



ASSESSING THE EFFICACY OF THE PARTICIPATION AND STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT OF THE WOMEN'S COALITION IN POST-CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN ZIMBABWE

ZIMBABWE WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

SUMMARY

Since the late 1990s, women in Zimbabwe have been greatly affected by the country's protracted humanitarian crisis caused by a multifaceted conflict with economic, political and governance dimensions. Not only have women been disproportionately affected by the economic hardships of the crisis, such as the shortage of basic commodities, high levels of unemployment and increased poverty, but with the escalation of conflict, they have also experienced progressively higher levels of physical violence. In a context in which women have been used as a tool to exact punishment on political opponents through rape and other violence, it is clear that the state suspended the observation of its obligations to women under international law. This violence has had a negative impact on women's ability to participate effectively in the political life of the country.

The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) was formed in 1999 as a coordinating network for the empowerment of women and girls, to allow them to speak with one voice on all issues affecting their rights. Since then, the WCoZ has been the coordinating coalition for women's rights initiatives in Zimbabwe.

This study assesses the efficacy of the WCoZ strategies of engagement to enable women's participation in the post-conflict transformation processes in Zimbabwe. It covers the period from the height of political violence following the harmonized elections in 2008–2009 until today. The study assesses the WCoZ strategies in four main post-conflict and peacebuilding processes: the Global Political Agreement (GPA) signed in September 2008, which formed the basis for the coalition government and set out a process for writing a new constitution; the formation of the Government of National Unity in February 2009; the economic reconstruction process; and the ongoing constitution-making process.

Assessing the Efficacy of the Participation and Strategies of Engagement of the Women's Coalition in Post-conflict Transformation in Zimbabwe by Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association

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Much of the WCoZ's work is based on the international human rights frameworks to which Zimbabwe is committed. The most relevant among these is United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000. The resolution urges member states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, and calls on all actors involved in negotiating and implementing peace agreements to adopt a gender perspective.

In promoting and implementing strategies to put gender balance and women's rights on the political agenda, the WCoZ has successfully advocated and negotiated spaces for women to engage in national peace processes. This has resulted in the explicit inclusion of women's rights in various political agreements, such as the GPA.

The most important achievements of the WCoZ have been within the realm of the ongoing constitution-making process. Despite difficult conditions, the WCoZ has managed to increase women's participation in the process through convening national platforms for women's organizations, promoting consensus building and developing strategic partnerships. Evidence of the WCoZ's achievements include the creation of a Women's Charter setting out women's demands on the new constitution, as well as the adoption of this charter as a resource by the Select Committee of Parliament on the new Constitution; increased women's representation in outreach training teams; and the successful lobbying for a special committee on women and gender in the constitution-making process.

However, there have also been shortcomings. For example, the WCoZ has not achieved gender parity at the negotiating table in the constitution-making process, and it has had difficulty in dealing with the economic problems that women face.

Based on the assessment of the WCoZ strategies of engagement in the post-conflict transformation process, this study emphasizes the importance of taking advantage of the ongoing constitution-making process to push for legislative and policy provisions that guarantee gender parity in key national processes. In doing so, reference can be made to the constitution itself, which outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. The study also underscores the need for the WCoZ to continue to lobby for the establishment of a national Gender Equality Commission.

The WCoZ would also benefit from reviewing its work methods. For example, based on the experience of electoral violence in 2008, and considering the upcoming poll in 2012, the WCoZ needs to train its members in security risk analysis and awareness to ensure their safety. Further, when working with the state and political parties in lobbying for political reforms, it is important for the WCoZ to maintain a critical distance in order to prevent perceptions of partisanship, which might cost it key allies in such a polarized environment as Zimbabwe's. Finally, the WCoZ needs to augment its engagement by drawing on all its members—and beyond—in order to be prepared for situations that may arise as Zimbabwe moves towards greater democratization and a lasting peace.

Facts about Zimbabwe

Figures in US\$ are at current prices.

	Zimbabwe	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
Population, 2010 (m.)	12.6	854	6 841
GNI, 2010 (\$ b.)	6 988	1 054	62 573
GNI per capita, 2010 (\$)	460	2 146	11 081
ODA as a share of GNI, 2009 (%)	13.7	4.9	0.2
Debt as a share of GNI, 2009 (%)	1.9	2.0	..
Human Development Index, 2010 (score) ^a	0.376	0.463	0.620
Human Development Index, 2010 (rank/total) ^b	173/187
Literacy rate, 2009 (% of adults)	93	66	84
Life expectancy at birth, 2009 (years)	51.4	54.4	69
Depth of hunger, 2007 (kcal per day)	300	256	213
Military expenditure, 2010 (\$ m.)	98.3	30 100	1 630 000
as a share of GDP, 2009 (%)	0.8	1.7	2.6
Armed forces personnel, 2009	50 800	1.56 million	27.9 million
as share of total labour force, 2009 (%)	1.0	0.5	0.9
Global Peace Index 2010 ^c	140/153
Corruption Perception Index, 2010 (rank/total) ^d	134/178
Ibrahim Index of governance performance, 2010 ^e	51/100
Gender Inequality Index, 2011 ^f	0.583	0.610	0.492
Female population with at least secondary education, 2010 (%)	48.8	22.2	50.8
Female seats in Parliament, 2010 (%)	15.0	19.4	19.3
Female labour participation rate, 2009 (% of female adults)	60	61	52

CGE = central government expenditure; GNI = gross national income; GDP = gross domestic product; ODA = official development assistance.

^a The higher the index, the more human development.

^b The higher the rank (the lower the rank number), the more human development.

^c The higher the rank (the lower the rank number), the more peaceful the country.

^d The higher the rank (the lower the rank number), the less corrupt the country is perceived as.

^e The higher the rank (the lower the rank number), the better the governance performance.

^f The higher the rank (the lower the rank number), the less gender inequality.

Sources: Africa Development Indicators, World Bank online, <<http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=1&id=4#>>, choose ADI ; World Development Indicators & Global Development Finance, World Bank, <<http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=1&id=4#>>, choose WDI & GDF; World Development Report, World Bank, <<http://wdronline.worldbank.org/>>; Human Development Report, UNDP, <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/>>; Global Peace Index, <<http://www.visionofhumanity.org/info-center/global-peace-index-2011/>>; Ibrahim Index, <<http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/en/section/the-ibrahim-index>>; Corruption Perceptions Index, Transparency International, <http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi>; and SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, <<http://www.sipri.org/databases/milex/>>.



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ZIMBABWE WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

The Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) is a membership-based non-governmental organization seeking to develop, defend and promote dialogue on women's human rights. Founded in 1992, the ZWLA offers free legal services to women and is a forum for women lawyers. Its goal is to enhance the legal status and rights of women and children in Zimbabwe.

WOMEN'S COALITION OF ZIMBABWE

The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) is a network of over 200 women's rights activists and over 60 women's organizations throughout Zimbabwe. Founded in 1999, the WCoZ is a forum where women meet to engage in collective activism on issues affecting women and girls. Its vision is a Zimbabwean society where the rights of women and girls are respected. The WCoZ's mission is to coordinate women and girls for collective action through lobbying, advocacy, capacity building, information dissemination and resource mobilization. It is currently focused on bringing women into the constitution-making process, ending gender-based violence, and peacebuilding.

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