

Incomplete projects, resources could sway vote

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Calvin Manika

Political parties have stepped up their efforts to win support as the August 23 elections draw closer. Like elsewhere, voters in Hwange district, a long-marginalised area, will be taking stock of development or the lack of it.

According to political scientist Antony Mutale, the opposition will not have much to show for its dominance in councils in the districts and will instead focus on raising red flags corruption, money laundering, and mismanagement of the economy by the incumbent while the ruling party will cling to “still-in-progress projects” such as the Hwange Power expansion and Lake Gwayi projects.

Over the previous five years, government representatives have paid the several visits to the sites of the two mammoth. Residents of Hwange noted that the visits began a few months before the 2018 elections and have also increased in frequency towards the 2023 election. ZANU-PF have utilized the Hwange 7 and 8 expansion project, which has seen significant progress lately, to campaign.

“That does not demonstrate the government’s competency. Every citizen has a right to receive these services, and they must be provided to the entire country as a basic right,” he said.

Zimbabwe experienced severe power outages across the country until recently when

the situation with Hwange 7. It was clear that electricity would be an issue for the 2023 election given that the ruling party had promised to provide electricity to the whole country in its 2018 manifesto.

In its defense, the government cited the Covid 19 pandemic which impacted numerous economic activities around the world, as the project’s main drawback. When Covid 19 emerged in 2019, China was the epicenter. The fact that the expansion project was contracted to a Chinese company and that the majority of the supplies came from the ‘East’ may lend some credence to government’s explanation.

Construction has been going on in Gwayi also under a Chinese contractor for years.

Few locals villagers in the area secured jobs. Authorities have made promises of more employment and a variety of economic initiatives, including turning the isolated Gwayi area into a major fishing and tourism destination.

Democracy campaigner Tineyi Shoko expressed concern about the glacial pace of these projects. He sees the sudden focus on them to be all about elections.

"The current administration will not remain silent about these projects during the upcoming elections. They will continue to present them as accomplishments over the last five years and ask for an additional term to complete them. If they were so committed, they would have surely completed the projects a long time ago," said Shoko.

Meanwhile, the ruling party-state conflation and abuse of civil servants and state resources has also come under the spotlight in the execution of government projects. Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa (ACT-SA) says there is a growing body of irrefutable evidence that ZANU PF is among the leading abusers of civil servants as it seeks re-election ahead of general elections.

"This misuse and politicization yields a political advantage and benefit (re-election) to ZANU PF. This way, the prac-

tice is tantamount to the crime of corruption. Other rampant practices are many incidents of the abuse of public infrastructure, vehicles and stationery; manipulating state media; trading votes for access to public services and extorting donations from the private sector, among others," says the lobby group.

Democracy according to Act-SA entails that, there is strong need to confront the abuse of state resources for political gain. "Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Zimbabwean citizens and opposition political parties should not watch these developments in silence. The demand side represented by politicians abusing these assets, should be penalized. Other solutions to this problem involve reforming the electoral system, strengthening political parties, and regulating the financing of parties and elections."

When party-state conflation accusations were made against the ruling party during the general elections in 2018, Obert Mpfu, the Zanu-PF National Secretary for Administration, denied any wrongdoing.

Mpfu emphasized that his party had its own financing sources that it uses to support party initiatives.

"We are a group that has a history of self-sufficiency going back to 1980. Projects

are managed by our financial department to support party operations. We have a good resource base; I can say that with confidence. We didn't use state funds for our campaign program to purchase vehicles and uniforms. It is absurd to claim that ZANU-PF misuses State funding given how well-organized the party is," said Mpfu.

A sport utility vehicle (SUV) was given to every ruling party representative, including those running for the house of assembly, senate, and other party departments like the veterans shortly after this year's primary elections.

ACT-SA said that the 2018 elections in Zimbabwe were materially substantially skewed in favor of ZANU-PF due to a sizable financial base, the misuse of public resources, and extensive vote buying.

"There are several ways and strategies used by ZANU PF to instrumentalise the public service for political purposes. Public servants are enlisted in organizing committees and given specific duties and responsibilities to implement during working hours. Finally, an entire career in public service hangs on political affiliation. Some public servants give their allegiance to political parties as a strategy to have access to higher positions in government. The separation of state from party becomes very difficult," adds a statement by ACT-SA.

