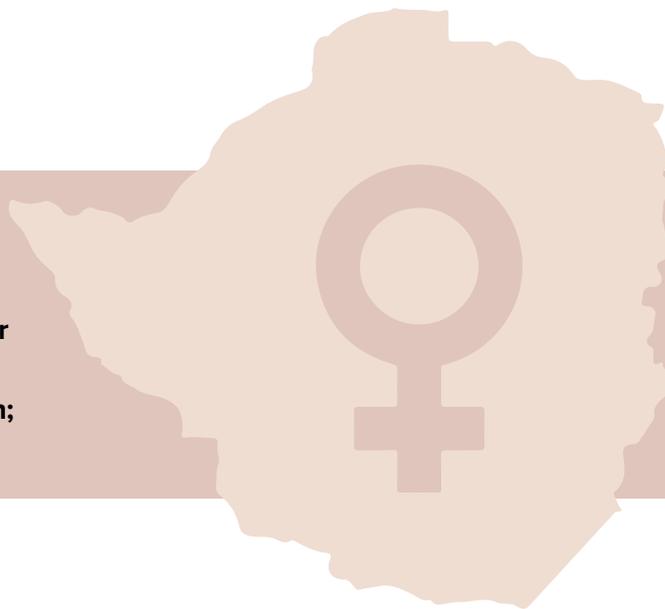


Charter on Women Political Participation and Decision Making

#What Women Want

PREAMBLE

We, the women and girls of Zimbabwe in our diversity and representing all ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, do hereby assert our collective position in this “What Women Want Charter” on electoral and political participation;



ACKNOWLEDGING the sacrifice and important role women played in the liberation struggle for an independent Zimbabwe in which fundamental human rights are respected, promoted, protected and fulfilled in totality;

NOTING that patriarchy remains ingrained in cultural and religious beliefs, stereotypes and myths, as well as the societal construct, which largely shapes the notion of men being comparatively more able to lead, making leadership a predominantly male domain, especially in senior roles;

FULLY AWARE that the legislative and executive arms of government are enjoined to protect and promote the Constitution of Zimbabwe and advance democratic and equitable governance in the country, and in this regard enact laws that promote good governance, gender equality, and promote and protect the human rights of women of all ages and abilities;

COGNISANT of the fact that women and girls constitute 52% of the country’s population as evidenced by the 2022 Population and Housing Census and that women – including young women and women with disabilities – made up 54% of the voters in the preceding harmonised elections and by-elections according to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC);

DISMAYED that despite the high voter turnout of women of all ages and abilities, there is a disproportionately high number of male presiding officers, polling officers and polling agents, pointing to structural discrimination of women in terms of holding positions in election management;

RELIEVED by the country’s constitutional provisions; Section 17 which requires the state to promote complete gender balance and take measures to ensure equal representation of women and men in all elected and/or appointed structures and processes of government at every level; Section 56 (Equality and Non-Discrimination), which provides for equal opportunities; Section 67 which provides for participation in political and electoral processes; and Section 80 (Rights of Women), which outlaws traditions and cultural practices that infringe on girls and women’s rights.

WORRIED that despite the aforementioned constitutional provisions on gender equality and participation in place, women, young women and women with disabilities even more so, are underrepresented in leadership and decision-making;

APPALLED at the widespread violence, intimidation, harassment and discrimination experienced by female candidates in the lead up to, during and after elections;

ALARMED by the glaring discrepancies in the appointment of women, including young women and women with disabilities, to government, constitutional institutions, and other decision making and leadership positions and bodies in equal numbers with male counterparts in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution;

DISTURBED by the impunity, lack of accountability and access to justice for women of all ages and abilities who experience discrimination, harassment and intimidation of a gender-based and misogynistic nature;

CONCERNED about the exorbitant fees for nomination, and access to the voters' roll and electoral maps for prospective election candidates in Statutory Instruments 144 and 145 of 2022 respectively;

COGNISANT that Zimbabwe is founded on the principle of gender equality as stipulated by Section 3 (1) (g) of the Constitution;

DESIROUS of seeing Zimbabwe's full and comprehensive adherence to its constitutional obligations, as well as its commitments to regional and international agreements, protocols, declarations, and treaties which call for gender equality.

