

KNOWLEDGE PROGRAMME | 2015

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RESILIENCE IN ADVERSITY

The changing face of women's activism in
Zimbabwe 2000-2014

Hivos
people unlimited

Colophon

First published in March 2015 by the Knowledge Programme Hivos

Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries
P.O. Box 85565 | 2508 CG The Hague | The Netherlands
www.hivos.net

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Design: Tangerine – Design & communicatie advies, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

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Introduction

The women's movement in Zimbabwe has gone through highs and lows in its long history of mobilizing at different levels and on various issues. The first years of the 2000s were such 'low' ones that many afterwards wondered whether the women's movement still existed. Yet new initiatives have emerged and grown, and contexts are changing. New generations and new modes of organizing and agency have taken shape, and significant successes in legal reform have taken place. This paper thus reframes the question about the status of the Zimbabwean's women's movement and explores how it is reconfiguring itself and continuing to exist. We first document recent methods of organizing and mobilizing by women in Zimbabwe and look both at new players and new forms of action. Secondly, we seek to document the movement's achievements and challenges since the turn of the millennium. The focus will be on organizing through women's NGOs. The women's movement in Zimbabwe comprises many actors, key among them women's NGOs and clubs; women in political parties and the labour movement; women's religious associations and women's professional or business associations. In this paper, however, the women's movement refers to organizing through women's NGOs. In documenting new players and new forms of action, as well as identifying challenges and achievements, the paper seeks to reflect on and rethink the women's movement and its status in the contemporary Zimbabwean context. This also provides a basis for reflection on strategies for transformative change and their underlying theories of change, and on how women's organizing engages with the state in the pursuit of gender equality and women's rights.

The paper seeks to serve an audience of practitioners, activists and researchers in and around the women's movements in Zimbabwe and beyond. It is part of Hivos' Knowledge programme, *The changing face of women's activism in Zimbabwe*, which seeks to interrogate and explore the potential of the women's movement in Zimbabwe in the light of a constantly changing context that offers both opportunities and challenges. It recognizes that new opportunities for the women's movement require more than the resumption of strategies that have worked in earlier decades: it is not just a matter of reviving organizations with new resources, and continuing with business as usual. Instead, the knowledge programme seeks to find out what reinventing and redefining the women's movement implies. As part of that programme, Hivos (Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries) and JASS (Just Associates) Southern Africa hosted a brainstorming meeting in March 2012, which brought together eighteen key players in the women's movement. The current paper builds on this meeting, and is inspired by a scouting mission carried out in 2013 by Anouka van Eerdewijk and Teresa Mugadza for the regional office of Hivos in Harare, Zimbabwe, as well as additional interviews in early 2014.⁽¹⁾ It has benefitted from careful reading and thorough feedback from a number of reviewers.⁽²⁾

Our purpose is to be both informative and reflective. We document recent achievements and challenges, and the work and approaches of new organizations who are not (yet) very visible in existing publications. Text boxes spotlight organizations that have emerged since 2000. (This is not to suggest that organizations founded earlier are less relevant, but is a result of the assignment of documenting new organizations.) The paper also offers insight into what has already been written and argued. It also investigates current trends and offers multiple perspectives. Historical perspectives combined with the emphasis on recent trends and players allows for fresh connections and emerging insights. We have attempted to make these reflections dialogical by referring to what authors have written and argued over the past fifteen years. We hope this reveals the many voices and brains engaged with

¹ The scouting mission encompassed a scan of the field, interviews with a selection of key stakeholders, a review of existing academic and grey literature, and a discussion of the findings with Hivos Harare in October 2013. The current paper further benefits from feedback by several key individuals on the insights garnered during the scouting mission. In early 2014, additional interviews took place to deepen insight on topics that required further exploration, in particular, young women's organizing, social media activism, and economic associations & groups. In total, 35 people were interviewed for the scouting mission and the additional data collection. We are grateful for the time, attention and inputs of all interviewees, as well as all those who supported the writing and preparation of this paper in other ways.

² We are grateful for the inputs of Pat Made, Shereen Essof, Isabella Matambanadzo, Revai Aalbaek and Ireen Dubel at different stages of the preparation of this paper.

the women's movement, and captures the wealth of thinking and debate. The paper is intended to be read as a *partial* 'herstory': we do not claim to have written the final description of women's mobilizing and organizing over this period. We have attempted to document trends, actors, achievements and challenges, and hope that contributes to a greater understanding of the recent history (and future) of women's movements in Zimbabwe. Readers might agree or disagree with our observations; we actually hope they do, because the paper can thus contribute to dialogue on the history, present and future of the movement.

This paper has four main parts. Part One reconstructs the timeline of women's organizing and mobilizing since 1980. It seeks to characterize the first and second decade after independence, and particularly looks at the women's movement since 2000. Part Two offers an overview of the key legal developments since independence, and emphasizes achievements and challenges since the turn of the millennium. In Part Three, the spotlight is put on new forms of organizing and mobilizing. Explicit attention is paid to young women's organizing, social media, and emerging trends in organizing in economic associations. Part Four seeks to connect the earlier parts by focusing on emerging insights on the status of the women's movement. It reflects on lessons regarding engagement with the state, and looks at networking and coalition-building. This part also highlights the multiple generations in the movement and the challenges the movement faces, and ends with arguing the value of diversity that has come to characterize the movement.

Part I – Timeline since independence

The field of women's organizing, mobilizing and activism is very varied. Ten years ago, Everjoice Win wrote:

Since Zimbabwe's attainment of political independence in 1980, the women's movement of Zimbabwe has grown quantitatively and qualitatively. From a mere handful of small, local women's clubs focusing on the welfare needs of women, the movement now comprises a more diverse spectrum. Organisations today range from small clubs, co-operatives, and faith-based mothers' unions, to trade unions, professional groups, women's rights NGOs, and issue-based social movements of various kinds. Women in the movement differ in relation to age, marital status, religion, race, the issues on which our organisations focus, and our spheres of operation (rural or urban locations, national, community, or household-level work). (Win 2004b, p. 19)

Nowadays, the field of women's organizing attracts a variety of actors, organizations and collaborations with diverse histories, trajectories, strategies and challenges. The timeline in this section starts with women's organizations, whose roots are in the 1980s and 1990s, engaged in a combination of lobbying/advocacy, legal assistance and counseling to women, as well as membership organizations, such as professional associations and women's wings of political parties or churches, that mobilized women at different levels. There are both older grassroots organizations dating from colonial times and catering for women's empowerment at community level, and more recent grassroots organizations and mobilizations of women, often more issue-based, some working on women's economic participation and related issues. Research and documentation institutions, though not always involved in direct organizing and mobilizing, catalyzed it through their work. Over time, different types of coalitions, networks and platforms arose and evolved, linking the work of different actors.

