

**Spotlight
Initiative**
*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*



GENDER REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP AUDIT REPORT

**An assessment of women's and men's representation in decision-making positions across
selected public, private and community institutions in Zambia**

Commissioned by: Non-Governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC)
With support from: Spotlight Initiative 2.0

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ACRONYMS

8NDP	Eighth National Development Plan	
AU	African Union	
CBOs	Community Based Organisations	
CDF	Constituency Development Fund	
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women	
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	
DDCCs	District Development Coordinating Committee	
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	
ICT	Information Communication Technology	
KII	Key Informant Interviews	
MP	Member of Parliament	
MTN	Mobile Telephone Network Zambia	
NEC	National	Executive
Committee	https://applications.myunfpa.org/Apps/ProcPlan/app/countryProcPlan.cfm	
NGOCC	Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council	
PDCCs	Provincial Development Coordinating Committees	
MMPR	Mixed Member Proportional Representation	
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community	
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals	
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics	
UN	United Nations	
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund	
WDC	Ward Development Committee	
ZAF	Zambia Air Force	
ZAMTEL	Zambia Telecommunications	
ZANACO	Zambia National Commercial Bank	
ZNS	Zambia National Service	



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. **African Women's Leadership Network:** An initiative aimed at enhancing women's leadership representation in developmental sectors.
2. **CEDAW:** Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, a United Nations international treaty promoting gender equality.
3. **Civil Society Organisation (CSO):** Non-governmental organizations that work to address social, political, and economic issues.
4. **Constituency Development Fund (CDF):** A fund allocated for development projects at the constituency level in Zambia.
5. **District Development Coordinating Committee (DDCC):** A district-level structure in Zambia for coordinating development activities.
6. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** A qualitative research method involving group discussions to gather insights on specific topics.
7. **Gender Audit :** A systematic assessment of gender equality within institutions and decision-making processes.
8. **Gender Equity and Equality Act:** Legislation aimed at ensuring gender equality in Zambia.
9. **Gender Mainstreaming:** The process of integrating gender perspectives into policies, programmes, and practices to promote equality.
10. **Gender Parity:** Equal representation and participation of women and men in leadership and decision-making positions.
11. **Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB):** Allocating resources in a way that promotes gender equality and addresses the needs of both men and women.
12. **Gender-Responsive Policies:** Policies designed to address and promote gender equality and inclusivity.
13. **Inclusive Development:** Development that ensures equal opportunities and benefits for all members of society, regardless of gender or other factors.
14. **Institution:** Refers to organizations, entities, or structures that play a role in governance, decision-making, or service delivery at various levels in Zambia of the public sector (e.g., government ministries, commissions, judiciary, local government bodies, security and defense agencies, public and quasi-government institutions) or the private sector.
15. **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** Interviews with individuals who have specialized knowledge about a particular subject or institution.
16. **Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR):** A system combining proportional representation and direct elections to allocate parliamentary seats.
17. **National Gender Policy:** Zambia's policy framework to promote gender equality and reduce disparities between men and women.
18. **Patriarchal Norms:** Societal structures and attitudes that prioritize male dominance and limit women's roles in leadership.
19. **Private Sector:** Businesses and enterprises owned and operated by private individuals or entities.
20. **Provincial Development Coordinating Committee (PDCC) -** A provincial-level structure for coordinating development activities.
21. **Public Sector:** Government-owned entities and agencies providing essential services for public welfare.
22. **Quasi-Government Institutions:** Organizations partially owned or controlled by the government, often involved in public service delivery.
23. **Quota system:** A policy mechanism to ensure a minimum percentage of representation for women in leadership and decision-making positions.
24. **SADC Protocol on Gender and Development:** A regional agreement aimed at achieving gender equality in Southern Africa.
25. **Spotlight Initiative 2.0:** A programme supported by UNFPA aimed at promoting women's participation in leadership positions in Zambia.
26. **STEM:** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, fields of study and careers often underrepresented by women.
27. **Ward Development Committee (WDC):** Local governance structures responsible for community-level decision-making.
28. **Women's Rights Organisations (WROs):** CSOs focused on advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gender Representation and Leadership Audit, commissioned by the NGOCC in December 2025 with support from the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 in Zambia provides a comprehensive analysis of women's and men's representation in key high leadership positions across Zambia's public and private sectors at national and local levels.

The gender audit reveals a landscape of persistent gender inequality, with significant underrepresentation of women in most key decision-making spheres, despite Zambia's constitutional and international commitments to gender parity. Key findings indicate that progress is possible but remains uneven, reversible, and concentrated in specific areas.

Public sector: While gender balance has been maintained at the Presidency and Vice-Presidency level for a decade, representation of women plummets in other executive roles for example 18% women in Cabinet. The Secretary to Cabinet and the two Deputy Secretaries to Cabinet are all male, which is 0% female representation at Secretary to the Cabinet level. The Judiciary stands out as a relative success story, with women holding over 50% of judgeships in superior courts. Critical deficits exist in the National Assembly (12% women MPs) and Local Government (7% women ward councillors). Leadership at the highest level of Security and Defence wings and Public/Quasi-Government Institutions, remains overwhelmingly male-dominated, with 0% females heading security and defense wings and also 0% board chairs in sampled parastatals.

Private sector: The gender audit found severe underrepresentation across key industries. In the banking sector, only 5 of 14 sampled banks have female CEOs. The media, telecommunications, and professional associations sectors are similarly male-dominated at the leadership level. Notably, no sampled university has a female Vice-Chancellor, indicating a profound "pipeline" problem in academia.

District and community levels: Gender disparity is most acute at the grassroots. Women are severely underrepresented in Ward Development Committees (WDCs), Constituency Development Fund (CDF) committees, and District Development Coordinating Committees (DDCCs), with some districts recording 0% female participation in key committees, directly impacting the gender-responsiveness of local development.

Civil society: Civil society is a notable exception, demonstrating that intentionality works, with high levels of women's leadership, particularly in women's rights organisations.

The gender audit identifies deep-rooted structural, cultural, economic, and political barriers, including patriarchal norms, the high cost of politics, a shallow talent pipeline in STEM/senior academic fields, and male-dominated networks, as the primary impediments to women's advancement.

One of the positive outcomes of the gender audit was that the majority of public and private institutions have established gender-responsive policies, which collectively mandate non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and protection against harassment for men and women in their institutions. However, while the policy frameworks exist, challenges remain in fully implementing these policies to achieve complete gender parity.

The report concludes with urgent recommendations calling for decisive, systemic action. Key proposals include enacting and enforcing legislative quotas for appointive and elective offices; mandating gender targets in the private sector; reforming the political environment to be safer and more accessible for women; and launching grassroots mobilization to increase women's participation in community governance. Accelerating progress toward gender parity in leadership is presented not only as a matter of justice but as an essential prerequisite for achieving sustainable and inclusive development in Zambia.



CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

NGOCC is the national umbrella organisation for women's rights and gender equality advocacy in Zambia. Over the years, NGOCC has championed gender-responsive governance and equitable participation of women and men in all spheres of leadership, governance, decision making and development processes.

In alignment with its 2023-2027 Strategic Plan and Zambia's Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP), NGOCC continues to promote evidence-based advocacy to strengthen gender equality across the public, private and community sectors. In December 2025 and with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) under the Spotlight Initiative 2.0, NGOCC commissioned a comprehensive Gender Representation and Leadership Audit, focused on analysing the representation of women and men in key, high and influential leadership positions in the public and private sectors, both at national and community levels. The purpose of the Gender Representation and Leadership Audit was to contribute to informing targeted national advocacy, policy reforms, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing women's leadership to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment in Zambia. Additionally, the gender audit provides baseline information for the African Women's Leadership Network's initiatives in 2026, which aims at enhancing women's leadership representation in all developmental sectors.

Conducting a gender audit of key high decision-making positions in a nation is critical because the process provides a systematic assessment of whether gender equality is truly applied within the highest levels of both the public (government) and the private sectors, thereby identifying gaps between policy commitments and reality. For a country like Zambia that has committed to gender equality by ratifying international instruments and enacting various policy and legal framework on gender, the gender audit is a foundational tool for ensuring that public policy, processes and institutional culture do not reinforce gender inequalities, but rather promote inclusive development¹. The gender audit is important for assessing representation of women and men in key decision-making positions; identifying institutional, social and cultural barriers that prevent women from advancing to top positions and establishing baselines that provide a clear, data-driven starting point to measure progress on gender equality over time. The gender audit also determines the degree to which the government is complying with national and international obligations regarding gender equality, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Once conducted, the gender audit holds leaders responsible for integrating gender equality into the institutions' operations, policies and structures. Gender audits are also important because they ensure that public services and laws address the different needs, roles, and opportunities for both men and women in the country.

1.1. Background

Zambia is a signatory to various international instruments that compel member states to adhere to gender equality benchmarks in decision making and governance processes. Some of the international instruments that Zambia has ratified include CEDAW, SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the SDGs. The country has also formulated policies and legislation on gender equality including National Gender Policy and Gender Equity and Equality Act, aimed at promoting gender equality in various areas, including promoting the participation of women in decision making and governance processes at all levels. The National Gender Policy formulated in 2000 and updated in 2014 and 2023, aims to achieve gender equality by reducing disparities between women and men, promoting women's empowerment, and ensuring equal access to resources, education, and political participation.²

However, despite the above positive policy and legislative measures put in place, Zambia continues to see gender imbalances in key decision making and governance processes at various levels. The country continues to record low numbers of women participation in decision making processes, as compared to their male counterparts. For example, at parliamentary level, the representation of women (elected and nominated), is currently at 12% (National Assembly of Zambia, 2025), while at local government level the representation of

¹ GRZ, 2024, 2020 – 2024 Gender Status Report

² GRZ, 2023, National Gender Policy



women is at 7% (Local Government Association of Zambia, 2025). These statistics are against the backdrop that women constitute 51% of the country's total population (Zambia Statistics Agency) and make 53% of the voters (Electoral Commission of Zambia, 2021). It is without doubt that inclusive participation in governance accelerates representative and balanced need-based development. Excluding one half of the population (women) from participating in the governance of the country, continues to side-line the majority from making critical decisions that affect their lives. This is not only a shortfall in the requirements for a democratic country, but also an impediment to the attainment of social and economic development. In this regard, a comprehensive gender audit and analysis, focused on women's representation in key high and influential leadership positions in the public and private sectors both at national and community levels, will contribute to informing targeted national advocacy, policy reforms, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing women's leadership to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment in Zambia. This gender audit, commissioned by NGOCC with support from UNFPA, covers several key sectors which include the public and private sectors in Zambia.

1.2. Goal

The goal was to conduct a multi-sectoral Gender Representation Leadership Audit to assess the extent of gender parity and mainstreaming in key high and influential positions within selected institutions and governance structures at national and local levels.

The audit aimed to generate data and actionable insights that would guide NGOCC and stakeholders in promoting gender-responsive governance, institutional accountability and inclusive participation.

The findings of the Gender Representation and Leadership Audit specifically contribute to:

- Providing evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue on gender equality.
- Strengthening NGOCC's role as a national reference point for gender accountability.
- Informing institutional capacity-building gender-responsive programming across public, private and community levels.
- Enhancing Zambia's commitments under CEDAW, SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, and the SDGs.
- Supporting the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 efforts towards the promotion of participation of women in leadership positions in the country.