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

01

ARTICLE 1

ALIGNMENT OF LAWS AND ELECTORAL SYSTEMS TO THE CONSTITUTION

- 1.1 The Government of Zimbabwe must urgently align all laws and regulations to ensure that women of all ages and abilities constitute at least half of the members of governmental bodies established by or under the Constitution of Zimbabwe.
- 1.2 The Government of Zimbabwe must fully implement its obligations to promote the rights of women of all ages and abilities to equal participation and representation in local and national level government, institutions and state-owned enterprises on an equal basis with men.
- 1.3 The Government of Zimbabwe must spell out concrete targets and specific time frames for increasing the proportion of women in leadership and decision-making positions by 2023.
- 1.4 The Government of Zimbabwe must enact a Gender Equality Act to operationalize Sections 17, 20, 56 and 80 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

- 1.5 The Government of Zimbabwe must enact a broader Sexual Harassment Act which incorporates harassment in political spaces and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.
- 1.6 The Government of Zimbabwe must put in place laws and policies that recognise, reduce, redistribute and represent Unpaid Care and Domestic Work to allow women of all ages and abilities to freely participate in political processes.
- 1.7 The Government of Zimbabwe must enact laws that enable the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to disqualify all political parties and political coalitions whose internal constitutions do not comply in full with the provisions of the Constitution of Zimbabwe with respect to equal representation of women of all ages and abilities.
- 1.8 The current 'First Past the Post' electoral system, which presents a disproportionate obstacle for women to successfully enter political office, must be amended to a Proportional Representation which provides extensively better conditions to ensure gender equality.

02

ARTICLE 2

POLITICAL PARTIES, FINANCING AND POST-ELECTION SUPPORT

- 2.1 Political parties must build internal democratic systems which ensures 50% representation by women in party leadership positions and must ensure that the political party constitutions are in line with the national constitution
- 2.2 Political parties must create a level playing field for women of all ages and abilities to freely campaign and contest for leadership through offering capacity building on leadership development.
- 2.3 Political parties must conduct candidate selection processes in a manner that women of all ages and abilities can participate without fear.
- 2.4 Political parties must design a gender responsive candidate selection process in consultation with members representing women of all ages and abilities.
- 2.5 Political parties must ensure that all information on candidate selection procedures is packaged and disseminated in an accessible, gender responsive manner.
- 2.6 Political parties must ensure that independent observers are accredited to observe the internal candidate selection process.
- 2.7 Election dispute and conflict resolution management mechanisms must ensure that the reporting and redress of gender imbalances, grievances, discrimination, abuse, and sexual harassment of women of all ages and abilities adheres to the non-discrimination and equality principles of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.
- 2.8 Political parties must ensure gender responsive budgeting and funding of electoral candidates.
- 2.9 The Government of Zimbabwe must create a special independent fund available to financially support women of all ages and abilities accepted as electoral candidates.
- 2.10 Political parties must ensure that an equal proportion of any public funding they receive is directed to funding women candidates of all ages and abilities.
- 2.11 The Government of Zimbabwe must amend the Political Parties Financing Act to ensure that political parties are obliged to distribute resources to women candidates of all ages and abilities on an equal basis and in equal measure with men.
- 2.12 Political parties must ensure a structured gender responsive post-election review, reflection, learning and support for women of all ages and abilities who participated in the elections

PEACEFUL PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENDING IMPUNITY.

- 3.1 The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and the Judiciary must ensure that the election dispute and conflict resolution management mechanisms to redress gender imbalances, grievances, discrimination, abuse, and sexual harassment of women of all ages and abilities are in line with the non-discrimination and equality principles of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.
- 3.2 The Government of Zimbabwe must facilitate the removal of all laws that restrict free movement, prevent or hinder women from enjoying the right of free association and respect the tenets of Section 59 of the Constitution which provides for the right to peacefully protest and petition.
- 3.3 The Independent Commissions entrenching democracy, constitutionalism, transparent, accountable governance and rule of law established under Chapter 12 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe must effectively discharge their mandate, which have a direct bearing on ensuring peaceful resolution of conflicts and participation by all, especially young women and women among other vulnerable groups.
- 3.4 The Government of Zimbabwe must ensure that women of all ages and abilities can fully and equally participate in all decision-making structures and processes without experiencing fear or violence.
- 3.5 Political parties must strengthen intra-party democracy to reduce the incidence of intra-party violence, discrimination and exclusion of women in conformity with the national Constitution..
- 3.6 Political parties must review and update party policies and procedures to ensure provisions on zero tolerance of violence against women.
- 3.7 The Government of Zimbabwe must be transparent and accountable in utilising national resources towards goods and services that expand the lives of women of all ages and abilities.
- 3.8 The Government of Zimbabwe must ensure accountability and reconciliation for the human rights violations that have happened in Zimbabwe since independence. The culture of impunity, especially for sexual violence against women must end.

MEDIA

- 4.1 The media must provide equal coverage to both men and women.
- 4.2 The media must equally portray women leaders and aspiring women leaders in a positive manner. The focus, as seen in the portrayal of men, ought to be on their professional capacity, the issues they work on, the experiences and achievements.