Women react to reduced female MP candidates

Grace Moyo

A recent report by the Election Resource Centre (ERC) shows that women's participation as election candidates has declined.

The Nomination Analysis Fact Sheet produced by the ERC shows a 3 % drop from 14.4% of total candidates in 2018 to this year's 11%.

In 2023, a paltry 70 female candidates out of a total of 566 candidates are running for office.

According to the fact sheet, new kid on the block, United Zimbabwe Alliance (UZA) has the highest number of women candidates. The party is also led by Elisabeth Valerio, the only female among the presidential candidates.

"Out of the major political parties that nominated candidates for the National Assembly election, United Zimbabwe Alliance (UZA) performed best in gender inclusion with 29% of their nominated candidates being women. Notably, only 11% of the nominated candidates in the National Assembly for Zanu PF are women, while the number drops even further for CCC which only has 9% of their nominated candidates as women," said ERC.

Quizzed on the dwindling women representation in leadership, The Girls Table



Director, Samkeliso Tshuma contends that the patriarchy is at the centre of challenges driving women away from leadership.

"Our constitution is clear on gender equality in sections 56, 17 and 80 but political parties, including the so-called progressive ones, have failed to ensure gender parity in leadership. The politics is men-led and most of the women we see in politics are those that pander to the whims and caprices of powerful men in political parties," Tshuma said.

According to Tshuma, the country needs specific laws that deal with non-compliance to constitutional provisions on gender equality in leadership.

"We need laws that categorically demand for specific gen-

der equality requirements that should be satisfied by every party. There should also be strict penalties in place for not adhering to these laws such as withholding state political party funding from political parties that disregard gender equality. As Zimbabweans, we like to sign pledges that we have no intention to fulfil hence the need for laws to ensure implementation. There should be 50-50 representation even in political party structures," she said.

Tshuma decried economic and traditional barriers that systematically relegate the girl-child to the periphery.

"Women do not have the financial muscle to compete. Our politics is tokenistic. People expect food, t-shirts and other freebies from candidates but

unfortunately women are typically unable to fulfill those expectations due to financial constraints.

"A young woman growing up in Tsholotsho or Plumtree is taught to be submissive to the male gender from an early age. They are brought up believing that leadership is a preserve for men. To then expect them to muster confidence and challenge men for positions is a tall order. It all starts during formative years in the family structure. We need to deal with these cultural beliefs that consolidate patriarchy at every level," she said.

In a recent statement on increasing women's participation, Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) advised that men should not be alienated but rather engaged and involved as allies in the fight for gender equality and that it was important to challenge stereotypes and gender roles if progress is to be made towards increasing women participation in leadership.

"We must encourage men to become champions for gender equality and actively support women's political aspirations.

We must raise awareness and challenge stereotypes. There should be targeted awareness campaigns to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes that hinder women's

political participation. Education and sensitization efforts should be aimed at both women and men to foster a culture of gender equality," said WILD

Violence has often been blamed as a deterrent for women in politics. Zimbabwean politics has proved to be an unsafe space for women.

Brenda Dube of Dete bemoaned the violence and toxicity of the political environment that has discouraged women from running for office.

"Attacks against women both online and offline are a problem for women who wish to venture into politics. They are called names that strip them of their dignity. Authorities must do everything in their power to protect women and make politics a safer space for the fairer gender," she said.

During the 2020 by-elections campaign, MP Jasmine Toffa sustained a fractured arm after an attack by suspected Zanu PF thugs in Bulilima.

Two years ago, then MDC-Alliance's Joana Mamombe, Cecilia Chimbiri and Netsai Marova were abducted and tortured following a demonstration in Warren Park, Harare. The trio was charged with communicating falsehoods after reporting the matter to the police. They were only acquitted a few weeks ago.

According to Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTATS) as at 20th of April 2022, 48% of Zimbabwe's population were male and 52%, giving a sex ratio of 92 males for every 100 females. Presently, parliamentary representation of women in Zimbabwe stands at 31%

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Call for political tolerance



Grace Moyo

Zimbabweans have been urged to exercise tolerance as the nation edges closer to the 23 August harmonised election.

The call came on Friday night, during a Public Policy Research Institute of Zimbabwe (PPRIZ) lecture themed, 'Political Tolerance, Violence Free, and Policy Oriented Campaigns.'

Keynote speaker, Dr Wayne Malinga emphasised the need for peaceful campaigns and tolerance within and between political parties. He outlined strategies that can be employed to achieve peace during the election period that include the need to fully appreciate and tolerate divergent political views.