1.3. Main objective

The objective was to assess the ratios of women and men in key leadership positions in institutional frameworks and operational practices across selected sectors.

1.3.1. Specific objectives

The following were the specific objectives:

- Evaluate gender representation and participation of women and men in decision-making positions.
- Examine the availability and implementation of gender-responsive policies within institutions.
- Identify institutional, cultural, and systemic barriers that hinder gender equality and inclusion.
- Document successful gender mainstreaming practices and lessons to be learned across institutions.
- Recommend concrete measures to strengthen gender integration, accountability and transformative leadership practices.
- Develop a fact sheet and a power point presentation of the main findings to be used during the dissemination of the results to the stakeholders and as part of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 knowledge managements, events and communication campaign



CHAPTER TWO

2. Methodology

This section describes the methodology used and limitations encountered during the process of collecting data for the Gender Representation and Leadership Audit.

2.1. Data Collection Methods and Tools

The qualitative research method was used to collect and analyse data. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIs) guides were used to collect data and gain deep, rich understanding of complex issues that hinder women from ascending to high decision making positions.

2.2. Data Collected

The data collected for the preparation of the Gender Representation and Leadership Audit report was generated from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data collected was mainly in the form of desk reviews of relevant documents of targeted institutions such as reports, press statements, media articles, research analysis and policy documents. Primary data was in the form of responses obtained through the administration of the FGDs and KI guides.

2.3. Focus Group Discussions

In total, eight (8) FGDs were conducted to collect information at district and community levels in the eight (8) targeted districts namely Chinsali, Chipangali, Choma, Isoka, Katete, Mansa, Mongu and Solwezi. The FGDs comprised gender balanced groups of between ten (10) and twelve (12) respondents. The FGD participants comprised a total of 88 people (44 women and 44 men). The districts were purposefully selected by NGOCC and UNFPA, as those involved in the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programme and other projects. The FGD participants were purposefully selected by the team conducting the Gender Representation and Leadership Audit. The FGDs identified social-economic and gendered factors that affect women's participation in decision making and governance processes. The qualitative data generated through the FGDs complemented the findings from the literature review and the Key Informant Interviews (KIs), by providing deeper insights into the factors contributing to the low representation of women in decision-making positions, at both national and community levels in Zambia. The FGDs enabled participants to elaborate on underlying causes of persistent gender disparities while also highlighting existing success factors and opportunities for change.

2.4. Key Informant Interviews

KIs were held with key respondents in targeted institutions at national and district levels. The informants provided data on the gender representation of leadership positions in their institutions, as well as institutional, cultural, and systemic barriers that hinder gender equality and inclusion of women in decision making and governance processes.

The purposive sampling method was employed to identify pre-determined target and pre-selected respondents from key institutions in the public and private sectors. The respondents engaged in the exercise were those with knowledge of each targeted institution.

2.5. Sampling Design and Data Sources

At national level, data collection targeted public and private institutions in Lusaka. The public institutions comprised those from the Executive, Public and Political Administration; the National Assembly; Judiciary; Local Government; Security and Defense Agencies; Government Commissions and public and quasi government institutions. Private sector institutions included banks, the media, telecommunication companies, professional associations, universities, political parties and civil society organisations. A purposive sampling method was used to pool the above targeted institutions and the following was the criteria that guided their selection:

- Positions and structures with high, low, or skewed representation of women and men, particularly in leadership, decision-making, and technical roles.
- Positions and structures that directly affect the daily lives of citizens and where policy impacts differ for men and women, such as healthcare, education, social protection, or infrastructure.
- Sectors linked to national development, economic autonomy, or those undergoing significant reform.
- Areas that pose risks and gaps with known gender-blind or gender-biased policies, where there is a high risk of reinforcing inequalities.
- National decision-making bodies such as the Executive, National Assembly, Judiciary and top public administration positions.

- Districts where NGOCC is implementing the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 supported by UNFPA
- Districts that are implementing other key NGOCC projects

2.6. Sample size of the survey

Originally the Gender Representation and Leadership Audit targeted one hundred and fifty (150) institutions based on the criterion indicated above on the selection of target institutions. Out of this target number, one hundred and twenty (120) institutions responded positively. The percentage response was 80%.

2.7. Data analysis and management

Data analysis involves transforming unstructured data (text, audio and images) from interviews and observations into themes and patterns through a systematic process of organizing, coding, categorizing, and interpreting, to understand the underlying meanings and experiences.

2.8. Limitations, gaps and challenges encountered during the study

The following were the challenges encountered in undertaking the Gender Representation and Leadership Audit:

- Reluctance and lack of cooperation from some of the targeted institutions in providing information.
- Delays in responding to the research queries by most of the key respondents who could not be found in the offices due to a number of reasons.
- Since the study was conducted in the rainy season, reduced respondent availability and participation was faced, especially in rural districts where FGDs were being conducted. Reduced respondent availability and participation came as a result of respondents being busy with agricultural activities.
- Receipt of incomplete responses from some of the targeted institutions.
- The absence of sex disaggregated information from the secondary data records of some of the institutions
- The gender audit was conducted in December during the period when many institutions were on industrial break, resulting in delayed provision of information by respondents.
- Some respondents, especially in the public sector, were politically sensitive to participate in the process, since the gender audit was being conducted close to general elections. Some respondents, especially in the districts, participated only after being instructed by their superiors from the provincial and district government administrations.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Findings and analysis

This chapter presents the findings, their interpretation and analysis based on the objectives that were set. The findings were analysed from both the primary and secondary data collected. The presentation of findings is segmented into the following three sections: public sector, private sector and the information collected at district and community levels in the eight (8) sampled districts.

3.1. Public sector

The public sector comprises government-owned entities, agencies, and public corporations funded by taxpayers to provide various essential services such as healthcare, education, defense, and infrastructure, focusing on public welfare and not profit. Institutions that have been sampled under the public sector include all levels of government, and quasi-government organisations whose aim is to ensure that societal needs are met and the general good is served. The public and quasi-government Institutions form the premise of Government and play a key role in making decisions, policies as well as implementing national development programmes on behalf of the citizens. It is important to ensure that these institutions are characterised by strong balances in terms of gender, especially that decisions made at this level of Government affect the entire population. The following are the findings on gender representation in the Public Sector.

3.1.1. Executive, public and political administration

In the past 10 years since 2015, Zambia has always maintained gender balance at the highest decision making level of president and vice president. The country has had a male president and a female vice president. But despite Zambia continuing to maintain gender balance at the top most decision-making level of the Executive, the gender balance in other Executive, Public and Political Administration levels is currently skewed towards men. Women are significantly underrepresented in key decision-making positions of the Executive, Public and Political Administration. At Cabinet level which comprises the President, Vice President and twenty-five (25) ministers, the representation of females is currently at 18% and men at 82%; at provincial ministerial level, women hold 10% of the positions, while men hold 90%, at Secretary to the Cabinet male representation is 100% and 0% for women. At the permanent secretary level the representation of women is 24% and the men 76%. At the level of directors, the representation of women is at 28% and men 72%. Lastly, at the level of district commissioner, the representation of women is 21% and the representation of men is 79%.³

Table 1: Gender representation in government and public administration

Decision making positions	Gender representation				Total number of positions
	F	F%	M	M %	
President	0	0%	1	100%	1
Vice President	1	100%	0	0%	1
Cabinet Ministers	5	18%	23	82%	28
Provincial Ministers	1	10%	9	90%	10
Secretary to the Cabinet	0	0%	1	100%	1
Permanent Secretaries	14	24%	44	76%	58
Directors	77	28%	195	72%	272
District Commissioners	24	21%	88	79%	112 ⁴

Source: Cabinet Office and the Public Service Management Division

3.1.2. National Assembly

The 13th National Assembly (2021-2026) made history by electing a first ever female Speaker in the country, the Right Honourable Nelly Mutti, on 3rd September 2021 and she was deputised by two deputy speakers, a female and a male. The Leader of Government Business installed in the House was also female, the Vice President of Zambia. Currently, the representation of women in the position of Speaker is 100%, Leader of Government Business 100% and deputy speaker is 50%. While women are well represented on top positions of the National Assembly, the representation of women at the level of elected and nominated members of parliament (MPs) remains very low at 12%. Female representation in Parliament has been declining over the

³ Statistics are according to the date collected

⁴ There are 116 positions of district commissioner in Zambia. At the time of the gender audit, there were four vacancies, hence the total number being 112

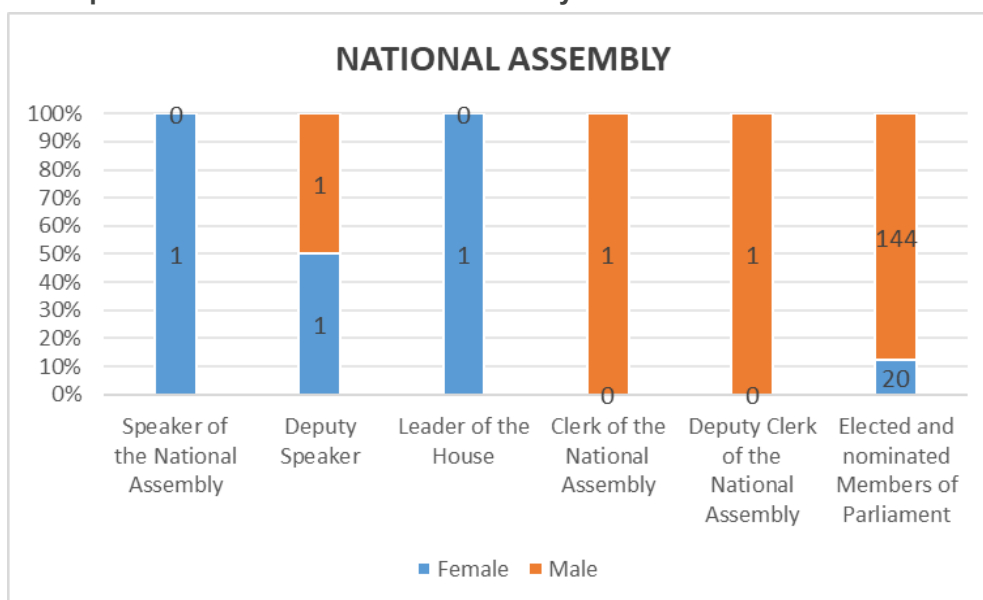
past few years. In 2021, the 13th National Assembly began with a reduced number of women at 15% (25 out of 167 members - this includes speaker, deputy speaker, leader of the house and elected and nominated MPs). The previous session of the 12th National Assembly had 18% women representation in Parliament. In addition, during the period of the 13th National Assembly, particularly in 2025, the number of female MPs further dropped when two females (Honourable Maureen Mabonga and Honourable Tasila Lungu), lost their seats.

Table 2: Gender representation in the National Assembly

Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
	F	F%	M	M %	
Speaker of the National Assembly	1	100%	0	0%	1
Deputy Speaker	1	50	1	50	2
Leader of the House	1	100%	0	0%	1
Clerk of the National Assembly (Acting)	1	100%	0	0%	1
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly	1	33%	2	67%	3
Elected / Nominated MPs	20	12%	144	88%	164
Parliamentary Committee Chairpersons	5	22%	18	78%	23

Source: National Assembly of Zambia

Figure 1: Gender representation in the National Assembly



3.1.3. Judiciary

The Judiciary has shown significant progress with regards to gender balance in key decision-making positions, as compared to the other wings of Government, with women holding a high percentage of positions in superior courts. Women currently comprise more than 50% of judges in the superior courts, indicating strong representation at some of the highest levels of the Judiciary. In the recent past, women in the Judiciary have historically held top positions, including that of Chief Justice, President of the Constitutional Court, and Judge President of the Court of Appeal. At registrar level, women representation is at 50% as shown below in Table 3. At the subordinate court level, women make up 40% of the two hundred eleven (211) magistrates. The Judiciary is highlighted as a sector where gender parity has been actively promoted and largely achieved, especially at the senior judge level.