To make sense of the contemporary status of the women's movement, several authors have taken a historical perspective on different periods in Zimbabwe's history (e.g. Essof 2013; Hellum et al. 2013; Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008; McFadden 2005; Win 2004b). Below, we briefly describe women's organizing and agency in the decades since independence, giving most emphasis to the past fifteen years, which have been less extensively documented in existing publications. We focus on women's organizations and NGOs, and give less attention to, for instance, women's wings of political parties or professional associations. We will, unfortunately, also be unable to look in detail into the engagement of women in other civil society organizations, or the specificities of the national gender machinery and how its role and position evolved over time.

1980-1989: The first decade after independence

Women have been organizing themselves since the early 1900s in, for instance, prayer clubs or handicraft projects. At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe had a number of formally constituted organizations of mainly black women. These included the Association of African Women's Clubs (AAWC) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), as well as the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau (ZWB) and Jekesa Pfungwa/Vulingqondo (JPV). Income-generating activities and women's practical needs were their main focus. These clubs were significant for their visible constituencies, for nurturing connections between women, and for expanding their mobility.

The first decade of the post-independence era saw a growth of the women's movement. This had been nurtured by the earlier 'debates about gender roles' in the immediate pre-independence period that 'came from two fronts: from women in the nationalist liberation movement, and from a small group of university-educated and professional women' (Essof 2013, p. 33). The Ministry for Community Affairs and Women's Development was established in 1981. 'It was never particularly powerful within government, but in the early days it did provide a valuable platform for the building of a gender consciousness and the exploration of feminist issues' (Essof 2013, p. 35). The 1980s were the decade of development, with the state and donors focusing on improving livelihoods, agricultural productivity and social services such as health care and education, building roads and infrastructure, and providing

water and sanitation. Women's organizations contributed to national development, mobilizing women in income-generating projects, micro-credit schemes, adult literacy and primary health care projects. In the new landscape of post-independent Zimbabwe, young women started taking up jobs as editors, politicians and activists. The new independent status generated interest from donors, who provided a lot of funding for development activities, including resources for the women's movement.

In the post-independence setting, the women's movement had a welfare focus and was largely 'complementing government efforts; working only in development; working hand in hand; and not against the government' (Win 2004b, p. 20). But women who had been to the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 came back with 'a new world view, where discrimination against women was as much about the personal as the political', and they became critical and frustrated about the steps the State was taking to overcome the subordination of women (Essof 2013, p. 35). Soon, the 'movement separated itself from the state-sponsored initiatives of the early 1980s and became more autonomous' (McFadden 2005, p. 10). New types of women's organizations took shape from 1983 onwards. In response to Operation *Clean Up*, during which the government indiscriminately arrested thousands of women in the streets, allegedly for soliciting as prostitutes, and prevented women working in, for instance, schools or health clinics reporting for duty, a women's pressure group was formed, the Women's Action Group (WAG). WAG became a critical voice, challenging violations of women's rights by the State and articulating an explicit equal rights perspective. WAG organized workshops and conferences that established women's demand for rights in marriage and divorce, ownership and inheritance of land and property, decision-making, access to legal protection from sexual harassment in the work place, and domestic violence.

Between 1985 and 1995, the number of women's and feminist organizations grew, a growth that was fuelled by a new consciousness:

It appeared that state patronage allowed little room for the advancement of women's rights and with this gradual recognition a different kind of women's organizations was born. The new activism took place outside the state and brought women from different sections of Zimbabwe's still divided society together around gender interests for the first time. (Essof 2013, p. 36-37)

Growing criticism of state authoritarianism from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, combined with criticism of structural adjustment economic programmes that severely affected the lives of women and their families, contributed to more critical civil society movements, and the growth of more feminist groups and organizations. That period saw a spirit of solidarity and voluntarism, with individuals and organizations exploring opportunities and building on a growing sense of interconnectedness. Research by female academics was linked to advocacy for legal reform on the part of activists and lawyers, who also offered free legal counseling and other services to women. Public meetings were convened. In response to the enactment of the Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982, which accorded women and men full adult status at age 18, organizations like WAG assumed a major role in educating and informing women and men all over the country on the implications of this law. Other organizations advocating the realization of women's rights emerged around 1990. Well-known ones that played critical roles in later years include the Musasa Project (1988), the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRWCN, founded 1990), and the Women and AIDS Support Network (WASN, established 1989). Influential regional networks also emerged: Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) and the regional Women in Law and Development Foundation (WiLDAF), which established its headquarters in Harare in 1990. WiLDAF was set up in 1990 out of a conference on women, land and development, and became a key continental organization advocating the promotion, protection and exercise of women's rights.

1990-1999: Vibrant activism and new consciousness

The second decade after independence was a turbulent period in which various major developments came together. An Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was adopted in 1991, and the conditionalities imposed by the World Bank and IMF led to a fall in government spending on health,

education and other social services, which brought hardship to the poor and seriously affected women's lives. Women's organizations became engaged with service provision; ZWB and JPV saw their membership growing, and new organizations, such as the Girl Child Network, were established. In 1992, the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) was founded. In the first half of the 1990s, civil society in general, and women's organizations in particular, increasingly questioned economic policy, became more critical, and developed a stronger orientation towards human rights and the law. Advocacy on poverty, participation and governance became stronger against a backdrop of political power shifts and growing state authoritarianism in the late 1980s, and struggles against apartheid and dictatorship in South Africa, Zambia and Malawi.

The 1990s were a period with a 'high level of activism [that] was sustained through numerous campaigns' (Essof 2013, p. 48). The Musasa project, ZWRGN and ZWLA, together with the regional WiLDAF and WLSA, became visible faces of a vibrant movement that raised awareness on women's rights and lobbied for legal and policy reform. ZWRGN stimulated dialogue around women's aspirations and needs for change, and produced a publication entitled *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*. The Musasa project put violence against women on the agenda, provided shelter and counseling to women, and worked with organizations such as the Bulawayo Lawyers Association. They also worked with ZWLA, which offers legal services to indigent women, undertakes test case litigation, and advocates legal and policy reform for women's rights. Organizations like the Women and Land Lobby Group (WLLG) and Indigenous Business Women's Organisations (IBWO) sought to hold the state accountable for women's rights in key national policy processes on indigenization and land reform. Lobbying and advocacy for policy and legal reform were key strategies aimed at establishing gender equality and realizing women's rights. By 1995, there were over 25 registered women's organizations working independently on a range of issues in rural and urban settings, as Essof notes:

Some of these organizations worked in both urban and rural areas, cultivating a substantial rural constituency. If one wants to categorize, I could say these NGOs and CBOs spanned the range of practical and strategic gender interests working within the paradigms of women in development, women and development, and gender and development (WID, WAD and GAD). There existed a conceptual unevenness in understandings and articulations of gender as a political struggle. Thus, some of these organizations were overtly feminist in orientation, others more conservative and mainstream in their approaches. Nonetheless, in the 1990s, they all played a major role in re-defining the private and public sphere, demanding full rights for women as citizens of the state. (Essof 2013, p. 38)

The 1990s was thus a period of opportunity and awakening (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008, p. 18), of new energies and emerging synergies.

