

## Zimbabwe media workshop on violence against women in elections

A media training workshop on violence against women in elections (VAWIE) and gender-sensitive reporting was hosted by the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) in Harare at the end of June.



Image supplied. A media training workshop on violence against women in elections (VAWIE) was hosted by The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)

The objective of the workshop was to inform, educate as well as raise awareness among media practitioners on VAWIE and to build capacities on gender sensitive media coverage.

The workshop also examined challenges and opportunities in conflict-sensitive and peace journalism during election reporting and offered recommendations collectively no matter what ideology one subscribes to to raise awareness on VAWIE.

### **Non-discrimination and equal gender media coverage**

In her welcoming remarks, ZESN board member Farisai Chaniwa lamented the proliferation of gender information disorders and implored media practitioners to give equal coverage to male and female political participants.

She also urged journalists to practice peace journalism to prevent the incitement of violence while at the same time, serving as a conduit for reconciliation.

ZESN chief executive officer, Virginia Muwanigwa gave insights on the Legislative Framework vis-à-vis women's representation and participation in electoral processes premised on Sections 2, 3, 17, 52 and 56 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe on gender equality and women's participation.

She implored the media to ensure non-discrimination and equal gender media coverage in all electoral processes for women, persons with disability, youth and the elderly.

Muwanigwa also brought to the fore that, the 2013 Constitution is progressive with provisions on equality

rights except in personal and family.

She applauded the Proportional Representation Electoral System in the Senate, which has managed to ensure 44% female representation in the Senate.



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## Media monitoring on VAWIE reportage

The workshop deliberated on media monitoring on VAWIE reportage in line with Section 155 of the Constitution on the need to have free, fair, credible and peaceful elections that are free from violence.

It was noted that victims of violence are often denied the right of reply, with the reliance on political analysis in instances where a first-hand account could be ideal.

Participants engaged in a plenary discussion on experiences of female journalists in electoral reportage.

Some of the issues which were highlighted were that female journalists face violence not only from the public but also from their male counterparts who often do not want female journalists to cover issues of elections and politics as it is believed to be the male turf.

Also, lack of newsroom resources, for example female journalists who go into the field on assignment now must sleep in cars and not only is it uncomfortable but also scary for women.

## Participants

At least 75 participants including representatives from Chapter 12 Commissions attended, including:

The Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC)

- The Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC)
- Zim fact editor-in-chief and correspondents,
- Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation programming and news and current affairs team,
- Editors and reporters from Alpha Media Holdings,
- Zimpapers
- Jester Media
- AB Communications
- *Zimbabwe Daily*
- New Ziana editors
- Freelance journalists
- Journalists from *263Chat*, *Sly Media TV*, *SABC News*, *The Observer*
- CSOs working directly with media organisations.

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