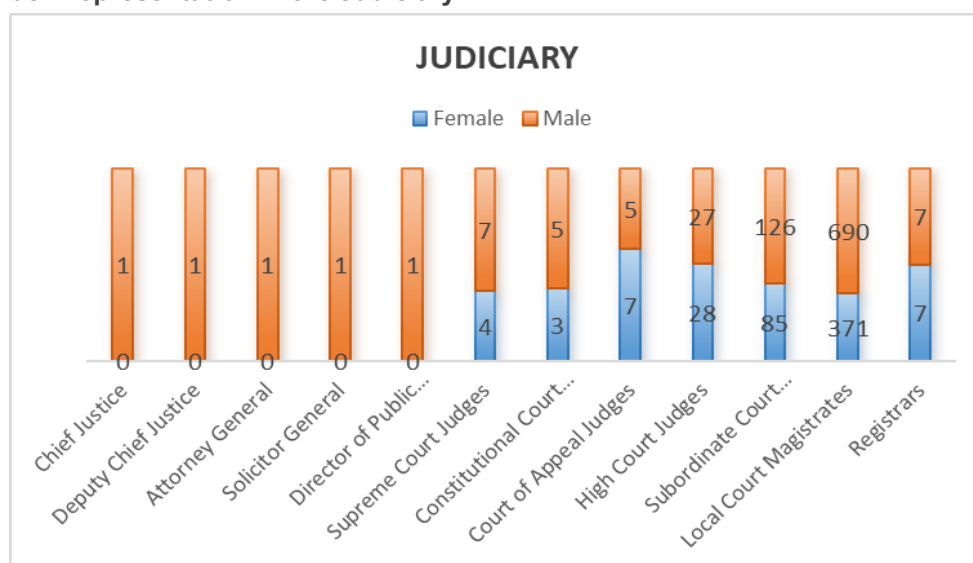
Table 3: Gender Representation in the Judiciary

Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
	F	% of F	M	% of M	
Chief Justice	0	0%	1	100%	1
Deputy Chief Justice	0	0%	1	100%	1
Attorney General	0	0%	1	100%	1
Solicitor General	0	0%	1	100%	1

Director of Public Prosecutions	0	0%	1	100%	1
Supreme Court Judges	4	36%	7	64%	11
Constitutional Court Judges	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	8
Court of Appeal Judges	7	58%	5	42%	12
High Court Judges	28	51%	27	49%	55
Subordinate Court Magistrates	85	40%	126	60%	211
Local Court Magistrates	371	35%	690	65%	1,061
Registrars	7	50%	7	50%	14

Source: Judiciary

Figure 2: Gender Representation in the Judiciary



3.1.4. Local Government

Leadership in the local government is heavily skewed towards men, with women holding a very low percentage of elected positions. For instance, at the level of councillor, out of 1,858 positions, currently females only hold 137 positions (7%), while men hold 1,721 (93%) of the positions. At the level of mayor/council chairperson, out of the 116 positions, women hold 12% compared to 88% held by men. Only twenty-four (24) women out of a total of 116 principal officers (town clerks/council secretaries) in the councils around the country are women, translating to 21%, while the remaining 79% accounts for men.

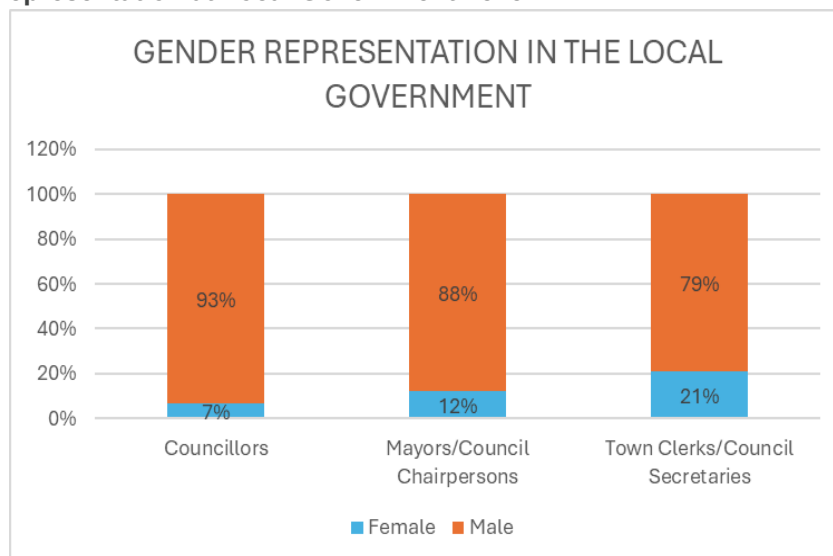
Table 4: Gender Representation at Local Government Level

Decision making Position	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
	F	F%	M	M%	
Councillors	137	7%	1,721	93%	1,858
Mayors/Council Chairpersons	14	12%	102	88%	116
Town Clerk/ Council Secretaries	24	21%	92	79%	116

Source: Local Government Association of Zambia



Figure 3: Gender Representation at Local Government Level



3.1.5. Security and defence agencies

As of 2025 gender balance in top positions within Zambia's security and defense wings (Army, Air Force, National Service, and Police) is heavily male-dominated, although the Government has in the recent years demonstrated political will to promote women to senior ranks to improve inclusivity. Women are also being appointed to occupy or act in significant strategic roles. The Zambia Army and Zambia Air Force recently promoted several women to the rank of Brigadier General and Colonel.

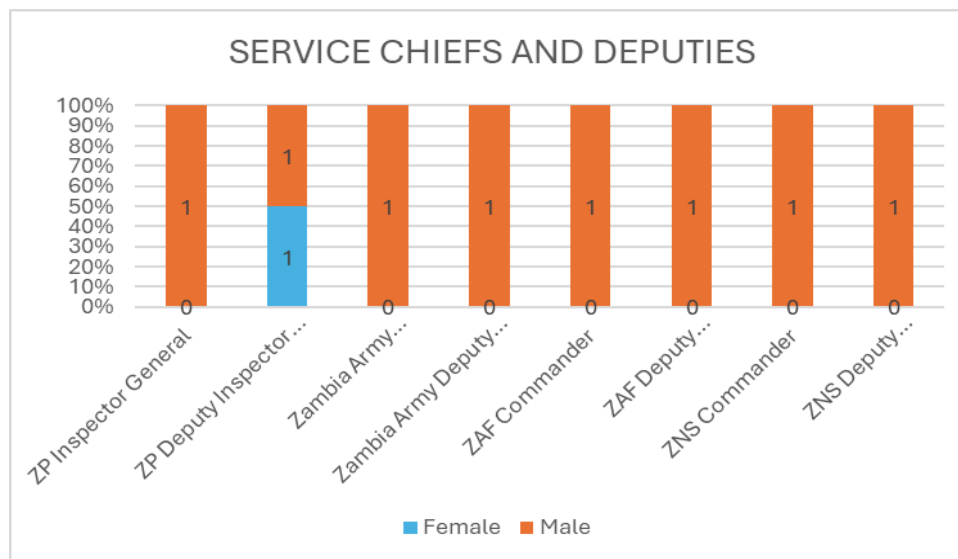
Currently, the top leadership positions of commander and deputy commander in the Zambia Army, Zambia Air Force and Zambia National Service are all held by men. It is only the Zambia Police Service Inspector General, that is deputised by a male, and female.

Table 5: Gender Representation in Security and Defence Agencies

Institution	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	F%	M	M%	
Zambia Police Service	Inspector General	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Inspector General	1	50%	1	50%	2
Zambia Army	Commander	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Commander	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Air Force	Commander	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Commander	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia National Service	Commander	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Commander	0	0%	1	100%	1

Source: Security and Defence Agencies

Figure 4: Gender Representation in Security and Defence Agencies



3.1.6. Public Commissions

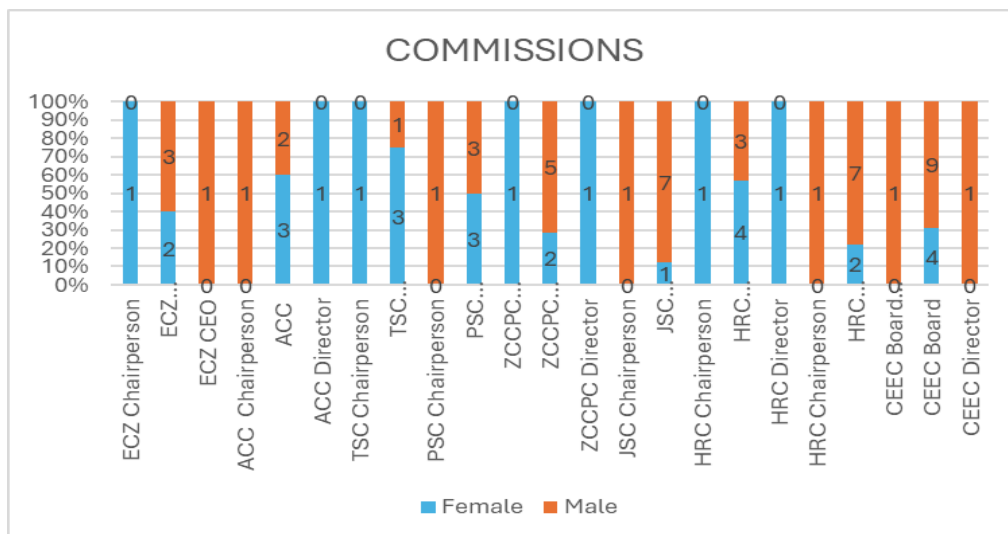
Gender balance in the leadership of Government commissions remains a mixed picture, characterized by significant strides in specific high-level appointments alongside persistent overall underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles. Out of the eight (8) public commissions sampled, at least four (4) of them are chaired by women, representing at least 50%. These include the Electoral Commission of Zambia, the Teaching Service Commission, the Zambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission and the Human Rights Commission. In addition to this, out of the eight (8) Commissions sampled, at least four (4) have boards with 50% or above, representation of women.