The 1990s also saw an opening up beyond national boundaries, which further fuelled new consciousness and activism. Whereas, at the start of the decade, communication took place through letters, landline telephones and fax, it speeded up when internet and e-mail became available. Face-to-face meetings remained important, however. The United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) 'were a perfect ground for the acquisition of even more radical political perspectives' (McFadden 2005, p. 10), and further stimulated and inspired activism and organizing. The international conferences and their regional preparatory meetings exposed Zimbabwean women to experiences in Africa and beyond, and fuelled the articulation of more radical perspectives on women's rights. They stimulated the use of the law as a tool for development, and brought with them the language of gender and development, as well as that of gender mainstreaming. In the second half of the 1990s, sexual and reproductive rights became a new area of focus, and the impact of HIV and Aids called for attention.

The shape of the women's movements in this decade were further marked by domestic political and economic developments. In spite of heavy lobbying by a coalition from the women's movement, the passage of a gender-neutral Amendment 14 to the Constitution (January 1996) was a disappointment

that revealed how the law and the judiciary could, or tended to, reproduce gender biases⁽³⁾. Another bitter pill was the denial of women's right to inherit in the ruling by the Supreme Court on the *Magaya* case. 'By the mid-1990s, it was clear that gender concerns were marginal within the mind-set of the Zimbabwean government' (Essof 2013, p. 43). Zimbabwe's legal framework and Constitution were outdated. Women's activism changed from its state-sponsored origins, to become more autonomous and radical, till into the 1990s:

Women realized that their citizenship status was contingent on a fundamental restructuring of the law and legal instruments that men were using to exclude them and/or to maintain the bifurcation of the law into traditional customary law and civil law. (McFadden 2005, p. 11)

Win makes a similar point: 'it was patently clear by 1997 that the biggest problem underlying the Zimbabwean polity was the governance framework – that is, the constitution' (2004b, p. 23).

Together with the increasing 'questioning of the basis of power in Zimbabwean society' that had been sparked by structural adjustment (ESAP), these realizations contributed to 'the start of a protracted debate about democratisation' (Win 2004b, p. 21). The connection between the emerging economic crisis and political consciousness was also noted by others:

The sharp decline in Zimbabwe's economy started in 1997 when, over a four-hour period, the Zimbabwean dollar lost 74% of its value. The accelerating economic crisis of 1997 led to unprecedented strikes, food riots and intensified pressures from civil society to open up political space. (Hellum et al. 2013, p. 25)

The idea that a new Constitution was pivotal to improving governance and democracy was fuelled by the abuse of executive and legislative power by the ZANU PF government. In 1997, five young activists, including two women, founded the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA)⁽⁴⁾, which brought together most civil society organizations in Zimbabwe to advocate the drawing up of a new constitution. The NCA was a key driver of the constitutional reform process, together with the Women's Coalition (WC) that was formed in 1999 and had produced a women's rights charter. These processes were derailed and disrupted by the government's launch of a Constitutional Commission (CC). In 1999, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was launched, signaling the opening of space for vibrant political opposition and further complicating the scene. By the end of this decade of growing activism and unfolding new consciousness, the economic and political scene had changed fundamentally.

2000-present: Crisis, confusion and fragmentation

The constitutional reform process ended with the 2000 Referendum and a 'No' vote against the government-sponsored constitution. Party politics had taken over the constitutional reform processes, and this affected the women's movement in fundamental ways:

The state co-opted some members of the NCA into the CC; prominent among these were members of the WC. This precipitated a crisis within the WC and the wider women's movement. Several questions arose [that...] reflected varying degrees of belief in the State and its role in furthering women's interests and rights. (Win 2004b, p. 23-24)

With the launch of the MDC in 1999, 'the women's movement and the WC, already smarting from internal divisions, was thrown into more confusion' (p. 24). These processes revealed:

The fractures and underlying differences between individual women and groups making up the movement, largely in terms of their specific relationships with the state. [...] The women's

³ Amendment 14 was passed to reverse two Supreme Court decisions that had granted women the right to live with their foreign spouses in Zimbabwe, and permitted the foreign spouses to seek employment (see *Rattigan versus Chief Immigration Officer 1994 (2) ZLR 54 (S)* and *Salem v Chief Immigration Officer 1994 (2) ZLR 287*). In addition, the right to citizenship was restricted to children whose parents were of Zimbabwean citizenship. According to Amendment 14, foreign spouses of Zimbabwean citizens are no longer entitled to automatic residence rights in Zimbabwe; they now have to apply for temporary residence and, after a certain period, may apply for citizenship.

⁴ Everjoice Win, Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga, Brian Kagoro, Deprose Muchena and Tawanda Mutasah.

movement [...] lost its autonomous identity and the ability to respond as a political force that was primarily concerned with women's interests and claims. (McFadden 2005, p. 13-14)

The impact of the constitutional debate was profound. Because it 'silenced and flattened the political and ideological landscape of the Zimbabwean women's movement', it led to claims that 'the consequences of teaming up with male dominated structures in the struggle for social justice at the national level must receive urgent feminist interrogation' (Mc Fadden 2005, p. 15).

Party politics, which had overtaken the constitutional reform process, left the women's movement split into two camps. The intensity and turbulence of the constitutional reform process led to 'a collective pause after the 2000 elections' with some feeling 'a need to "lie low" or "go underground"' in the face of the potentially violent elections of 2001' (Essof 2013, p. 63). Key activists and staff of women's organizations left the country during this period for a variety of reasons. These included personal and financial security, but many activists were also exhausted by the intense organizing and needed time to recover. This affected women's mobilizing. The status of the women's movement was thus described as 'in disarray' (Win 2004, p. 25) and 'in the doldrums – ideologically and in activist terms' (McFadden 2005, p. 15). At the start of the millennium, it was 'experiencing a slump' and 'disjointed, competitive, selfish and privatised' (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008, p. 34). Many had serious concerns about the movement's becoming 'weak and dismantled' and even doubted its existence (Essof 2013, p. ix).

This is also related to the broader political and economic context of the growing Zimbabwean crisis and collapse in the late 1990s and 2000s.

