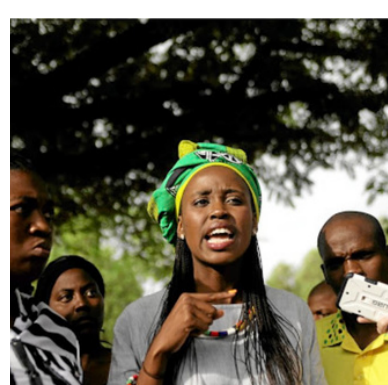


# MEMORANDUM

## ON ACHIEVING THE 50/50 GENDER PARITY IN GOVERNANCE & DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN ZAMBIA



PRESENTED BY GIRLS GONE POLITICAL

BEFORE THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL  
GUIDANCE & GENDER MATTERS  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA





## ABOUT GGP

*Girls Gone Political (GGP) is a young women's grassroots organisation which is championing for the increased participation and representation of authentic young women in politics and the public service.*

*Our Mission is to amplify the young woman's voice and ensure that young women are fully represented at the decision-making table and at all levels of Zambia's political & governance sphere.*

*We are looking to bridge the gender gap in politics and break the patriarchal barriers that limit the participation of young women.*

# INTRODUCTION

This memorandum will provide insight from young women's perspective on our national policy and legal frameworks that aim at achieving the 50/50 gender parity in Zambia's key decision-making positions and their adequacies. It will also address:

- Institutional framework that drives the gender equality agenda in Zambia, and its adequacy.
- Challenges influencing women in governance and decision-making positions.
- Opportunities available to women in governance and decision-making positions.
- Recommendations & Next steps on averting the persistent and widening inequality gaps between men and women in governance and decision-making positions.

## **Brief Overview**

According to the World Bank, Governance is the way in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. Therefore, GGP believes that young women's participation in governance at any level is critical because it influences how power is distributed and used; determining who has decision-making power, how other players make their voices heard, and how accountability is given.

Gender equality denotes women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere.



Globally, political leadership and representation remains heavily male-dominated. Only ten countries have a woman as Head of State, and 13 have a woman Head of Government, and only 21 per cent of government ministers were women. While there has been some progress made in women's participation in national parliaments, in many cases driven by the adoption of gender quotas, globally only 26 per cent of national parliamentarians are women. Young women are even further underrepresented – of the 2.6 per cent of the world.

In Zambia, women continue to face a multitude of formal and informal barriers to political participation. Despite the historical appointments of women to key decision-making positions such as Vice-President, Speaker of the National Assembly, Chief Justice, Head of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Auditor General, Head of the Drug Enforcement Commission, President of the Constitutional Court, and Judge President of the Court of Appeal.

In 2023, Zambia has a representation of 15.7% of women in parliament, out of this, there is only 1 young female MP below the age of 35 and 8% of women elected at local government level.



## A. POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS ON GENDER DEVELOPMENT IN ZAMBIA

In promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, Zambia has strengthened the policy and legal frameworks. Zambia is a signatory to the 1995 Beijing Platform Declaration that prompts Governments to make deliberate efforts to empower women across all sectors of society into taking up decision-making positions. It is our view that it is therefore the Executive's duty to ensure that state machinery is conducive and supports the advancement of gender equality across all sectors, particularly in the public sphere where women have been historically marginalized.

### 1. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The Sustainable Development Goals under Goal 5 particularly aims to Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all women and girls.

Target 5.5 states: 'Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life'

Zambia is a signatory to several international instruments providing for gender equality including:

- Universal Declaration on Human Rights & United Nations Convention on the Political Rights on Women that's relates to participation of women in politics and decision making which states that:

**Article 3 – Women shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination. Women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.**

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1991);

**Article 7- Provides that: Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:**

**(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.**



- Beijing Declaration on the Platform for Action (1995);
- Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) & Economic, and Social and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC),
- African Union: Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human & People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2006)
- SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008)

One of the key targets in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development is 50% women's representation in all areas of decision-making by 2030.

**Article 12. states that: "State parties shall ensure equal and effective representation by women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors, including the use of special measures."**

- All These international and regional instruments above mentioned advocate for women's equal and effective participation in all areas of decision making.

## 2.. NATIONAL POLICY & LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

### I) National Gender Policy 2000 & 2014

This National Gender Policy is aimed at ensuring the attainment of gender equality in the development process by redressing the existing gender imbalances. It also provides for equal opportunities for women and men to actively participate and contribute to their fullest ability and equitably benefit from national development. The development of this Policy has been necessitated by a number of developments at national, regional and international levels such as global best gender practices & research findings.