Table 6: Gender Representation in Public Commissions

Institution	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	F%	M	M%	
Electoral Commission of Zambia	Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Commissioners	2	40%	3	60%	5
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Anti-Corruption Commission	Chairperson	0	0	1	100%	1
	Board/Commissioners	3	60%	2	40%	5
	CEO (Director)	1	100%	0	0%	1
Teaching Service Commission	Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Commissioners	3	75%	1	25%	4
	CEO (Not Applicable)	-	-	-	-	-
Public Service Commission	Chairperson	0	0	1	100%	1
	Commissioners	3	50%	3	50%	6
	CEO (Not Applicable)	-	-	-	-	-
Zambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board/Commissioners	2	29%	5	71%	7
	Director	1	100%	0	0%	1
Judicial Service Commission	Chairperson	0	0	1	100%	1
	Commissioners	1	12.5%	7	87.5%	8
	CEO (Not Applicable)	-	-	-	-	-
Human Rights Commission	Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board/Commissioners	4	57%	3	43%	7
	Director	1	100%	0	0%	1
Local Government Commission	Chairperson	0	0	1	100%	1
	Commissioners	2	22%	7	78%	9
	CEO (Not Applicable)	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Cabinet Office and sampled Public Commissions

Figure 5: Gender Representation in Public Commissions



3.1.7. Public and Quasi Government Institutions

Gender representation in leadership positions within Zambian government quasi-institutions (parastatals, boards, and commissions) remains largely skewed in favour of men, despite a commitment to gender equality in policy and law. Out of the sampled twenty (20) institutions, none of them has a female board chairperson. All the chairpersons of the sampled institutions are men. At the level of CEO, only three (3) institutions out of those sampled are headed by women (Zambia Statistics Agency, Zambia Environmental Management Authority and Zambia National Building Society). However, it is important to note that at the time the gender audit was being conducted, in two of these institutions, the women holding the CEO position were merely acting. In terms of women representation in the boards, only one institution, Zambia Revenue Authority, had a representation of 56% for women. The rest of the institutions have representation of women in their boards of between 22% and 44%. It is important that future appointments adhere to the Zambian policy and legal framework provisions of 50% gender parity. Zambia should also adhere to the provisions of the international instruments it has ratified at the level of the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC), which compel member states to have at least 50% of gender parity in all decision-making positions.

Table 7: Gender Representation in Public and quasi Government Institutions

Institution	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
Zambia Revenue Authority	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	5	56%	4	44%	9
	CEO (Commissioner General)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Statistics Agency	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	2	22%	7	78%	9
	CEO (Statistician General) - Acting	1	100%	0	0%	1
National Road Fund Agency	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	5	42%	7	58%	12
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Bank of Zambia	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	8
	CEO (Governor)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Environmental Management Authority	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	8
	CEO (Director General) - Acting	1	100%	0	0%	1
Examination Council of Zambia	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	4	44%	5	56%	9
	CEO (Executive Director)	0	0%	1	100%	1



Food Reserve Agency	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	30%	7	70%	10
	CEO (Executive Director)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia National Building Society	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	43%	4	57%	7
	CEO (Managing Director)	1	100%	0	0%	1
Energy Regulation Board	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	1	14%	6	86%	7
	CEO (Director General)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	43%	4	57%	7
	CEO (Director General)	0	0%	1	100%	1
National Pensions Scheme Authority	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	2	22%	7	78%	9
	CEO (Director General)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Development Agency	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	8
	CEO (Director General)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	2	33%	4	67%	6
	CEO (Managing Director)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Citizen Economic Empowerment Commission	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	4	31%	9	69%	13
	CEO (Director General)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Independent Broadcasting Authority	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	33%	6	66%	9
	CEO (Director General)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Rural Electrification Authority	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	4	44%	5	56%	9
	Chief Executive Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
Road Development Agency	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	2	25%	6	75%	8
	CEO (Director & Chief Executive Officer - Acting	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Airports Corporation Limited	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	8
	CEO (Managing Director)	0	0%	1	100%	1
National Water Supply and Sanitation Council	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	43%	4	57%	7
	CEO (Director)	0	0%	1	100%	1

Source: Sampled Quasi Government Institutions

3.2. Private Sector

The private sector is the part of a country's economy that is owned, managed, and controlled by individuals, partnerships, or corporations rather than the government. The private sector in Zambia comprises a diverse range of businesses and enterprises owned and operated by private individuals or entities. The eighty-four (84) institutions sampled under the private sector for the gender audit are from the banking, media, telecommunications, professional associations, learning institutions, political parties and the civil society.

3.2.1. Banking Sector

Zambia has a diverse banking sector regulated by the Bank of Zambia, with more than twenty (20) registered commercial banks as of 2025, offering retail, corporate, and investment banking services. Among these, a total of fourteen (14) banks were sampled for the gender audit. The gender audit revealed that the banking sector is amongst the sectors with the lowest participation of women in leadership and decision making positions. Out of the banks sampled, only five (5) are led by female CEOs and these include Citi Bank, First National Bank, ABSA, Zambia National Commercial Bank and Ecobank. Only three (3) out of the banks sampled have female board chairpersons. These include Access Bank, United Bank for Africa and Standard Chartered Bank. All the banks sampled have less than 50% women representation on their boards. Women representation in the boards of the banks sampled, range between 17% and 40%.



Table 8: Gender Representation in the Banking Sector

Institution	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
AB Bank Zambia Limited	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	1	20%	4	80%	5
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Access Bank Zambia Limited	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	2	25%	6	75%	8
	CEO (Managing Director)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Citi Bank Zambia Limited	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board ⁵	-	-	-	-	-
	CEO (Citi Country Officer)	1	100%	0	0%	1
First Alliance Bank Zambia Limited	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	0	0%	5	100%	5
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
First Capital Bank Zambia Limited	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	2	25%	6	75%	8
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
First National Bank Zambia Limited	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	4	40%	6	60%	10
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Stanbic Bank Zambia Limited	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	30%	7	70%	10
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Absa Bank Zambia PLC	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	1	20%	4	80%	5
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
United Bank for Africa Zambia Limited	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	4	40%	6	60%	10
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia National Commercial Bank PLC	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	2	20%	8	80%	10
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Indo-Zambia Bank Limited	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	1	17%	5	83%	6
	CEO (Managing Director)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Ecobank Zambia Limited	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	38%	5	62%	8
	CEO (Managing Director)	1	100%	0	0%	1
Standard Chartered Bank Zambia PLC	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	2	40	3	60%	5
	CEO (Managing Director)	0	0%	1	100%	1
National Savings and Credit Bank	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	38%	5	62%	8
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1

Source: Sampled Bank institutions

3.2.2. Media Sector

The gender audit revealed that in Zambia, men have continued dominating media ownership, management, and high-level decision-making positions. While over the years the media landscape has become more diverse with the growth of private, community and religious radio and television stations, the industry remains largely patriarchal, with men owning most of the media organisations and occupying most positions of power. The gender audit sampled television stations, radio stations and print media institutions and reviewed gender representation regarding the ownership and leadership. Out of the seven (7) television stations sampled, only two (2) are led by women, Crown Television and Millennium Television. For radio stations, out of the (9)

⁵ Citi Bank Zambia falls under the Citi Group Global Structure. The Board of Directors and Executive Management for Citigroup Inc. globally is led by Chair and CEO Jane Fraser, overseeing international subsidiaries including Zambia.



sampled, only three (3) are led by women, Live FM, Komboni and Millennium Radio stations. Out of the five (5) print media institutions sampled, only two (2) are led by women, Daily Nation and the Mast newspaper as illustrated in the tables below.

Table 9: Gender Representation in the Ownership and Leadership Positions of Television Stations

Television Station	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation	Director General	0	0%	1	100%	1
Diamond Television	Chief Visionary Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
Crown Television station	Chief Executive Officer	1	100%	0	0%	1
KBN Television	Chief Executive Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
Prime Television	Executive Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
QTV	Managing Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
Millennium Television	Executive Director	1	100%	0	0%	1

Source: Sampled Television Stations

Figure 6: Gender Representation in the Ownership and Leadership Positions of Television Stations

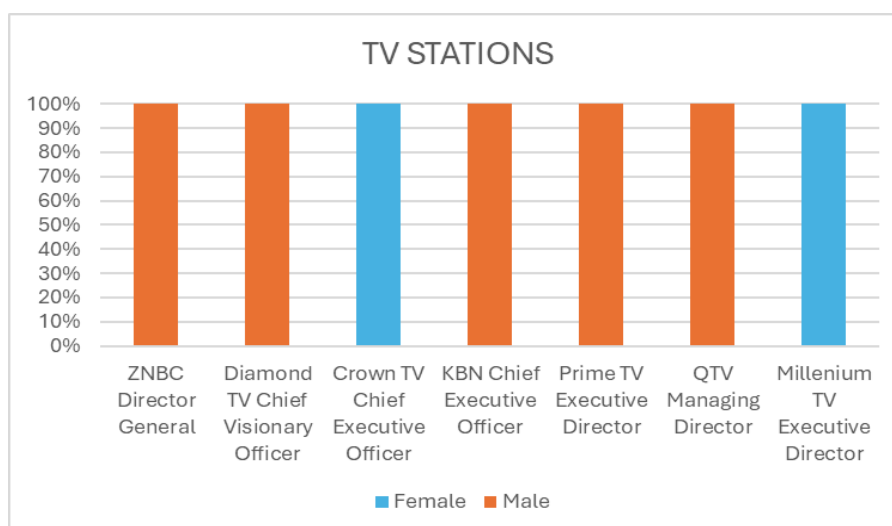


Table 10: Gender Representation in Leadership Positions of Radio Stations

Radio Stations	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (Radio 1, 2 & 4)	Director General	0	0%	1	100%	1
Hot FM	Chairman of Hot FM Group	0	0%	1	100%	1
Radio Phoenix	Managing Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
Live FM 97.3	Chief Executive Officer	1	100%	0	0%	1
5FM	Chief Executive Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
QFM	Managing Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
Power FM	Chief Executive Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
Komboni Radio	Chief Executive Officer	1	100%	0	0%	1
Millennium Radio	Executive Director	1	100%	0	0%	1

Source: Sampled Radio Stations

Figure 7: Gender Representation in Leadership Positions of Radio Stations

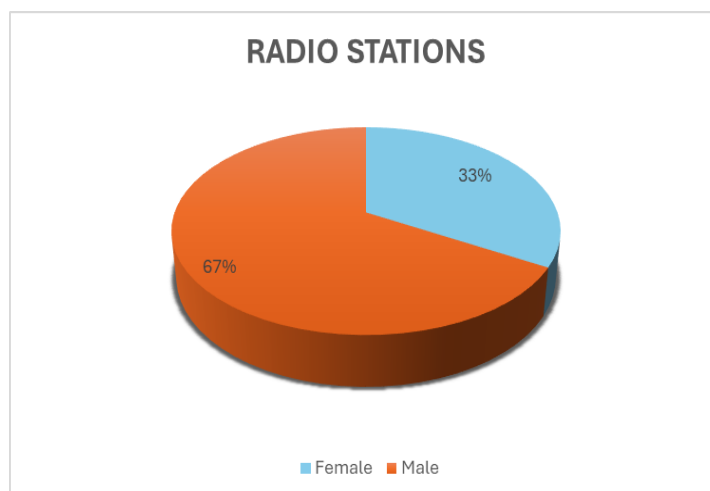
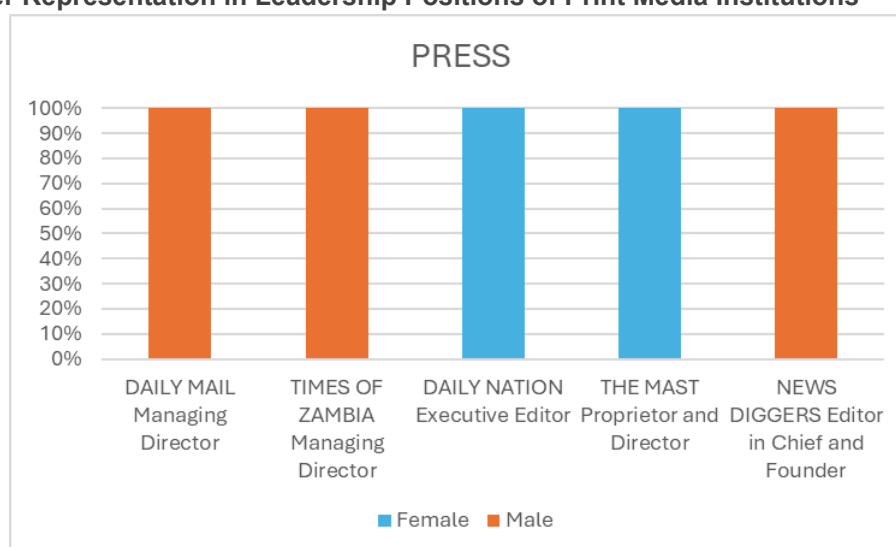