Zimbabwe has, since 2000, become known globally for its failed economy, the flight of more than a million of its citizens, widespread political violence, break-down of the rule of law, and the nationalization of almost all white-owned farmland. The Zimbabwe case [points to] a context of political authoritarianism and unprecedented economic decline; one in which the violation of civil, political, social and economic rights has increased dramatically. (Hellum et al. 2013, p. 22)

This affected the shape, form and effectiveness of not only the women's movement, but of the wider civil society, which had to operate in an 'increasingly shrinking space' (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008, p. 34). The 2000s turned out to be a decade of many elections, in which everything was politicized. Elections took place in 2000, 2005, 2008, and 2013 (Makamure 2012; Womankind 2011). During this period, women's bodies became sites of conflict, as is the situation in most cases of conflict. Of particular note is the politically motivated violence against women, that took the forms of assault and sexual gender based violence. The Research and Advocacy Unit has produced a body of work on political violence against women, indicating that half of the 2,158 women interviewed in 10 provinces 'had been victims of violence', and that 'rape was reported with a surprisingly high frequency: 2% reported that they had been raped, 3% that a family member had been raped, and a startling 16% reported that someone in the community had been raped' (RAU 2010a, p. 2). Another report, which focuses particularly on politically motivated rape, states:

Politically motivated sexual violence against women in Zimbabwe takes many forms. These include extreme violence, gang rape and insertion of objects (bottles and sticks) into the women's genitalia. [...] Most were beaten prior to rape, some quite severely. [...] Over three-quarters of the victims were victims of multiple rape. [...] Most did not report the rape to the authorities. [...] Most of the women did not receive appropriate care for the trauma they had experienced. (RAU 2010b, p. 2)

The issue has proven difficult to discuss and address; yet women and women's organizations have sometimes shared experiences of facing politically motivated violence in their communities. At the end of 2012, for example, Musasa organized the Women and Peace Conference to break down the silence around rape and sexual violence, which included politically motivated violence. In the presence of Ministers, parliamentarians from all parties, civil servants, civil society and donor representatives, acts of rape and sexual violence committed across the political divide were shared.

The 2000 elections were won by ZANU-PF, but MDC also won a number of seats. The 2005 elections were also won by ZANU PF, with the two thirds majority required for constitutional amendment. However the elections were marred by intense violence, intimidation and assault, which

disproportionately affected women. In 2008, the MDC won parliamentary elections, and the run-off for the presidential elections sparked violence leading to the assault of opposition supporters. Under international pressure and significant lobbying from FePEP (the Feminist Political Education Project),(5) as well as women in political parties,(6) who became part of the negotiating teams, a Global Political Agreement (GPA) was signed, and an 'Inclusive Government' was installed in 2009. Within this government, ZANU-PF maintained control over 'the economy, the army, the intelligence and the police that in the past have been used to suppress dissent' (Hellum et al. 2013, p. 27). The political polarization was not ended with the installation of the inclusive government, and 'deep political divisions in the [...] government' continue to 'set the scene for new divisions between NGOs' and show 'how the human rights struggle in this political terrain is fragmenting' (Hellum et al. 2013, p. 42).

Even though the rejection of the draft Constitution in the Referendum implied that political opposition and competitive elections had become possible, the process deeply marked the political landscape.

After the referendum, Zimbabwe was deeply polarized [...] From the politics on inclusion, Zimbabwe moved to a politics of exclusion. Coercion, backed up by the distribution of incentives to select groups, dominated the rules of the game. Those who were willing to be mobilized in defense of the regime were rewarded with land, contracts and employment. Individuals and groups that did not prove loyalty were excluded socially, politically, and through violent attacks on their homes and workplaces. (Dorman 2003, p. 863)

In response to the lost constitutional referendum, the ZANU-PF government started the fast track land reform programme in 2000, the so-called third *chimurenga*, which was accompanied by a wave of violence against opposition forces (see, for instance, Sachikonye 2002). In 2005, the government started Operation Murambatsvina, a large-scale campaign to forcibly clear urban slum areas across the country, which left an estimated 700,000 people homeless.

In 2002, controversial bills such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) were passed and added further repression to the already polarized political climate (Sachikonye 2002; Feltoe 2003). 'NGOs involved in civic education and mobilization were affected by legislation, such as POSA and AIPPA, limiting their freedom of speech, organization and assembly' (Hellum et al. 2013, p. 28). These laws greatly 'constrained the work of the women's movement', narrowing the scope of their activities and advocacy strategies; some organizations were 'banned from implementing activities in certain parts of the country' and others faced suspensions (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008, p. 42-43). Organizations such the Women's Action Group, the Musasa Project and the Association of Women's Clubs found themselves unable to operate in areas where they had functioned since the early 1990s. In addition to the challenges related to legislation regarding demonstrations, picketing and meetings, women's organizations had to deal with firmer law enforcement agents and, in some cases, extra-legal groups who were controlling certain areas and further constraining the community work they did. In 2004, the government attempted to adopt an NGO Bill, but so far civil society and non-governmental organizations have managed to fight off the signing of that bill. Where, in the 1980s to the 1990s, the right to demonstrate could be exercised without restraint, this was no longer the case in the 2000s. Women have to seek clearance to demonstrate for or against anything; this has killed any spontaneity that might have been left in the women's movement. These challenges notwithstanding, during this period women were also able to creatively utilize other methods of engaging with the public; instead of demonstrations and petitions, they used public meetings, community theatre and road shows to raise critical issues. This also served

⁵ Among the women's lobby groups that made significant contributions to the negotiations for the Inclusive Government was FePEP. FePEP was a collective of individual feminists within the country and in its diaspora who committed to expressing their views on the need for intervention in the Zimbabwean crisis between 2007 and 2009. They initially issued a statement in April 2008 calling for a transitional authority to run the country, given the impasse in the aftermath of the March 2008 elections. FePEP played a critical role informing the negotiations for the Inclusive Government from a women's perspective and engendering the language of the Global Political Agreement. The lobby by women expanded to include not only women from the political parties, but also the Women's Coalition in late 2008 and it called for a negotiated settlement.

⁶ While one woman, Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga, was the official negotiator for a political party, other political parties had women in their negotiating teams who played advisory roles as well as serving as links between the women's movement and negotiations for the Inclusive Government.

to empower communities to take up issues on behalf of organizations and enhanced community mobilization in the targeted areas.

This shrinking space for civil society is well documented in the reports on violations against female human rights defenders. The *Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders* documented experiences by members of WOZA (Women of Zimbabwe Arise, see Box 1) and MOZA (Men of Zimbabwe Arise). These included police violence during peaceful demonstrations, arbitrary arrests, arrest without charge under POSA and other repressive legislation, as well as beatings, torture and harassment of those held in custody, and denial of medical treatment. WOZA's report, *Counting the Costs of Courage*, concludes that over the past 40 years, 'the Zimbabwean state has not only failed to protect but also rather inflicted harm on citizens exercising their constitutional rights' (WOZA 2008, p. 14). The report sheds light on the traumatic experiences of organized violence and torture, but also points to trauma in terms of displacement experiences due to 'serious dislocation in their lives, both materially and socially' due to the complex emergencies Zimbabwe is going through' (p. 4).