### ii) The Constitution of Zambia Act No. 2 of 2016

- Our preamble states that Zambia shall:  
*·Uphold the human rights and fundamental freedoms of every person.  
 Commit ourselves to upholding the principles of democracy and good governance.*

*Confirm the equal worth of women and men and their right to freely participate in, determine and build a sustainable political, legal, economic and social order. Among the national values in the Constitution (Section 8) are "human dignity, equity, social justice, equality and non-discrimination."*

- *Article 173 of the Constitution (values and principles of public service) further provides for "adequate and equal opportunities for appointments, training and advancement of members of both gender and members of all ethnic groups."*

- Article 231 of the Constitution provides for the establishment of a Gender Equality Commission to:
  - Monitor, investigate, research, educate, advise and report on issues concerning gender equality;
  - Ensure institutions comply with legal requirements and other standards relating to gender equality;
  - Take steps to secure appropriate redress to complaints relating to gender inequality, as prescribed.
- Article 259 of the Constitution provides that: "where a person is empowered to make a nomination or an appointment, that person shall ensure that fifty percent of each gender is nominated or appointed from the total available positions, unless it is not practicable to do so".

## The Gender Equity and Equality Act No. 22 of 2015

The Government has strengthened the legal framework by enacting the Gender Equity and Equality Act, 2015 which has progressive provisions for the equal participation of both sexes in decision making. The Act further provides for all public bodies and private bodies within their responsibilities to develop special measures to achieve at least fifty percent representation of women in decision-making structures.

Some of the key provisions of the Gender Equality Act:

- **Section 24**, which requires the minister responsible for gender and the Gender Equity and Equality Commission to ensure equal representation and participation of both sexes in decision making by formulating and implementing policies, strategies and programmes for "...building the capacity of women to participate effectively in decision-making through leadership and gender sensitive training and mentoring; providing support structures for women in decision making positions; and changing discriminatory attitudes and norms of decision making structures and procedures."
- **Section 29**, further provides that a woman has an equal basis with a man, the same right to participate in public decision making; and to hold public office and perform public functions at all levels of Government.

Whilst the Constitution provides for the Republican President to establish the Gender Equity and Equality Commission, which is responsible for its implementation, the Commission has not been constituted since 2015, when the act was enacted into law. This therefore acts as a setback in terms of the implementation of the progressive policies as well as Legislative Acts.



## B. BARRIERS TO YOUNG WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE & ASCENSION TO KEY DECISION MAKING POSITION

60% of Zambia's population is its young people, but although their numbers are substantial, their political power has not reflected their demographics. For young women, the intersection of sex and age has compounded this problem; young women's representation in political institutions, policy-making and decision-making processes has remained limited, apart from small pockets of progress.

Young women have an inalienable right to be represented when laws are adopted, budgets negotiated and governments held to account.

The exclusion of young women from democratic processes is a violation of this right and undermines the valuable contributions they bring for the good of all people today and for the good of future generations. Their participation in formal politics is especially important as young women are strong and powerful leaders in many related fields, including in civic and democratic engagement on issues such as climate change, racism and gender equality, among other.

The factors contributing to young women's under- representation in politics, policy-processes and decision-making are many.

- A lack of effective government action;
- High Youth Unemployment
- Lack of financial resources act as a very practical barrier to their entry into politics.
- Unequal access to education and subsequently to economic opportunities exacerbate the impact of these negative social norms.
- Sexist attitudes, sometimes but not always deriving from religion or traditional practices;
- A corrupt and patronage-based political system;
- Electoral Violence, including against women candidates.
- Centralised power systems still generally favour patronage over merit, which has impacted on the numbers and type of women engaging with political parties.

Girls continue to be stereotyped and denied equal access to education and other opportunities in addition early and forced marriages deny young women and girls the chance to aspire to politics as most girls marry early to escape poverty. Underpinning the political barriers to young women's more active participation in political and public life are discriminatory social norms.





## C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION- GIRLS & YOUNG WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING POSITIONS

Despite the various obstacles to achieving gender equality across Zambia in political life and decision-making. Through research and our grassroots engagements, there are key opportunities for young women to be more active in politics and decision-making processes.

- African Union's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (2018-28) identified a number of entry-points for strengthening young women's civic & political participation (YWPP) that can be leveraged by Zambia's Government as its member state.