Table 11: Gender Representation in Leadership Positions of print media institutions

Radio Stations	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
Zambia Daily Mail	Managing Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
Times of Zambia	Managing Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
Daily Nation	Executive Editor	1	100%	0	0%	1
The Mast	Proprietor and Director	1	100%	0	0%	1
News Diggers	Editor in Chief and Founder	0	0%	1	100%	1

Source: Sampled Print Media Institutions

Figure 8: Gender Representation in Leadership Positions of Print Media Institutions



3.2.3. Telecommunications sector

Gender representation at the CEO and board levels within Zambia's telecommunications sector show that men continue to hold the majority of top leadership positions. While the sector is historically male-dominated, particularly in technical roles, over the years there has been a visible effort to increase female representation in senior management and executive decision-making, supported by corporate initiatives. Despite these strides, top executive positions, particularly CEO roles in the broader ICT sector, remain predominantly held by men. All the three (3) telecommunication companies sampled in the gender audit (Airtel, MTN and ZAMTEL) have male CEOs. At board level, ZAMTEL and Airtel only have 33% female representatives on their Boards.

Table 12: Representation of Women and Men in Telecommunications Companies

Institution	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
Zambia Telecommunications Company	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	1	33%	2	67%	3
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Mobile Telephone Network Zambia (MTN)	Board Chairperson (N/A)	-	-	-	-	-
	Board (N/A) ⁶	-	-	-	-	-
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Airtel Zambia	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	2	33%	4	67%	6
	CEO (Managing Director)	0	0%	1	100%	1

Source: Sampled Telecommunication Companies

3.2.4. Professional Associations

Gender representation at presidential and vice-presidential levels within professional associations remains largely male-dominated, mirroring broader national, political, and corporate governance trends. Women remain underrepresented in the top leadership positions of many professional bodies. Out of the thirteen (13) professional associations sampled only three (3) had female Presidents denoting 21% of female representation of the sample. The three (3) organisations include Zambia Institute of Chartered Accountants, Zambia Institute of Public Relations and Communication and Insurers Association of Zambia. At vice president level, female representation is also at 21% as only three (3) associations had women vice presidents namely Law Association of Zambia, Engineering Institute of Zambia and Zambia Association of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians.

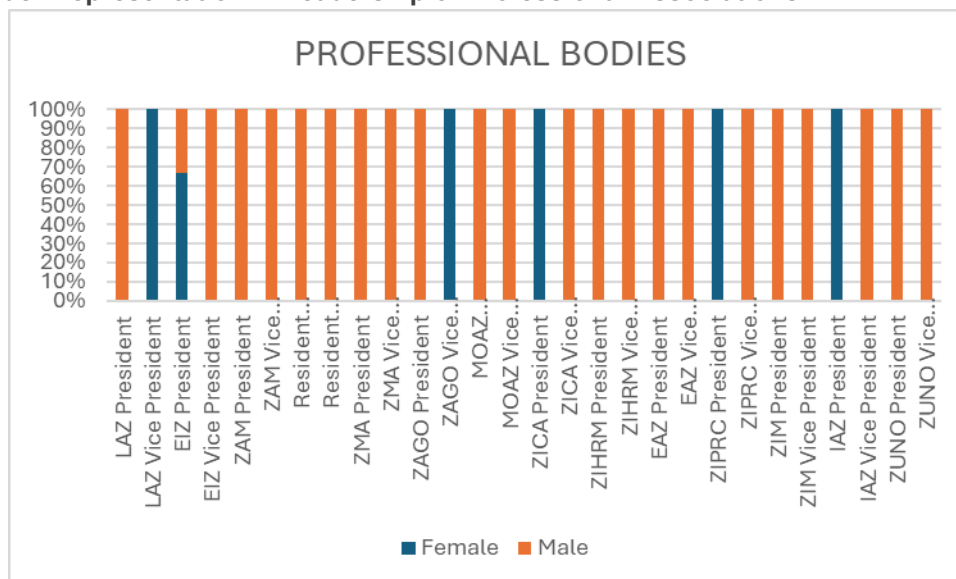
Table 13: Gender Representation in Leadership of Professional Associations

Institution	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
Law Association of Zambia	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	1	100%	0	0%	1
Engineering Institute of Zambia	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	2	67%	1	33%	3
Zambia Association of Manufacturers	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	2	100%	2
Resident Doctors' Association of Zambia	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Medical Association	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Association of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	1	100%	0	0%	1
Media Owners Association of Zambia	Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Institute of Chartered Accountants	President	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Institute of Human Resource Management	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
Economics Association of Zambia	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Institute of Public Relations and Communication	President	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Institute of Marketing	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
Insurers Association of Zambia	President	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Union of Nurses Organisation	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1

Source: Sampled Professional Associations

⁶ MTN company affairs in Zambia are driven by an executive team led by CEO and CFO. Local operations fall under the governance of the broader MTN Group Board.

Figure 9: Gender Representation in Leadership of Professional Associations



3.2.5. Learning Institutions (Universities)

Gender representation at the vice chancellor and deputy vice chancellor levels in Zambian universities is characterized by significant male dominance and the underrepresentation of women. While there has been progress in female enrolment at the student level over the years, the top administrative leadership in both public and private universities remains largely male-dominated. The gender audit revealed that out of the eight (8) public and private universities sampled, none of them have female vice chancellors. There is currently 100% male dominance at the level of vice chancellor in public and private universities in Zambia. For the position of deputy vice chancellor only one, Mulungushi University, has a female deputy vice chancellor, translating to 12.5% female representation.

Table 14: Gender Representation in Decision Making Positions in Universities

Institution	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
University of Zambia	Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	0	0%	2	100%	2
Copperbelt University	Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
Mulungushi University	Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	1	50%	1	50%	2
Lusaka University	Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	0	0%	3	100%	3
Cavendish University	Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	0	0%	2	100%	2
Rusangu University	Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
Apex University	Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	0	0%	2	100%	2
Levy Mwanawasa Medical University	Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	0	0%	1	100%	1

Source: Sampled Universities

3.2.6. Political Parties

Similar to other sectors discussed in the gender audit, representation of women in the top leadership positions of political parties in Zambia remains low and predominantly male. The situation has however improved over the years with women now leading political parties and some holding high positions such as party chairperson and general secretary in the recent past. Out of a sample of eight (8) political parties, two (2) political parties, namely the National Democratic Party and New Heritage Party are led by female presidents, while the remaining six (6) have male presidents. This entails that at presidential level, 25% of the sampled political



parties comprise women representation, while 75% accounts for male representation. At vice president level, two (2) political parties have female presidents out of the eight (8) sampled. At general secretary level only one (1) political party has a female, while the rest seven (7) have males. Few political parties have 50% representation of women in their national executive committees. The representation of women in NECs is between 10% and 44%.

Table 15 Gender Representation in Political Parties

Political Party	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
National Democratic Party	President	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	National Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice National Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	General Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice Secretary General	1	100%	0	0%	1
	National Management Committee	22	44%	28	56%	50
	Youth Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Vice Youth Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
New Heritage Party	President	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	2	100%	2
	National Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	General Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
	National Management Committee (Politbural)	3	30%	7	70%	10
United Party for National Development	President	0	0%	1	100	1
	Vice President	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Chairperson	0	0%	1	100	1
	General Secretary	0	0%	1	100	1
	Deputy General Secretary	1	100%	0	0%	1
	National Management Committee	18	26%	52	74%	70
New National Party (Former Movement for Multiparty Democracy)	President	0	0%	1	100	1
	Vice President	1	50%	1	50%	2
	Chairperson	0	0%	1	100	1
	National Secretary	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Vice National Secretary	0	0%	1	100	1
	National Executive Committee	5	42%	7	58%	12
Socialist Party	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	General Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
	National Executive Committee	2	29%	5	71%	7
Citizens First	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	General Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
	National Executive Committee	3	30%	7	70%	10
FDD	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	General Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
	National Executive Committee	1	10%	9	90%	10
PNUP	President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Vice President	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	General Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
	National Executive Committee	2	20%	8	80%	10

Source: Sampled Political Parties



3.2.7. Civil Society Leadership

Gender balance in the top leadership of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Zambia presents a mixed picture of women being highly represented in Women's Rights Organisations (WROs), while underrepresented in ordinary CSOs. The gender audit reveals that all sampled women's rights CSOs have female chairpersons, female CEOs and most of their boards have 100% of women representation. For ordinary CSOs the representation of women in leadership positions is also not very low, as the majority CSOs have over 30% representation of women in their top leadership positions. Out of the sixteen (16) CSOs sampled for the gender audit, ten (10) have female CEOs, the majority being women's rights organisations. A total of twelve (12) organisations out of those sampled have female chairpersons. This translates to 75% female representation and 25% male representation in the CSOs that have been sampled. A total of nine (9) out of the sixteen (16) organisations sampled have boards that have over 50% women representation.

Table 16: Gender Representation in CSOs

Institution	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
		F	%F	M	%M	
Media Institute in Southern Africa Zambia	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	2	29%	5	71%	7
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Transparency International Zambia	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	6	67%	3	33%	9
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Non-Governmental Gender Organisations Coordinating Council	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	8	89%	1	11%	9
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Local Government Association of Zambia	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	1	8%	11	92%	12
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Women in Law in Southern in Africa	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	6	75%	2	25%	8
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Zambia Alliance for Women	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	6	100%	0	0%	6
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Zambia National Women's Lobby	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	14	100%	0	0%	14
	CEO (Acting)	0	0%	1	100%	1
Alliance for Community Action	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	4	57%	3	43%	7
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Zambia Centre for Interparty Dialogue	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	5	42%	7	58%	12
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Civil Society for Poverty Reduction	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	2	25%	8	75%	12
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Chapter One Foundation	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	3	43%	4	57%	7
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1
Women for Change	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	7	87.5%	1	12.5%	8
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Young Women Christian Association	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	8	100%	0	0%	8
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
ZCSD	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	2	29%	5	71%	7
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1
Disability Rights Watch	Board Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Board	3	43%	4	57%	7
	CEO	0	0%	1	100%	1



Young Women in Action	Board Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Board	7	100%	0	0%	7
	CEO	1	100%	0	0%	1

Source: Sampled Civil Society Organisations

3.3. Gender Audit of the Leadership Positions at District and Community Levels

A total of eight (8) districts namely Chinsali, Isoka, Chipangali, Katete, Choma, Mansa, Mongu and Solwezi were sampled for the gender audit. The districts were selected by NGOCC and UNFPA on the basis of being among areas where the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programme and other key projects are being implemented by NGOCC and its partners. The findings have revealed that gender representation at community and district levels is critically low, with women severely underrepresented at various levels of decision-making positions. Leadership remains heavily male-dominated in the district council structures such as the WDCs and CDF committees; on the public administration structures such as the PDCC and DDCC; and many other decision-making levels, as can be seen from the table below on the data collected from the eight (8) districts.