The slump in the women's movement's mobilization needs to be understood in the context of shrinking space for civil society actors due to political upheaval at the national level and general socio-economic decline. These combined factors placed focus on economic survival at the expense of organizing. Established women's organizations that remained visible in the 2000s include ZWLA, WASN, Musasa, WILDAF and ZWRCN. New organizations emerged in the decade, of which WOZA and WIPSU (Women in Politics Support Unit) are the most well-known (see Box 1 and 2 below). The Women Coalition of Zimbabwe also became a major player, and merits further consideration in Part II of this paper.

BOX 1 WOZA and popular mobilization strategies

Women Of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) was founded in 2003 in response to the impact of economic decline since the turn of millennium and its impact on women as primary care givers. WOZA links access to water, food, electricity, education, and health care to democratic governance, and employs what they call 'tough love': the disciplining love of a parent, and especially mothers, to press for better governance and social justice and to bring dignity back to Zimbabweans.

'Woza' is a Ndebele word that means 'coming forward'. WOZA supports and encourages women to speak out collectively and to stand up to claim their rights and freedoms. They organize peaceful protests around pressing economic, social and human rights issues. WOZA also supports women in developing the confidence to assume leadership positions and roles in their communities, and engages in lobbying and advocacy. MOZA, founded in 2006, is the men's wing of the organization (Men of Zimbabwe Arise) and engages especially young men in the struggle for a better Zimbabwe. Approximately 80,000 women and men are members of WOZA/MOZA. Since 2003, over 3,000 of them have been held in police custody, many more than once and for more than 48 hours (wozazimbabwe.org; see also WOZA 2008; Asoka 2012).

Civic education and community mobilization are key strategies employed. WOZA seeks transitional justice, a restoration of the rule of law and economic and social justice, and the development of institutions and attitudes that protect people from power abuse and impunity on the part of public officials. Civic education and community mobilization are pursued to ensure that Zimbabweans outside the political arena and the urban elites are involved, and the search for transitional justice is grounded in communities and then linked to the national level (Ndlovu 2009). Since 2006, WOZA has held 284 meetings on social justice with over 10,000 women and men across the country; their views and demands for a new Zimbabwe are laid down in the People's Charter.

BOX 2 WIPSU: working with women in politics

The Women in Politics Support Unit was set up in 2001 as the Women in Parliament Support Unit by a group of women's rights activists who had been active members of civil society in many capacities⁷. The organization was created primarily as a space to build the capacity of women MPs and enhance their participation in parliament as representatives and policy-makers, and was one among a number broader initiatives to increase women's participation in representation and decision-making.

WiPSU identifies its target group as female politicians i.e. those seeking or already in political office. Over time, its name changed to Women in Politics Support Unit to reflect its expanded mandate of providing support to women in politics beyond Parliament, including in local authorities/local governance and women within political parties among other representative spaces. Through a Constituency Effectiveness programme, WiPSU helps women MPs create forums to interface with their constituents and communities. Under its Research and Technical Support programme, it facilitates technical support to women MPs in their legislative roles, for instance by providing them with research and information on matters debated in Parliament/Council, or by drafting motions and speeches when requested. Through their Media and Advocacy programme, the organization creates and uses various platforms to raise attention for the issues including women's participation in decision-making.

One major achievement is the facilitation of the creation of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus. This is an inter-party platform where women MPs can share ideas and also lobby for women's rights and gender equality in Parliament as a collective, rather than as individual members or members of a single political party.

In Part III of this paper, we take a closer look at some women's organizations that emerged since 2000. Before ending this section, however, we want to highlight two factors that have affected women's organizations in this decade: professionalization and the impact of religion. To start with the former, the economic decline and political crisis also affected the resources available to women's organizations. This pushed NGOs and women's organizations into a survival mode, and increased their orientation towards donors for finance, even though there were fewer donors due to the country's instability. Where, in earlier years, resources for women's rights could easily be mobilized for actions and interventions, the current shrinking of global funds for women's rights mobilizing has not spared Zimbabwean women. This has resulted in the few resources available being channeled to 'priorities' such as salaries and administration costs, at the expense of visible mobilization and public programme interventions. Increasingly, resources are attracted for very specific projects/interventions, leaving organizations little or no room to maneuver around the broader issues that the movement may be facing. A "follow-the-money" mode has taken over agenda-setting and, combined with the tyranny of log frames, has eroded the activist spirit; this has led to observations that 'as women's NGOs have become very technicist and non-feminist, so have they become more distant from rights holders, and have lost the capacity to mobilize the collective power of women' (Win 2014, p. 38). This mode manifested itself since the late 1990s, and has now become entrenched.

In this context of repression, churches have become some of the few public spaces where people could meet. Religion offered a sense of community and security in uncertain times, but the moral compass of the church was often opposed to women's self-determination. It is being observed that there is a 'rise of Pentecostal Christian churches, their movement and very retrogressive ideology' that 'have attracted middle and upper middle classes in increasingly large numbers' (Win 2014, p. 17). Although the impact of such new trends in religion and beliefs, including also traditional African churches and a (re)surgence of Islamic movements, is not thoroughly documented, Win observes 'the erosion of secular space... intolerance and/or exclusion of other religions' and 'Church and State connection' (Win 2014, p. 18). She also wonders how the participation of the upper and middle classes, that is opinion leaders, civil society leaders, women's movement leaders, will affect policies, laws and

⁷ The founders include Thoko Matshe, Devi Pakirri, Priscila Misiharabwi-Mushonga and Everjoice Win.

public debate. The rise of religious fundamentalism and evangelism in this decade has undermined women's rights, and contributed to making sexual and reproductive issues, such as abortion, and sexual and LGBT rights, contentious and framed in terms of tradition and culture.