"It is important to have violence-free campaigns. Peaceful and credible elections are

essential for democracy to thrive. Violence impacts negatively on the credibility of elections. It is also important to preach non-violence before, during and post-election. There is need for contesting parties to play by the rules provided by the code of conduct for political parties and candidates who should allow campaigns to be determined by issues affecting the people," said Dr Malinga.

Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) House of Assembly candidate for Lobengula-Magwegwe constituency, Nigel Ndlovu concurred with Dr Malinga on the need to place citizens at the centre of issues.

"A key aspect of our ZAPU manifesto is the Human Security Model which seeks the greater good of the masses and not the elite. Our focus is on the people," he said.

Ndlovu told delegates that ZAPU is the only policy-oriented party as evidenced by the fact that it is currently the only party with a manifesto. "People must desist from the politics of popularity and focus on the politics of policy," he added.

As a measure to promote political tolerance, Dr Malinga recommended inter-party dialogues.

During the plenary session, Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association BVTAD Director, Michael Ndiweni decried a deficiency of morals that usually escalates during elections. Ndiweni contended that if this moral decadence is not nipped in the bud, a non-violent election remains a pipe dream.

"As long as this country continues on the path of the moral deficiency that we are seeing from certain politi-

cal parties during this election period, believe you me, talking about a non-violent election is a mere waste of time,” Ndiweni said.

Recently in Bulawayo there was a violent attack on journalists and vendors at the vegetable market area along Fife Street and 6th avenue by Zanu PF members who were reportedly evicting vendors who did not have the ruling party’s membership cards.

Former Minister of State Enterprises and Parastatals in the Government of National Unity of 2009–2013, Gordon Moyo reminded aspiring candidates vying for political office in Matabeleland that there are certain qualifications required to lead the people in the region.

“We want to know whether you understand our past, share our past and have experienced our past. We should remind ourselves all the time that the past is present because up to now, there are people whom we still do not know where they were buried,” said Dr Moyo while asserting that the region’s history has been distorted and falsified.

The lecture was attended by the media, civic society organisations, and political players from across the political divide, among other stakeholders.

Young candidates call youths to vote in their favour



Providence Moyo

After successful nomination court process, young candidates are calling upon agemates to show belief in other young people by rallying behind them and voting for them in the 23 August election.

This emerged during a weekly virtual discussion that was organised by Election Series 101.

Zimbabwe African People’s Union(ZAPU) candidate who is running for parliament in Lobengula-Magwegwe constituency, Nigel Ndlovu said young people in politics lack the support of agemates which frustrates efforts aimed at increasing youth participation in leadership.

“One of the challenges we face as young candidates is lack of support from other

youths as they do not believe in other young people and their capacity to deliver their political campaign promises. As young people we must understand the daily struggles that we face and remain resolute as we stand a better chance of occupying these positions to proffer solutions. It is unfortunate though that when you campaign to other youths, you turn into a laughing stock,” said Ndlovu.

Pashor Sibanda, a candidate for Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) contesting under Cowdray Park Constituency concurred with Ndlovu and said this was one of the hindrances in trying to increase youth representation in Parliament.

“Youths participation in parliament will increase if youths understand their responsibilities to their re-

spective areas. Youths need to know that by not physically voting they have indirectly voted for the status quo which does not advance the youth agenda, so we need to go out in numbers and support each other on the day so that we achieve increased representation in parliament and councils," he said.

When asked what he intends to do for his constituency, Sibanda says plans to harness community engagement were afoot as he took a swipe at imposing projects on residents that are not in accordance with the law including set provisions by the Urban Council Act.

"I want to push the Kasi (township) Economy where residents in Cowdray Park, which is the biggest suburb in Bulawayo, begin to trade amongst themselves and grow the economy and contribute to the city's Gross Domestic Product. All major services must be within Cowdray Park enabling residents to access everything they need," said Sibanda as highlighted that currently, a fund has been set up to assist vulnerable children such as orphans.

Ndlovu spoke about how politicians have been insincere in pushing the devolution agenda as they make promises during the campaign season only to remain mum about the

issues during the entire 5-year period. As part of his campaign, he promised to push devolution which is a mainstay of his party. He said real and meaningful development had been stalled by government's failure to implement devolution.