According to the information outlined in the table below, few women sit on the district and provincial government administration structures. For example, out of the five provincial towns sampled for the gender audit males were dominant at the ministerial, and provincial health directorate levels. For the position of provincial permanent secretary and provincial education officer, only Mansa District is headed by females. The rest of the four districts (Chinsali, Choma, Mongu and Solwezi) are all headed by males. For the PDCC structures in the five provincial towns, female representation in all the districts is less than 37.5% with Chinsali having the highest percentage (37.5%) and Mansa having the lowest at 15%. In all the 8 districts, the representation of women on the DDCC is below 36% with Mansa having the highest (36%) and Chinsali having the lowest at 0%.

Key district government positions such as the District Commissioner, District Administrative officer, district health director, district education board secretary and mayor/council secretary are predominantly held by men. The gender audit reveals that in all the eight (8) sampled districts, the position of mayor/council secretary is held by men. For the position of district commissioner, it is only in Mansa where the position is held by a female, while males hold the position in the rest of the seven (7) districts.

At community level, women are also under-represented on CDF committees and WDCs as can be seen from the table below. Isoka district presents the worst case scenario as there is only 1% representation of women sitting on the WDCs in the 14 wards of the district. Out of the 14 wards in Isoka, 13 wards have no woman sitting on the WDC. All the sampled districts have less than 31% women representation on the CDF committee, with Solwezi having the highest percentage (31%) and Choma having the lowest at 22%.

Representation of women at CBO level is better because most CBOs at community level were formed by local women groups. Out of the 32 CBOs sampled in the districts 21 are led by women. It was however interesting to note that all the youth groups at community level are led by men.

Traditional and religious leadership in the sampled districts is also male dominated. Amongst the sampled districts, Chinsali, Isoka, Mongu and Solwezi do not have women representation at senior traditional leadership.

Table 17: Gender Representation in Leadership Positions at district and community levels

District	Institution /Structure	Decision Making Positions	Gender Representation				Total Number of Positions
			F	%F	M	%M	
Chinsali	Provincial Administration and Structures	Provincial Minister	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Permanent Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Deputy Permanent Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Education Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Principal Gender Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		PDCC	15	37.5%	25	62.5%	40
	District Administration and Structures	District Commissioner (Acting)	1	100%	0	0%	1
		District Administrative Officer	1	100%	0	0%	1
		District Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Education Board Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1



	Council	DDCC	0	0%	40	100%	40
		Mayor /Council Chairperson	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Town Clerk /Council Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		CDF Committee (1 constituency in Chinsali)	5	28%	13	72%	18
		WDCs (for 17 wards in Chinsali)	16	11%	135	89	151
	NGOs & CBOs Leadership (Chairperson level)	Women of Influence	1	100%	0	0%	1
		ZNWADO	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Tukalubuka Women Association	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Shipa Shangila	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Traditional Leadership	Senior Chiefs in the district	0	0%	3	100%	3
	District Religious Committee	District Pastors Fellowship Committee	22	35%	40	65%	62
Chipangali	District Administration and Structures	District Commissioner	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Administrative Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Health Director	1	100%	0	0%	1
		District Education Board Secretary	1	100%	0	0%	1
		DDCC	8	32%	17	68%	25
	Council	Mayor /Council Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Town Clerk /Council Secretary	1	100%	0	0%	1
		CDF Committee (for 1 constituency in Chipangali)	4	25%	12	75%	16
		WDCs (for 8 wards in Chipangali)	11	8%	130	92%	141
	NGOs & CBOs Leadership (Chairperson level)	Chisomo	6	60%	4	40%	10
		Chipangali District Women Association	10	91%	1	9%	11
		Kachere	3	30%	7	70%	10
	Traditional Leadership	Senior Chiefs in the district	1	12.5%	7	87.5%	8
	District Religious Committee	District Pastors Fellowship Committee	4	10%	35	90%	39
Choma	Provincial Administration and Structures	Provincial Minister	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Permanent Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Deputy Permanent Secretary	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Provincial Education Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Principal Gender Officer	1	100%	0	0%	1
		PDCC	42	28%	108	72%	150
	District Administration and Structures	District Commissioner	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Administrative Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Health Director	1	100%	0	0%	1
		District Education Board Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		DDCC	15	19%	65	81%	80
	Council	Mayor /Council Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Town Clerk /Council Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		CDF Committee (for 2 constituencies in Choma)	6	22%	21	78%	27
		WDCs (for 28 wards in Choma)	25	8%	272	92%	297
	NGOs & CBOs Leadership (Chairperson level)	Hospice Alternative Care	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Chikanta Community Schools	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Ubunthu Enablers	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Positive Action on Human Rights Freedom and Development	0	0%	1	100%	1
	Traditional Leadership	Senior Chiefs in the district	4	11%	33	89%	37
	District Religious Committee	District Pastors Fellowship Committee	15	25%	45	75%	60



Isoka	District Administration and Structures	District Commissioner	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Administrative Officer	1	100%	0	0%	1
		District Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Education Board Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		DDCC	15	27%	40	73%	55
	Council	Mayor /Council Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Town Clerk /Council Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		CDF Committee (for 1 constituency in Isoka)	8	44%	10	56%	18
		WDCs (for 14 wards in Isoka)	1	1%	70	99%	71
	NGOs & CBOs Leadership (Chairperson level)	Orphanage Christian Centre	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Mother Support Group	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Ambassador	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Traditional Leadership	Senior Chiefs in the district	0	0%	2	100%	2
	District Religious Committee	District Pastors Fellowship Committee	5	10%	45	90%	50
Katete	District Administration and Structures	District Commissioner	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Administrative Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Education Board Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		DDCC	8	22%	28	78%	36
	Council	Mayor /Council Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Town Clerk /Council Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		CDF Committee (for 2 constituencies in Katete)	8	24%	26	76%	34
		WDCs (for 22 wards in Katete)	46	18%	208	82%	254
	NGOs & CBOs Leadership (Chairperson level)	Katete district women development Association	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Mothers without borders	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Traditional Leadership	Senior Chiefs in the district	1	25%	3	75%	4
	District Religious Committee	District Pastors Fellowship Committee	3	30%	7	70%	10
Mansa	Provincial Administration and Structures	Provincial Minister	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Permanent Secretary	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Provincial Deputy Permanent Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Education Officer	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Provincial Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Principal Gender Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		PDCC	21	15%	120	85%	141
	District Administration and Structures	District Commissioner	1	100%	0	0%	1
		District Administrative Officer	1	100%	0	0%	1
		District Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Education Board Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		DDCC	13	36%	23	64%	36
	Council	Mayor /Council Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Town Clerk /Council Secretary	1	100%	0	0%	1
		CDF Committee (for 2 constituencies in Mansa)	11	27.5%	29	72.5%	40
		WDCs (for 20 wards in Mansa)	38	17%	184	83%	222
	NGOs & CBOs Leadership (Chairperson level)	Roof Us Advocacy NGO	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Center for Future Generations	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Group Focust Consultations	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Care for Nature	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Zambia Integrated Family Support	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Mansa Land Alliance	0	0%	1	100%	1



		Women Care Association	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Youth Connect	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Integrated Youth Development	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Traditional Leadership	Senior Chiefs in the district	3	8%	36	92%	39
	District Religious Committee	District Pastors Fellowship Committee	3	30%	7	70%	10
Mongu	Provincial Administration and Structures	Provincial Minister	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial PS	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Permanent Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Deputy Permanent Secretary	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Provincial Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Principal Gender Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		PDCC	31	21%	119	79%	150
	District Administration and Structures	District Commissioner	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Administrative Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Education Board Secretary	1	100%	0	0%	1
		DDCC	7	17.5%	33	82.5%	40
	Council	Mayor /Council Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Town Clerk /Council Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		CDF Committee (for 2 constituencies in Mongu)	6	21%	22	79%	28
		WDCs (for 27 wards in Mongu)	75	22%	270	78%	345
	NGOs & CBOs Leadership (Chairperson level)	Youth Activists Organisation	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Harmony Foundation	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Youth And Childcare Foundation	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Whisper Infant Care Support	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Traditional Leadership	Senior Chiefs in the district	0	0%	10	100%	10
	District Religious Committee	District Pastors Fellowship Committee	10	31%	22	69%	32
Solwezi	Provincial Administration and Structures	Provincial Minister	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial PS	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Permanent Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Deputy Permanent Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Provincial Health Director	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Principal Gender Officer	1	100%	0	0%	1
		PDCC	32	30%	75	70%	107
	District Administration and Structures	District Commissioner	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Administrative Officer	0	0%	1	100%	1
		District Health Director	1	100%	0	0%	1
		District Education Board Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		DDCC	12	20%	48	80%	60
	Council	Mayor /Council Chairperson	0	0%	1	100%	1
		Town Clerk /Council Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
		CDF Committee (for 1 constituency in Solwezi)	4	31%	9	69%	13
		WDCs (for 13 wards in Solwezi)	60	31%	132	69%	192
	NGOs & CBOs Leadership (Chairperson level)	Zambia Land Alliance	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Solwezi Youth Alive	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Women in Mining	1	100%	0	0%	1
	Traditional Leadership	Senior Chiefs in the district	0	0%	3	100%	3
	District Religious Committee	District Pastors Fellowship Committee	4	8%	47	92%	51



FGD conversations in the eight (8) sampled districts brought out a lot of reasons why there are fewer women holding decision-making positions as presented above. FGDs participants mentioned some of the following as the reasons why fewer women hold decision making positions in their districts: women get less support from family members and the community; lack of confidence amongst women; higher illiteracy levels amongst women; negative social cultural attitudes discouraging women to take up leadership positions; women do not have enough financial resources to vie for elective decision-making positions such as councilor; fewer women are appointed or promoted to take up government positions; and women are burdened with household and community responsibilities hence they have less time to participate in governance processes.

Despite the fewer representation of women in leadership in the sampled districts, FGDs participants agreed that women's participation in decision making positions was important and women needed to be included in leadership positions because they would be able to assist in addressing challenges that affect marginalized groups such as women and children. FGD participants shared that the few women who were in leadership, especially at community level, had proved to be better leaders as they were honest and responsible and were more concerned with improving the welfare of the communities they served.

One FGD participant stressed that *“women should be represented in decision making positions because they can effectively address issues that affect women in communities such as lack of health, water and sanitation facilities. Women in leadership play an important role as they are the ones in touch with day to day challenges.”*

FGD participants recommended that more women should be encouraged to hold positions in community structures such as traditional leadership, church leadership, local government, ward development committees, community action groups, community welfare assistant committees, community health committees, cooperatives, community zonal leaderships, ward political leadership and market associations.

Some of the solutions recommended by the FGD participants to increase women's participation in decision making positions at local level included the following: urging family and community members to render support to the few women in leadership; sensitizing community members on the importance of women's participation in leadership; encouraging more women to take up leadership positions; building capacities of women on leadership skills; encouraging women to take up adult literacy classes; providing mentorship to young women interested in becoming leaders; and changing systems and practices that inhibit participation of women in leadership, such as setting meetings at times convenient for women to attend.