Starting at the Local Level up to National level, especially in the rural parts of Zambia there's an opportunity to increase young women's access to diverse, inclusive and accessible pathways towards political participation. As listed below:

- Consistent and continued sector-specific gender awareness-raising; and institutional capacity development to ensure improved sector reporting and accountability for gender equality and equity.
- Key political institutions, including legislatures, political parties, electoral management bodies and local government bodies, to engage and build the capacities of young women more proactively.
- Our country needs to strengthen women's participation throughout the electoral cycle, including by advancing law reform and other actions to address violence against women in politics
- There's an opportunity to identify whether and what kind of law reform might enable them to more proactively promote young women's participation.
- An opportunity for Ministry of Education to ensure civic education is gender-transformative and is included in national school curricula. It should include the depiction of women leaders as role models, human rights, gender-sensitive voting information, understanding decision-making processes and the role of civil society. It should provide opportunities to practise political discourse and promote diverse forms of participation, including pathways towards political leadership.
- Local government structures have an opportunity to partner with community-based organisations to reach girls, including the most marginalised, by providing diverse opportunities to engage: investing in participatory mechanisms including digital innovations, working through school structures and linking girl-led groups and their networks with formal decision-making processes.
- An opportunity for the Executive to establish the Gender Equity and Equality Commission as a matter of urgency, and ensure young women sit on the commission board
- Collaboration with social movements such as GGP at the grassroots level is an invaluable opportunity to ensure diverse representation of young women in democratic institutions.

## **D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AVERTING PERSISTENT AND WIDENING INEQUALITY GAPS BETWEEN MEN & WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE & DECISION MAKING POSITIONS**

The persistent and widening inequality gaps between men and women, and between boys and girls, not to mention people with disabilities (who are completely excluded even in the way sector data is collected), calls for reflection and re-evaluation of policies and programs, in order to make them more gender-responsive and to identify practical implementation approaches that leave no one behind.

. It is rooted in the psycho-social conditioning of society, which generally positions women in society as home-makers rather than decision makers and leaders. Research indicates that gender-based disparities persist in favour of males in education, decision-making, health, agriculture and many others areas. The social economic situation in Zambia has been worsening due to failing industries, rising unemployment levels, which are a result of the structural adjustment programmes

This conditioning impacts the way boys & girls are raised and the way they see themselves and the way society views them. Which in turn impacts the manner in which they participate in socio-economic and civic affairs. This social order is enforced in society by all genders, which causes the inequality to grow. In the following paragraphs, the potential impact of women's equal participation in leadership will be discussed.

The following are actionable recommendations for averting the persistent and widening inequality gaps between men and women in governance and decision-making positions.:

- Quota systems must be established to reserve candidacy and political seats for Youth, Women & Persons With Disabilities .
- Promote parity as one of the key measures guaranteeing women safe, fair, inclusive and supportive access to political office.
- Ensure that youth quotas and gender quotas can work together and succeed to influence positively the representation of different age and gender groups.
- Adopt and implement protective measures to eliminate sexism and gender-based harassment and violence in politics, including online.

- Mixed gender approaches

Engaging both men and women is more effective at changing the system. By connecting men and women on gender equality and sharing perspectives, men's attitudes and relations with their female colleagues might change. This is especially useful for trainings on campaign skills and fundraising

## E. NEXT STEPS

- Invest in the empowerment of girls: fund and implement quality education (including in the field of STEM and civic education) and training opportunities that reflect the needs of young women, and ensure the transparency, accessibility, fairness and inclusiveness of this process.
- Ensure financial accessibility to quality education by means of grant schemes, scholarships and financial services, such as CDF empowerment for Youth
- Strengthen gender-responsive youth policies and programs through legislation, budget allocation and parliamentary oversight.
- Create an enabling environment for young women's public engagement, via civic education and supporting youth initiatives.
- Create an environment conducive to ensuring political leadership's buy-in to providing robust support to young women politicians.

Trainings and capacity building are the main method of supporting young women in politics. With a focus on:

- self-esteem, public speaking, self-assertion
- political campaigns, advocacy and fundraising
- leadership skills
- media engagement
- ways to challenge stereotypes and cultural barriers

Women-only trainings can be very useful for empowering women with the necessary skills and overcoming psycho-social barriers. The safety of a women-only environment helps build confidence and resilience.



## CONCLUSION

GGP believes that paving the way for young women to participate in political, business, and civic arenas is an investment in more equitable, just, and peaceful societies.

Women's voices must not only be present — but heard — in the political processes that affect them. Females deserve an invitation at that table, they desire a seat at the table. It is not enough to simply just talk about equality. It isn't enough to simply believe in it. One must work at it. Let us work at it together and treat each other as partners and not competitors.

Girls and young women should have early exposure to political and decision-making spaces. For example, one form of such engagement can be facilitated by Model Youth Parliaments & Youth Council. Where they can prepare youth for the decision-making process, build their capacities in debating, communication and leadership, and familiarize them with electoral systems, the significance of parliament as an institution, the democratic processes and political leadership from a young age..

Lastly experienced parliamentarians have a responsibility towards young women candidates and MPs, to role-model and mentor them in their quest for their rightful place in politics. Young women particularly need both male & female mentors. At the same time, mentorship will promote intra and inter-generational communication and cooperation between women. If young women perceive they have a place and a path to success, they will be more likely to continue proactively to participate in political life. As a mutual learning process, investing in the success of others contributes to the personal growth and development of mentors as well