"What people tell me to do, I will do it. They will tell me the kind of devolution they would want to see and I will go to parliament and represent their interests," said Ndlovu.

Ndlovu added that he will do a door to door campaign. He bemoaned financial constraints as the major reason for his loss in the 2018 harmonised elections when he stood as an Independent candidate.

Youth representation has over the years been one of the major challenges in the country. After the 2018 elections, Zimbabwe had only 2.85% youth representation in parliament which translates to 6 youths only under the age of 35 who managed to get into Parliament.

Zimbabwe is a youthful population with over 67% of the population under the age of 35.

Police ordered to stop rally bans



Grace Moyo

Top echelons of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) have instructed commanders to stop arbitrary bans on opposition rallies, following an outcry from Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) whose rallies have either been controversially banned or given stringent conditions to follow.

A memorandum sent to the commanders urged them to "ensure that political parties are allowed to hold rallies unless there are valid reasons to warrant such rejections." They were further advised to that decisions to ban rallies should only be reached after "thoroughly consulting."

The police hierarchy noted incidences where the opposition has claimed to have been denied the right to convene rallies by the police resulting in disputes.

"These skirmishes are discrediting the electoral

process...Regulating authorities are urged to thoroughly consult before coming up with decisions to deny any political player opportunity to hold a rally or meeting."

"Commanders should note that for elections to be deemed free, fair, peaceful

and credible, the playing field should be reckoned as level, hence the police actions should not discredit the electoral processes."

The signal was sent to officers commanding police provinces, officer commanding support unit, director (CID), and direc-

tor (police intelligence).

The latest in a series of bans and tough conditions dealt to the CCC was its intended launch rally which had been slated for Sunday in Bindura. Police banned the rally citing venue unsuitability.

Kasukuwere barred from contesting



Staff Reporter

The High Court has set aside Saviour Kasukuwere's nomination as a Presidential candidate and ordered Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to exclude him on the presidential ballot paper.

Zanu PF supporter Lovedale Mangwana approached the court seeking an order to nullify the decision to accept Kasukuwere's nomination papers by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

Reading the operative part of

the judgment, the judge Justice David Mangota highlighted that the decision of the nomination court was a violation of section 91 and a violation of the applicant's rights.

Mangota ruled that Kasukuwere was out of the country for more than 18 months and therefore was no longer a registered voter.

In his founding affidavit, Mangwana argued that the Electoral Act does not allow a candidate who has been out of the country for over 18 months to contest for president.

"I submit that the decision to accept the first respondent's nomination paper is in breach of section 91 (1) (d) of the Constitution and invalid," he argued.

Kasukuwere's lawyer, Jacqueline Sande says the ex-minister's camp will appeal the judgement.

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Bittersweet court ruling for UZA



Gift Nyathi

The United Zimbabwe Alliance (UZA) has bemoaned the delay in having its president, Elisabeth Valerio a presidential candidate.

Valerio won her appeal against the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's (ZEC) decision to reject her presidential nomination papers due to payment issues. She joins a list of 11 male nominees vying for the country's top job to become the only 2023 female presidential candidate.

However, the Party's National Spokesperson Elvis Dzvene

said the party welcomes the ruling with a heavy heart.

"While UZA welcomes the ruling, we are equally unhappy about the time that we have spent in the courts challenging the unfair and unjust rejection of our nomination by ZEC. Our campaign has already begun, however, not having our President on the ballot was a set back," said Dzvene in a statement.

He added: "It is important to note that we remained optimistic that justice would be served. We have not been deterred by the difficulties and

our candidates nationally are on the ground spreading the UZA ideology to the electorate. As a citizens driven political party we draw our mandate from the people of Zimbabwe. The win in court for our President renews our strength to pick up from where we had left and we carry forward our vibrant election campaign."

The UZA spokesperson took a swipe at ZEC whom he believes had no legal base to reject Valerio's papers.

"We welcome the court's ruling appreciating that justice has been served. It was not right for the Zimbabwe Elec-

toral Commission to reject our party leader's nomination papers as there was no legal basis for this. The June 21st decision of the elections body was incorrect considering that President Valerio availed all

the relevant documentation to indicate that payment had been effected on time."

Valerio will battle it out against the big guns, President Emmerson Mnangagwa,

Nelson Chamisa and Saviour Kasukuwere (whose own candidacy hangs in the balance as he battles a court challenge to remain on the ballot), among other candidates.

