies was created is testament to the art of politicking, gamesmanship and lip service played by the dominant power brokers in political parties. Further to this, Maphosa and colleagues have argued that women parliamentarians are often ridiculed, thus allowing them in parliament is tokenistic in nature.[45] Writing on the "quota system", the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe also observed that the Zimbabwean political landscape continues to operate under patriarchal values that view rights as concessions or favours to be given for legitimacy or support at a particular moment, rather than as entitlements.[46]

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41 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe", 17.

42 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe", 15.

43 Berevoescu and Ballington, "Women's Representation in Local Government", UN Women Working Paper, 6.

44 Hamandishe A. 2018. "Rethinking women's political participation in Zimbabwean elections", *Africa Portal*, 27 July.

45 Maphosa et al, "Participation of Women in Zimbabwean Politics", 127.

46 Kapoor, *Gender analysis of the governance architecture/infrastructure in Zimbabwe.*

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Turning to the Church, its mandate is to teach and encourage other women, not to shame those who participate in political leadership positions. It is noted that women, on their own, share different perceptions of each other when it comes to the participation and experiences of female politicians. Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender notes that women are involved in stigmatizing other women involved in politics and that women in Zimbabwe generally have a negative attitude towards female politicians. Thus, there is a role that the Church could play in educating and encouraging men to support women's leadership. In its 2022 survey, Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender recorded one male interviewee saying, "Politics is dangerous for women and it is a not good idea having my wife/ partner participating in politics. I think that once a woman takes an active role in the public sphere, they are bound to apply the same ideas at home where they will challenge the husband's authority."[47] This goes to show that some of the participants believe that women should stay away from politics. Hence, in such scenarios the Church needs to embark on awareness campaigns to change and redefine traditional gender roles such as unpaid care work. Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender maintain, "Women must be made aware of their rights. Government and all political parties must ensure that women participate equally and are represented equally in all national and local decision-making bodies."[48]

It is assumed that once these awareness campaigns are initiated and sustained through the church, society stands to benefit more, since churches have large groups of followers. Furthermore, the Church is expected to provide spiritual and moral support to women and encourage families to provide women, who contest in elections, with resources. It is noted that women lack support from family and intimate partners.[49] Lack of support makes it difficult for women to succeed in politics or any endeavours, because of the multiple roles they play. Without a clear support system, women find it difficult to balance the demands from both the public and private spheres. Men, unlike women, have the support of the whole family, especially their wives who will ensure that the household and other issues are taken care of. Men do not have to worry or feel guilty for leaving the children or the family as they spend days away from home. A woman has to worry about all these things and that often the wider extended family actually accuses women of abandoning their children and families once they concentrate on their careers and leave family responsibilities behind. As a result, this kind of unpaid care work hinders women from engaging actively in political leadership positions.

Moreover, it is the role of religion to rebuild the name and image of women. Women suffer verbal abuse whenever they dare into the overrated men's world of political or leadership spaces. Men often refer to any such courageous woman as a whore,

47 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe", 20.

48 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe", 20.

49 Chiroro, "Persistent inequalities".

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hure in ChiShona language. Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender noted that "the term *'hure'* has been regressively used for the surveillance of women and to exclude them from public spaces."[50] The word *"hure*" loosely translates to a whore or woman of loose morals."[51] The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe have observed that "a woman is labelled a whore (*'hure'*) if she became a politician or aspired to become so…it was observed that women would have penetrated male spaces, thereby challenging patriarchy. It is about male perceptions of a woman's upward mobility that causes violence."[52]

For Jan Michalko, a proponent of gender justice who was instrumental in establishing the Nehanda Centre for Gender Studies at Great Zimbabwe University, whenever a woman challenges a male political leader about any inconsistencies, she is attacked either physically or online.[53] This is like a nuclear bomb for women, who are raised in a society that moralises their every action. In such cases, the church should help women and men to reconstruct and change their mind-sets about women vying for leadership positions.

Another strategy that can be used by religion and law to assist women is to initiate advocacy and community outreach activities that promote women's participation in leadership spaces. There is need for government and civil society organisations to continue intensifying community awareness programmes geared towards fighting stigma and cultural norms that militate against women's participation in leadership. It is important that such programmes involve and engage men, especially in critical positions within religious, cultural and legal systems which actively work to promote and protect systems and norms that perpetuate women's exclusion.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have argued that without meaningful participation of women in leadership spaces, their aspirations, wishes and needs will be difficult to meet satisfactorily. Hence, society ought to interrogate law and religion to influence positive changes towards the participation of women in leadership positions in order to ensure women's full and effective participation and that they have access to equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making. Thus in political, economic and public life, law and religion should work hand in hand, adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforcing legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women at all levels. The church should

50 Padare Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, "Policy Brief on Women's Political Participation in Zimbabwe", 39.

51 Chiweshe MK. 2015. "Negotiating and creating urban spaces in everyday practices: experiences of women in Harare, Zimbabwe", in Allen A, Lampis A and Swilling M (eds) *Untamed Urbanisms*. London: Routledge.

52 Kapoor, *Gender analysis of the governance architecture/infrastructure in Zimbabwe.*

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assume a new and proactive function to ensure that gender equality and the promotion of women to decision-making and leadership positions also take place within the church. Church-related organisations such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA), the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), to mention a few, should address gender imbalances within their organisations and push the same agenda to other civic organisations. If church leadership can follow gender equality quotas, then it will be easier to create a new mindset, amongst both men and women who currently enable the patriarchy, one where female participation becomes the norm, rather than the exception. Furthermore, these religious organisations should familiarise themselves with the various sections of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, including Sections 17, 56, and 80, to facilitate the participation of women in leadership positions in Zimbabwe.

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