In this decade, efforts to create common ground amongst the actors in the women's movement may have been lost. Differences between generations also made working together difficult. It was (and is?) not uncommon for the younger generation's working methods to be resented by older actors in the movement, who seem to feel that all interventions in the current dispensation should be done in the ways they used. The 2000s were also a decade in which civil society was confused about its role vis-à-vis the state, especially once the MDC entered the government. There was little agreement about a collective role for women's organizations to pursue their efforts to garner women's rights and gender equality. One of the critical issues on which the women's movement failed to respond with a collective voice was the political violence against women, especially rape and sexual violence. The post-2008 period was characterised by a renewed struggle for constitutional reform. The NCA again opposed the controversial drafting process for the lack of popular consultation. Despite their efforts to interdict the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC), a referendum was held in March 2013, on the basis of which the draft was accepted (more details on this in Section III). The results of the elections that followed in July stunned observers, with ZANU PF winning 159/210 seats and MDC-T falling back to 49. As for the Presidential vote, 61% of the electorate voted for Robert Mugabe and 33% for his direct opponent, Morgan Tsvangirai. While regional and continental bodies received the election results favourably, other stakeholders, such as the EU and US, expressed doubts about its free and fair status. Since then, the opposition seems to have fallen apart:

Despite the big 'wahala' around Zimbabwe's elections held in July 2013, my bet is that all will be forgotten, ZANU will be in power for the next five years, Mugabe might go (from natural causes more than through the ballot box), and the opposition has to go back to the drawing table. Civil society and women's movements have to reframe their struggles and find more strategic ways of (re)engaging with ZANU, given the tension and deep distrust that characterized the CSO-State relations in the past 15 years. Feminist movements in Zimbabwe must in particular find a new way to still fight for fundamental women's human rights outside the narrowly defined so called democracy and governance agenda – read- regime change agenda. (Win 2014, p. 6)

Part II - Key Legal Developments

Zimbabwean women have a history of influencing state policy and legislation at various levels. This is rooted in pre-independence activism, which ranged from localized organization into women's clubs and church guilds⁽⁸⁾ to more organized participation in pro-independence labour movements. There is relatively limited documentation of women's mobilization across ethnic, racial, social and political divides. However, it would seem that, with the advent of independence, women began to mobilize more within their various social groupings particularly in the context of engaging with the state to influence policy and legislation. As early as 1987, research into women's rights showed that the law was a key factor in discrimination against women in Southern Africa in general, Zimbabwe being no exception (WLSA 1987a, 1987b). These findings, and the challenges women were facing in accessing their rights before the law, informed early legal and policy reform initiatives by women's movements. These interventions were based on the theory that, in order to achieve equality for women, it was necessary to address both discrimination and/or gaps in the law, while working to change attitudes that perpetuate discrimination. This could be attributed to the militancy gained by women during the liberation struggle, and the realization that independence had not brought equality of the sexes although men and women had fought on an equal basis. Thus the use of law reform and policy advocacy was a deliberate strategy. This section provides an overview of key legal developments on women's rights since independence, with emphasis on two recent ones: the Domestic Violence Bill and the new constitution.

Employment and Inheritance rights

At independence, the newly created Ministry of Women's Affairs became the platform through which the women who had participated in the liberation struggle influenced state policy and legislation. A major success of this work was the Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982 (LAMA)⁽⁹⁾. The basic importance of the LAMA was that women and men, upon attainment of the age of 18, attained majority status. This was a result of the realization that the law restricted the participation of women in public and private lives as adults. This ministry can be accredited with many of the positive legal and policy developments of the first decade after independence, although its position and mandate has been shifting and has fallen over time⁽¹⁰⁾.

These include the Equal Pay Regulations of 1980, which basically did away with the discrimination in pay structures that saw employees being paid according to race and sex, leaving black women as the lowest earners. Other key developments of this era include the Deeds Registry Amendment Act of 1983, finally providing for married women, to register immovable property in their own names. This was followed by the Labour Relations Act of 1984, which addressed discrimination in the workplace, guaranteeing women's rights to equal pay and opportunities.

By the middle of the first decade, women were beginning to organize both through the structures of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (including women's cooperatives, groupings and community gardens set up by the Ministry), and in non-state spaces, such as the activist women's organizations that had started to emerge (such as the WAG and Musasa Project). By the later part of the post-independence decade, the activist women's organizations were beginning to focus on the women's rights issues that showed persistent inequalities in society. These included unequal property division in divorce cases, which culminated in the enactment of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1987, which provided equality in the separation of property upon divorce for parties married within the terms of the general law. Further,

⁸ There is evidence to suggest that the women's clubs and church guilds forced some level of racial integration in a racially segregated society. See generally <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/zimbabwe/gender/ziyambi1.html>.

⁹ Now part of the General Laws Amendment Act, and no longer stand-alone legislation.

¹⁰ The role of the national gender machinery has changed and shifted over time (see for instance Essof 2013: 35-36, 40-42, and ZWRN 2000). Although the Ministry of Women's Affairs played a key role in policy and legal reform for women's rights, its activism experienced a lull in later years. This may be due to the changing nature of its structure, its institutional location under patriarchal leadership, lack of resources and staff, and other structural constraints. It only meaningfully re-engaged with women's rights in the 2012-14 constitutional reform process.

there was a lobby for changes to inheritance laws, which had remained patriarchal and saw many women and female children suffering as a result of property grabs by their fathers'/husbands' extended families in cases where the deceased had no male child. The Deceased Persons' Family Maintenance Act of 1987 was promulgated to address this anomaly by providing for the right of the widow and children of the deceased to remain in the home until the estate was wound up. In addition, where the female children of the deceased did not qualify to inherit, those who were still dependents/minors were provided with the right to maintenance from the estate.

These early breakthroughs in legislation created a 'state of moral panic' (Essof 2013, p. 36) and were followed by 'what was widely viewed as a gender backlash in Zimbabwe's post-independence politics' and met with 'growing backlash sentiments within government and among those who advocated a return to (patriarchal) African culture' (Ranchod-Nilsson 2008, p. 645). By the second decade after independence, the women's movement had to tackle gender inequality more directly and politically, based on the recognition that discrimination against women was caused by the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society. An important development in this period was the creation of organizations to facilitate legal reform and policy advocacy by the women's movement, such as ZWLA. The Beijing conference further strengthened women's resolve to fight for equality and for their voices be heard as equal members of society. The regional organization, WiLDAF, brought together activists and organizations to promote the attainment of women's rights through the law. These organizations were a result of continuous engagement and strategizing by facets of the women's movement.

Of importance in this era is that the women's movement was now mobilizing to a greater degree through women's organizations than through the national machinery. This can be seen in the context of the fact that the space for civil society organizations in *general* had shrunk; it also affected women's organizations' relationship with the national machinery. Organizations working on women's issues began to focus their work in the wider socio-economic and political context of the country. This increasingly placed them in the same grouping as broader civil society organizations considered confrontational for demanding rights from the patriarchal state. Thus, where there had in the past been considerable consensus on issues and strategies between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and women's organizations, this consensus, particularly on strategies, was dissolving. The relationship with the Ministry of Women's Affairs was retained as a platform to move forward on the legislative agenda, but lobbying was now more the responsibility of activist organizations; and the linkages, particularly with regard to strategies, were no longer as strong or as defined as in the first decade. During this period, key legal instruments enacted included the Administration of Estates Amendment Act of 1997, which overturned the customary law position that female children and wives could not inherit from their fathers or husbands. This was in recognition of the fact that, despite the strides provided by the Deceased Persons' Family Maintenance Act of 1987, women and female children were still disadvantaged and, in most cases, dispossessed and disinherited on clear grounds of gender discrimination, a critical issue in the context of the growing impact of the HIV/Aids epidemic.