3.4. General Discussion of the Findings

At the time of the gender audit, the general picture of women's representation in decision-making and leadership in the public and private sectors at national level and selected eight (8) districts, was with persistent underrepresentation at various levels, while at the highest level of president and vice president Zambia seemed to have continued holding the gender parity status for a decade (since 2015). Women's representation in decision-making and leadership positions at many national levels in Zambia remained low and far below the 50% parity target set by regional protocols of the SADC, AU and UN. Zambia still ranks among lower-performing countries in the Southern African region, in women's representation in leadership and decision making positions.

3.4.1. Public Sector

Government and Public Administration

At the highest level of the Executive (presidency and vice presidency), the gender audit revealed that Zambia has attained gender balance of 50% male president and 50% female vice president. This status has been held for the past 10 years since 2015. This consistency has been as a result of political parties in power exercising political will and deciding to adopt male and female candidates for president and vice president. Currently, there is no law compelling political parties to maintain gender parity at the highest level. This means that the status could change in future when the two positions are held by people of the same gender. There is a need to formulate a law compelling political parties to maintain gender balance at the level of president and vice president.



Despite Zambia having scored on gender parity at president and vice president levels, women always hold the vice president position. Women are lowly represented in other positions in Government and Public Administration, such as Cabinet and permanent secretary level. The representation of women at Cabinet level stands at 18% and men at 82%, at provincial ministerial level, women hold 10% of the positions, while men hold 90%, at Secretary to the Cabinet male representation is 100% and 0% for women. At permanent secretary level the representation of women is 32.9% and the men 67.1%. It is important for the Government to adhere to provisions in Article 259 of the Constitution compelling appointing authorities to be gender sensitive when making appointments.

Judiciary

The Judiciary has shown significant progress with regards to women holding key decision-making positions. The gender audit revealed that women hold more than 50% of key positions in the Judiciary. In the recent past, women in the Judiciary have held top positions, including that of chief Justice, president of the constitutional court, and judge president of the Court of Appeal. Currently positions of chief justice and deputy chief justice are being held by men. A law should be enacted to maintain gender balance at the highest level, so that positions of chief justice and deputy chief justice are held by different genders.

National Assembly and Local Government

For the National Assembly, the underrepresentation of women is mostly at the level of elected and nominated MPs where the current representation of women is at 12% (as at December 2025 and January 2026). While this underrepresentation stems from a complex mix of deeply entrenched patriarchal, economic, and political factors, the major cause of under-representation embarks from political parties which adopt fewer women for parliamentary elections. Zambia should enact a law compelling political parties to observe gender parity when adopting parliamentary candidates. With the revision of the Zambian Constitution in 2025, the situation on the representation of elected women MPs may improve as the law now requires more women to be nominated as MPs by the president and through the Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR) system, while other women will be elected directly through the parliamentary elections. Under the newly enacted Constitution of Zambia (Amendment) Act, 2025, twenty (20) women will be nominated as MPs through a special proportional representation (PR) system. These 20 seats are part of a newly introduced MMPR system, where seats are allocated to political parties based on the total number of votes obtained at national level. The parliamentary seats to be nominated by the president have also increased from 8 to 11 and it is hoped that more women will be nominated by the president.

The gender audit also revealed that the number of female MPs during the 13th Session of Parliament reduced further, after the women MPs that lost their seats were replaced by men. Now that the Constitution has been revised requiring political parties to replace candidates during elections, the women's movement should lobby political parties to replace MPs who lose seats with the same gender.

Regarding the Local Government sector, the gender audit revealed that women continue being strongly underrepresented with 7% at the level of councillor and 12% at mayoral/council chairperson level. Similar to the parliamentary level, the underrepresentation of women at councilor and mayoral/council chairperson levels are due to societal cultural and patriarchal attitudes, economic, and political reasons. The Zambian society is largely patriarchal, often associating public leadership with men while relegating women to the private, domestic sphere. Women leaders often face prejudice, with many viewing them as less capable than men, or fearing they will abandon their families if they take up leadership roles.

One of the women who contested the 2021 General Elections interviewed during the gender audit as a key informant had this to share: *"Women's underrepresentation at local government and parliamentary levels is also due to economic constraints. Elections in Zambia are becoming increasingly expensive, requiring candidates to pay high nomination fees and bear the costs of travel, media, and campaign refreshments. Women generally have less access to personal financial resources, land, or credit compared to men, making it difficult to fund campaign activities. Voters also often demand immediate financial or material support from candidates, a demand that financially disadvantaged female candidates struggle to meet"*. Other political barriers faced by women in politics as revealed by the gender audit include political parties often lacking gender-sensitive, internal mechanisms to adopt women candidates, but favouring male candidates. Political violence and harassment including verbal abuse, hate speech, cyberbullying and physical intimidation, was cited as a key deterrence to women's effective participation in elections.

Security and Defense Wings



The top leadership positions in the security and defence forces wing are predominantly held by men due to a combination of historical, cultural, structural, and institutional factors. The Zambian military has long been viewed as a masculine, "hard power" institution. Cultural stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes, including male chauvinism, have traditionally limited the perceived capacity of women to lead in high-stakes, physically demanding, or high-risk roles. For decades, recruitment into the defence forces was heavily skewed towards men, creating a massive, deep-rooted backlog of male senior officers compared to women. It is only in recent years (such as the large-scale female recruitment in 2023) that the military has actively sought to increase the number of women in the ranks. Due to the historical lag in recruitment, women are underrepresented at the top-tier officer ranks from which commanders and deputy commanders are typically appointed.

However, while top positions are still largely held by men, the defense sector is gradually evolving toward greater gender representation, though it has not yet reached parity at the highest command levels. The situation is changing because recent developments indicate a concerted effort to shift the gender balance. In the past three years, there has been active recruitment of more females in the Zambia Army, ZAF, and ZNS. There has also been promotion of female officers to high ranks, including brigadier generals and colonels. Defense wings such as the ZAF and other services are developing gender policies to mainstream gender issues, enhance mentorship, and increase the participation of women in decision-making. Zambian female officers are increasingly being deployed in international peacekeeping missions, gaining valuable experience.

Public and Quasi Government Institutions

The gender audit revealed that representation in leadership positions within Zambian government quasi-institutions is skewed in favour of men. Out of the sampled twenty (20) institutions, none of them had a female board chairperson and only three (3) institutions had female CEOs. Only one institution had over 50% representation of women on the Board, while the rest were between 22% and 44%. The major reason for the under representation of women in leadership positions of public and quasi-government institutions, is due to fewer women appointed. The selection criteria for senior positions can be subjective or biased, failing to recognize the experience and skills of available female candidates. There is a need for the executive to improve in the appointment of women in high decision-making positions of the Public and Quasi Government Institutions.

3.4.2. Private Sector

Banking Sector

The gender audit revealed that the majority of the banks sampled had between 17% and 40% women represented on their boards. In addition, only five (5) banks out of the twenty (20) sampled had women CEOs and only three (3) had female board chairpersons. Low representation of women at the CEO and board levels of the banks in Zambia is driven by a combination of historical, socio-cultural, and structural factors that create a "glass ceiling" in the financial sector. While there has been progress exemplified by female CEOs currently at ABSA, ZANACO, CITI Bank, Ecobank and First National Bank, the banking landscape has traditionally been male-dominated. Respondents from the banking sector shared that historically and structurally, women in the banking sector have faced unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion. *"Women are often required to be more creative or perform better than their male counterparts, for them to secure the same promotions,"* one of the KII respondents from the banking sector shared. The respondents also added that there are fewer women at the top echelon of the banking sector because very few women have been educated and specialised in disciplines related to the banking sector such as economics and mathematics. There is also a noted disparity in the fields of study pursued at a tertiary level, with fewer women specializing in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) or specialized financial fields (e.g., Risk Management), as compared to men.

Despite these hurdles, there has been a positive shift toward more inclusive leadership, with some banking institutions actively promoting gender-balanced teams. The gender audit reveals that banks nowadays conduct training and certify women employees, in order to prepare them to take up board positions in the financial sector. Banks are also providing platforms for mentorship, networking and leadership development to upcoming young female employees. The Bank of Zambia has integrated gender mainstreaming into its 2016–2019 Strategic Plan, aiming to increase female representation in the financial services.

Media Sector

The gender audit revealed that in Zambia, men have continued dominating media ownership, management, and high-level decision-making positions. The low number of women CEOs and top executives in media institutions is significantly tied to media ownership structures, which are predominantly dominated by men, as well as broader patriarchal socio-cultural norms. The media has historically been, and remains, heavily owned



and controlled by men, influencing appointment of leadership and restricting women's ascension to decision-making roles. Despite these challenges, the gender audit revealed that there are ongoing efforts in Zambia to change the gender picture of the media landscape. The gender audit revealed that advocacy groups and organizations such as Women in News, ZAMWA and MISA have been calling for stronger regulatory frameworks to promote transparency and increase women's representation in leadership. They have also been promoting mentorship and advocating for policies to end gender discrimination in the media. Individual media institutions have also been taking steps to empower women by hiring and promoting women to senior positions.

Telecommunications Sector

Gender representation at the CEO and board levels within Zambia's telecommunications sector show that men continue to hold the majority of top leadership positions. Some of the reasons for fewer women representation in the telecommunication sector include limited access to STEM education and a smaller pool of qualified female candidates applying to such positions. The other reason cited by respondents was that in some instances, board appointments often rely on closed, male-dominated networks, making it difficult for women to gain visibility and access to available board positions. To promote women to occupy leadership positions in future, the three telecommunication companies sampled indicated that they actively celebrate and promote their female employees during events such as the International Women's Day and encourage women to take up leadership positions. As a result, during the gender audit, Airtel, MTN and ZAMTEL, all reported increased numbers of women holding key positions in senior roles at supervisory and management levels.

Professional Associations

Women remain underrepresented in the top leadership positions of many professional bodies. Out of the fourteen (14) professional associations sampled, only three (3) had female presidents denoting 21% of female representation of the sample. One of the major reasons for low representation of women on boards of directors in professional institutions is the lack of mandated quotas to compel the associations to practice gender balance. Some of the sampled professional associations even have two positions of vice presidents, but the positions are still held by males despite the president of the association being male.

Learning Institutions (Universities)

The gender audit revealed that out of the eight (8) public and private universities sampled, none of them have female vice chancellors. There is currently 100% male dominance at the level of vice chancellor in public and private universities in Zambia. For the position of deputy vice chancellor only one, Mulungushi University, has a female vice chancellor, translating to 12.5% female representation. The gender audit revealed that the absence of female Vice-Chancellors in universities could be attributed to severe underrepresentation of women in senior academic ranks such as professors. Currently, males in Zambia dominate the professor roles. Vice-Chancellors (VCs) are generally appointed from the highest echelons of academic and administrative leadership within universities or similar research-based institutions. The primary requirement for the position of vice chancellor is a distinguished record combined with significant executive management experience. The audit also revealed that there are fewer women in STEM fields, hindering more women to advance to top leadership positions of vice chancellor and deputy vice chancellors in universities.

Political Parties

Representation of women in the top leadership positions of political parties in Zambia remains low. Out of a sample of eight (8) political parties, only two (2) political parties are led by female presidents, while the remaining seven (6) have male presidents. In addition, only two (2) political parties had female vice presidents. The gender audit revealed that the low numbers of female political party leaders in Zambia could be attributed to the following: entrenched patriarchal cultural beliefs favouring male leadership; widespread political violence and intimidation discouraging women from pursuing political leadership; a lack of financial resources; high illiteracy levels among women and lack of internal political party mechanisms to support women.