Bodily integrity

It was also during the second decade that the women's movement began to mobilize actively on issues of bodily integrity. While in earlier years, women had been concerned about equality in marriage and in the workplace as the focus of their lobbying and advocacy, in this decade they were also becoming concerned with issues of bodily integrity, including domestic and other gender-based violence. This could be attributed to the rise of the HIV and Aids pandemic after independence. Women were being disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and bodily insecurity and HIV infection among women were linked. The 2012 MDG report, for instance, indicates a HIV prevalence rate of 7.8% for women, and 3.6% for men, and infection rates at 18 and 15 % respectively.

A major success for women's mobilization during this period was the Sexual Offences Act of 2001¹¹. The women's movement, women in activist organizations, church and other associations, and ordinary Zimbabweans came together to agree on the need for laws dealing with the proliferation of sexual crimes in the country, especially given the high HIV infection and death rates. Lead organizations in this campaign included Women and Aids Support Network, Women's Action Group and Musasa Project. The Act sought to consolidate sexual offences as well as provide comprehensive definitions and stiffer penalties for them. An important development introduced in this legislation was the 'marital rape' clause, which criminalized non-consensual sexual intercourse between married couples. At this juncture, given the disproportionate rates of infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases for women, this Act was considered a key milestone.

Another major development at this time was the initiation of the lobby for domestic violence legislation. In 1998, the Musasa Project published a comprehensive study of domestic violence in Zimbabwe that showed alarming figures (Armstrong 1998). One in every four women had experienced some form of domestic violence from the age of 15. The prevalence of violations of women's bodies and exposure to HIV infections and other diseases pointed to the urgent need for radical intervention. In a 1999 collaboration between the Musasa Project, WLSA, ZWLA, WiPSU, WAG and WASN, the lobby for the Domestic Violence Act was born. Initially, the lobby was just directed at the government and led by Musasa Project. However, as momentum for the need for the law gathered, the Law Development commission engaged not just the Musasa Project, but other stakeholders including organizations such as ZWLA and Legal Resources Foundations, as well as law enforcement agencies such as the Office of the Attorney General and representatives of the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Judicial Service Commission. These were the stakeholders that drafted the initial Draft Domestic Violence Bill, which became nearly every women's organization's lobbying tool.

The Domestic Violence Bill became a focal point for all women's organizations since it was clear from the research that violence limited the enjoyment and exercise of women's rights. Even though the lobbying for domestic violence legislation went on for almost ten years - the Act was passed in February 2007 - the sustained mobilization by women's organizations did not stop. Different organizations led the lobby at different times, depending on which issues were topical, but ultimately every women's organization as well as individual activists and intellectuals, ensured that discourse on the Domestic Violence Bill did not die. It is noteworthy at this point to state that both the Sexual Offences Act and the Domestic Violence Act were passed largely due to mobilization by the women's movement. But this would not have been as successful without the critical support of the national gender machinery. During the debate in parliament and in other spaces, the Ministry of Women's Affairs took political leadership of the process and navigated the bureaucracy of law-making for the women's movement.

The Constitution of 2013

Possibly the biggest milestone, and evidence of collective mobilization by the women's movement, was the constitutional reform process of 2000. Women came together from across the political divide, from within women's organizations, churches, clubs and informal spaces as well as individual professional and intellectual women. The lobby for constitutional reform was able to build on earlier experiences, for instance the lobbying on Amendment 14 or to access land. When the lobby for the new constitution had started -as a debate between a few young intellectuals- no one anticipated that the initiative would gain the attention of the whole country and cause the government to address the need for a new constitution. The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was set up in 1999 to raise awareness on the need for a new constitution. However, as the NCA began to consolidate its presence in Zimbabwean society, women began to become marginalized, since men sought to dominate the platform and its debates. Moreover, the government had responded to the call for a new constitution and had set up a Constitutional Commission to seek out the views of citizens on what they wanted in a new constitution. It was soon apparent to the women's movement that both these spaces would not

¹¹ It has now been subsumed into the Criminal Law Codification Act of 2001.

do justice to issues of gender equality, or even engage women meaningfully. This gave rise to the formation of the Women's Constitutional Coalition as a platform for women's voices and issues that engaged with the male-led processes in the NCA and the Constitutional Commission. When the Constitutional Commission finally presented its findings and a draft Constitution, the women's mobilization and lobbying contributed largely to the 'NO vote' of 2000. The women's movement, diverse as it was, was unanimous that the draft did not reflect gender equality in the manner that women desired; there were differences based on political allegiances, but not on the principles of equality. It is important to note that women voted as a movement in the referendum, as they voted for 'women's rights and issues' rather than for personal, sectoral or party political interests.

This process not only brought women together then, but the mobilization of this time became a crucial reference point in the constitutional reform process that finally delivered a new constitution in 2013. The momentum generated by the 2000 constitutional reform process and the proof that women, despite their differences, could mobilize en masse on issues of women's rights and gender equality gave impetus to the mobilization in the subsequent constitutional reform process that began in 2009 and culminated in a new constitution in 2013. Of course, this process had been interrupted for years, and the women's movement had had to deal with fragmentation and internal divisions. By the time the constitutional reform movement gained momentum again, the role and structure of the coalition had also changed. In the 2000 process, the Women's Constitution Coalition had been a key network in creating a voice for women to engage with both the Constitutional Commission and NCA processes. In the 2012 process, however, the Women's Coalition became a formal organization (WCoZ) linking the Select Committee on the Constitution (COPAC) process and the women's movement. The existence of the WCoZ made coordination of the women's organizations, activists, and other women easier. COPAC recognized the Women's Coalition as the coordinating body for all issues related to gender and women's rights, and, by default, all the women's organizations had to coalesce around the WCoZ. This was important in terms of the direct linkages between the official constitutional reform processes and women that were clearly established and mutually respected. This is not to say there were no disagreements or diverging views. Rather, what occurred was that the women's organizations all agreed on the minimum standards for gender equality and women's rights they would accept in the constitution. These were stated in the Women's Charter that was developed in 2000, and modified in 2012. Once the minimum standards were agreed upon and accepted, other issues that the actors did not agree on could be raised through other civil society platforms.

BOX 3 The Women's Charter

The Women's Constitutional Coalition, now the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, developed and published the Women's Charter in 2000. It was the result of a nationwide process of consultations involving women from the whole country. The Charter was developed out of the realization that there was need for a common position on the realization and recognition of the rights of women in Zimbabwe. The Women's Charter of 2000 was eventually amended, and the current Women's Charter launched in 2012.