Civil Society Organisations

The gender audit revealed that among all the sectors, women are better represented in decision making positions of the CSOs. This is because the CSO sector tends to be more inclusive of vulnerable groups and provides an enabling environment with more accessible space for women to exercise leadership. The gender audit attributed this to intentional inclusive policies, targeted capacity-building, mentorship of women leaders and strong networking strategies. CSOs actively invest in training women in leadership skills, promote networking, and technical competence, which prepares women better to take up leadership roles. Unlike corporate or political sectors where structural barriers are higher, CSOs offer a more flexible, nurturing environment for women to lead and drive advocacy, particularly on gender equality.



3.4.3. District and Community Level

The gender audit findings revealed that gender equality in representation at community and district levels is critically low, with women severely underrepresented at various levels of decision-making positions. Leadership remains heavily male-dominated in the district council structures such as the WDCs and CDF committees; on the public administration structures such as the PDCC and DDCC; and many other decision making levels. The gender audit revealed that the low representation of women on committees such as WDCs and CDF committees, especially in rural areas, is due to fewer women being available in rural areas to take up such roles due to lack of confidence and higher illiteracy levels. In Isoka for example, only one ward has a WDC with a female on the committee, while the rest 13 wards have committees composed only of males. There is a need to sensitize women and men in rural areas to have a gender balance in the positions on the WDCs.

In some provinces, committees such as the PDCC and DDCC comprise government heads of departments, and most of them tend to be male. In Chinsali district for example, the whole committee of the DDCC comprises males because the committee is formed from government heads of departments. The respondents revealed that there are few women possessing district government positions because most women are not willing to live in rural areas as they solicit to get transferred to urban areas.

3.4.4. Availability and implementation of gender responsive policies

Despite the under-representation of women in leadership and governance positions in most of the sampled institutions, one of the positive outcomes was that all institutions sampled had gender-responsive policies and practices, which collectively mandated non-discrimination, equal opportunity and protection against harassment for men and women in their institutions. For example, the Zambia Police Service has developed and implemented a Gender Equality Workplace Policy to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. This initiative includes the Anti-Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse Policy and a Gender Information Management System. The policies aim to eliminate discrimination, ensure participation and empowerment of both men and women in various processes, and promote gender-responsive budgeting across sectors. Practices that were common across different institutions included participating in national events promoting gender equality such as the international women's day; providing training on gender issues to staff; appointing institutional "gender champions" or gender focal point persons; establishing mentorship programmes for women; and enforcing zero-tolerance policies for harassment. However, while the policy frameworks exist, challenges remain in fully implementing these policies to achieve complete gender parity.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Key lessons of the Gender Audit

The Gender Representation and Leadership Audit reveals critical insights into the state of gender parity in Zambia's leadership landscape. Key lessons drawn from the findings include the following:

Progress is possible but uneven and reversible

- The audit demonstrates that deliberate policy and political will can yield significant progress, as evidenced by the sustained gender balance at the Presidency/Vice-Presidency for a decade and the strong representation of women in the Judiciary and certain Public Commissions. However, this progress is not uniform across sectors and can be eroded, as seen in the declining number of women in Parliament during the 13th National Assembly. Another example is under the Judiciary Sector where some positions held by female leaders in the recent past reverted to male heads, deputised by fellow men (e.g. position of chief justice and deputy chief justice).

Structural and cultural barriers persist

- Deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, socio-cultural attitudes, and male-dominated networks remain the most significant impediments to women's leadership. These barriers manifest in political party candidate selection, corporate board appointments, and community-level decision-making bodies, often sidelining qualified women.

The "Pipeline Problem" is a critical constraint

- The severe underrepresentation of women in senior technical, academic (e.g., professors), and specialized fields (e.g., STEM, finance) creates a shallow talent pool from which top leaders (CEOs, Vice-Chancellors, Permanent Secretaries) are traditionally drawn. This is a fundamental bottleneck requiring long-term investment in girls' education and women's career progression.

Appointed vs. Elected positions show different dynamics

- Women fare relatively better in appointed positions (e.g., within the Judiciary, some Commissions) where political or institutional will can directly influence outcomes. In contrast, elected positions (MPs, Councillors) present a greater challenge due to the combination of economic barriers, voter biases, and violent political environments that disproportionately affect women.

Failure to implement progressive policy and legal framework on gender equality

- Despite the country having progressive policy and legal framework on gender such as Article 259 of the 2016 Amended Constitution, the increase of women in leadership positions over the years has been slow and not translating into significant changes in terms of gender balance, as women representation remain below 40% in many sectors.

Economic exclusion fuels political exclusion

- The high cost of politics and campaigning, coupled with women's generally lower access to capital and assets, effectively prices many women out of contention for elected office at both national and local levels.

Local governance is the frontier of exclusion

- Gender disparity is most acute at the district and community levels (WDCs, CDF committees, DDCCs). This exclusion of women from grassroots decision-making directly impacts the gender-responsiveness of local development and service delivery, perpetuating cycles of inequality.

The Private Sector lags behind on policy commitments

- Despite corporate rhetoric on diversity, the banking, telecommunications, and media sectors show particularly low representation of women in CEO and Board Chair positions. This indicates a significant gap between Zambia's national and international gender equality commitments and the practices of key economic actors.

Civil Society demonstrates that intentionality works

- The high level of women's leadership within CSOs, particularly women's rights organisations, proves that targeted mentorship, inclusive policies, and a supportive environment can successfully cultivate and advance women leaders.



4.1. Recommendations

To accelerate progress toward gender parity in leadership decision making positions in the public and private sectors, the following concrete measures are recommended:

A. For the Government of the Republic of Zambia:

Enact and enforce legislative quotas

- Expedite the passage and implementation of legislation that mandates a 50% gender quota for all appointive positions in the public service, diplomatic corps, boards of parastatals, and commissions. Enact laws requiring political parties to ensure gender parity in their candidate lists for parliamentary and local government elections, with enforceable sanctions for non-compliance.

Strengthen the Gender Legal Framework

- There is need to operationalize all the provisions of the Gender Equity and Equality Act, which was enacted in 2015. Some of the provisions of the Act such as establishing the Gender Commission have not been implemented. Once established, the Gender Commission will enforce legal measures against discrimination and conduct mandatory gender mainstreaming in public and private institutions. All the legal provisions of the Gender Equity and Equality Act must be turned into practical, daily actions to ensure equal rights, opportunities, and outcomes for both men and women. There is also need to realign the National Gender Policy with clear, time-bound targets for women's representation across all sectors. Consider legislating to preserve gender balance at the very top executive levels (e.g., President/Vice-President; Chief Justice/Deputy Chief Justice).

Institutionalize gender-responsive planning and budgeting

- Mandate and resource all ministries, provinces, and spending agencies (MPSAs) to implement robust gender-responsive budgeting, with specific allocations for leadership training, mentorship, and support systems for women within the public service.

Reform the electoral and political environment

- Enforce stricter penalties for political violence and hate speech, particularly against women. Establish a publicly funded campaign finance fund to support women candidates and review nomination fees to make them more accessible.

Adherence to existing laws on appointments

- It is important that future appointments adhere to the Zambian policy and legal framework provisions of inclusivity and gender balancing in Article 259 of the Constitution. Zambia should also adhere to the provisions of the international instruments it has ratified at the level of the UN, AU and SADC, which compel member states to have at least 50% of gender parity in all decision making positions. For instance, the General Recommendation No. 23 of the CEDAW, one of the UN Convention Zambia has ratified states that women's representation in decision-making is a vital element for achieving a "full and complete development of a country."

B. For the National Assembly of Zambia and the Councils

- Create a conducive environment in Parliament and the Councils in order to attract more women to join.
- Conduct open days which are open to the public and students so that they can make decisions to join the legislature and the councils.
- Ensure mentorship is provided by MPs and local government leaders to aspiring female candidates, especially the young ones.

C. For the Electoral Commission of Zambia

- Consider lowering nomination fees for women.
- Include punitive measures for electoral malpractices including Violence Against Women in Elections.

D. For Political Parties:

Adopt and implement gender policies

- Develop and enforce internal gender policies that include mandatory quotas for leadership positions within the party (NEC, Central Committee) and for candidates in elections.



Create support systems

- Establish dedicated capacity-building, mentorship, and fundraising programmes for women aspirants and candidates. Ensure safe and non-discriminatory environments for women's participation.
- Have special measures to increase the number of female candidates either through the quota system or making the process safe for all genders and marginalised groups.

E. For the Private Sector:

Move beyond voluntary targets

- Adopt and publish ambitious, time-bound targets for women's representation in senior management, executive suites, and on corporate boards. Link executive compensation to the achievement of these diversity goals.

Build the pipeline

- Invest in scholarship programmes for women in STEM and finance, establish leadership acceleration programmes, and implement unbiased recruitment and promotion practices. Create formal mentorship and sponsorship programmes pairing senior leaders with high-potential women.

Promote gender-responsive corporate governance

- The Bank of Zambia, Securities and Exchange Commission, and other regulators should introduce governance codes requiring disclosure of gender diversity metrics at board and executive levels.

F. For Civil Society, Academia, and Development Partners:

Scale-up targeted interventions

- Expand leadership training, networking, and mentorship programmes for women across all sectors, with a specific focus on preparing women for political office, corporate boards, and university vice-chancellorships.

Strengthen advocacy and accountability

- CSOs should use audit data to hold the government and private sector accountable, advocate for policy reforms, and provide legal support to women facing discrimination or harassment in leadership pursuits.

Generate and disseminate knowledge

- Academia and research institutions should conduct further studies on barriers and solutions, while the media should proactively profile women leaders and highlight gender gaps in coverage.

G. For Community-Level Action:

- **Launch Grassroots mobilization:** Government and CSOs must conduct sustained civic education in rural areas to encourage and support women to participate in and lead WDCs, CDF committees, and other community structures.
- **Engage traditional and religious leaders:** Partner with traditional and religious institutions to transform harmful gender norms and promote the value of women's leadership in community development.



CONCLUSION

The 2025 Gender Representation and Leadership Audit presents a sobering yet actionable picture of women's leadership in Zambia. While the nation can point to symbolic breakthroughs and areas of genuine progress, notably the sustained gender balance at the apex of the Executive and the commendable achievements within the Judiciary; these remain exceptions in a landscape of pervasive inequality.

The audit unequivocally shows that Zambia is far from meeting its own constitutional principles, national policy objectives, and regional/international commitments to gender parity. The severe underrepresentation of women in Parliament, Local Government, the upper echelons of the public administration, the security sector, and corporate boardrooms constitutes a profound democratic and economic deficit. It stifles innovation, limits the representativeness of policy, and overlooks the talents of half the population.

The barriers are deeply rooted but not insurmountable. They are structural, cultural, economic, and political. Therefore, the solutions must be equally multifaceted and systemic. Tinkering at the edges will not suffice. What is required is a concerted, unwavering national effort driven by bold legislation, enforced quotas, transformative policies, and a fundamental shift in societal attitudes.

This audit serves as a critical baseline and an urgent call to action. The data is clear, the gaps are identified, and the path forward is illuminated. Accelerating progress towards gender parity in leadership is not merely a matter of fairness; it is an essential prerequisite for achieving sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development for all Zambians. The time for incremental change has passed. The moment for decisive, transformative action is now.



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