The Charter is the foundation for women's rights' demands in Zimbabwe. It states that Zimbabwean women are full and equal citizens entitled to equality and non-discrimination in all spheres of life. In addition, it addresses the need for a new constitution and calls for equality of access and opportunity for women and men both in the private and public domains. The Charter addresses 12 key areas where specific actions must be taken to ensure equality.

1. *Education*: Guarantee of free and compulsory primary and secondary education.
2. *Land, Environment and Natural Resources*: Non-discrimination in the allocation of land and other natural resources, including women's right to hold land titles.
3. *Governance and Democracy*: Non-discrimination in elections and a constitutional quota system.
4. *Health, HIV and AIDS*: Guarantee of the right to health, including universal access to treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS, especially women.

5. *The Differently-abled*: Elimination of all forms of discrimination and protection from abuse of women and girls living with disabilities.
6. *Youth*: Participation of youth in Parliament and in political parties protected in the constitution.
7. *Security*: Enhancing the capacity of law enforcement agents to protect women in times of threat.
8. *The Media Freedoms*: Guarantee of free expression and the repeal of repressive media law.
9. *Equality and Non-Discrimination*: Constitutional guarantee of equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, marital status, pregnancy, disability and sexual orientation⁽¹²⁾. In addition, guarantee of equal protection before the law and equal access to legal aid. Domestic application of key human rights instruments.
10. *Children's Rights*: Protection of the rights of the child as well as guaranteeing children the right to an identity provided for by the constitution.
11. *Social and Economic Justice and Public Funds*: Guarantee of the right to work in the constitution, as well as public finance management that mainstreams gender budgeting.
12. *National Values and Culture*: National values should uphold the rights, dignity and equality of rights of all citizens and the provision of equal opportunities in all sectors of previously marginalized groups.
13. *Independent Commissions*: Equality of representation in all commissions by women and men protected by the constitution.
14. *Transitional Justice and National Healing*: Creation of platforms to address past internal conflict and the setting up of a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission to redress past injustices.

The women's movement, under the leadership of the Women's Coalition, became a critical lobby to engage with for all parties seeking endorsement of the Draft Constitution of 2012. The Women's Coalition led the women's organizations' lobby for gender equality and women's rights in the 2009-2013 process. The strengthened relationship between the Women's Coalition and the Ministry of Women's Affairs gave the Coalition leverage to represent the gender equality and the women's rights agenda among other civil society actors. During the public consultations, the Women's Coalition was represented in the data-gathering teams. It also became a critical voice in the teams that incorporated the content of the public consultations into the draft Constitution. Once the Women's Coalition was satisfied with the Draft Constitution, it began a lobby for society at large, and women in particular, to vote in support of the Draft Constitution at the referendum of 2013. Thus the role of the Women's Coalition became that of representing women's views across the political divide and drumming up support for the new constitution.

The Women's Coalition's mode of operation across the political and social divide meant that the women in political parties worked hard to make their political parties support the minimum standards for gender equality and women's rights set out in the WCoZ women's charter. Even while the political parties framed gender equality and women's rights according to their political ideologies, their positions remained aligned to the standards advocated by the Women's Coalition. This took shape in a political playing field that continued to be shaped by Zimbabwean party politics as well as the continuously evolving and changing nature of the power and interests of the state; women's organizing for a new Constitution had to navigate this complex political field. Although a thorough analysis of this political landscape merits further analysis in terms of how it shaped the women's movement, its agenda and strategies, it is beyond the scope of this paper. Despite political differences among women, and complex power struggles in the Zimbabwean state and constitutional process, the Women's Coalition and women's organization managed to have positive impact on the Constitution. The national gender

¹² The reference to sexual orientation here is noteworthy, as it did not feature in the 2000 Charter. It is not included in the final Constitution.

machinery proved a critical point of influence. Through the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the gender equality and women's rights agenda was able to gain support in critical executive forums, such as the parliament and cabinet, which were not accessible to women in the women's movement. The collective voice of women was clear, and, even as the national machinery took political leadership of the process of incorporating women's voices towards the end of the process, the impact of the women's movement had been felt and consolidated.

BOX 4 Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013)

The new Constitution of Zimbabwe is considered a major step in fulfilling women's rights and gender equality requirements. It is largely compliant with most international and regional human rights instruments, and has very specific provisions for equality and non-discrimination. The key provisions on gender equality are:

1. the founding principles and values establish gender equality as a key value;
2. the national objectives provide for gender balance as a principle to be observed and applied;
3. the Constitution provides for socio-economic rights, thus paving the way for citizens to claim rights such access to health care, housing and education;
4. a wide ranging equality and non-discrimination clause in Section 56(3) states:
"Every person has the right not to be treated in an unfairly discriminatory manner on such grounds as their nationality, race, colour, tribe, place of birth, ethnic or social origin, language, class, religious belief, political affiliation, opinion, custom, culture, sex, gender, marital status, age, pregnancy, disability or economic or social status, or whether they were born in or out of wedlock."
5. the provisions on affirmative actions to address past imbalances. Section 17(2) states:
"The State must take positive measures to rectify gender discrimination and imbalances resulting from past practices and policies."
6. provision for proportional representation to enhance women's participation in Parliament through the reservation of 60 seats for women MPs selected by parties in addition to any women who may have contested the constituency seats. These seats are valid for the first two terms of Parliament after adoption of the constitution;
7. provisions for proportional representation in the Senate, using the 'zebra system' where each party list must be headed by a woman;
8. creation of a Gender Commission;
9. provision for equal representation of men and women in independent commissions;
10. and the requirement that all laws and policies be aligned to the provisions of the new constitution.

Part III – Women’s organizing and mobilizing since 2000

In this part of the paper, we put the spotlight on some of the new forms of organizing and mobilizing that have emerged over the past decade or so. We start with young women’s activism and organizing, and then turn to social media activism. We also explore the re-emergence of organizations working on economic empowerment, entrepreneurship and material livelihoods.

Young women’s activism and organizing

The women’s movement in Zimbabwe has seen an influx of young women’s organizations in recent years. Most of the current crop of young women’s organizations stems from the post 2005 era. During the lacuna in which the movement found itself in the early 2000s, new, young women entered the arena. Many of them took up leadership in struggling organizations, or were inspired to create new spaces for organizing. This led to an influx of young women’s organizations that make up a significant portion of the formal women’s movement; an influx that was also supported by the interest of donors in youth organizing. The young women’s organizations aim to respond to the needs of young women by creating platforms for them to interact and debate topical issues, and by addressing issues that the older women’s movement has not addressed.

To start with the latter, while the mainstream women’s movement addressed a number of issues relevant to young women, they are often not framed in ways that match the specific needs and contexts of young people. For example, young women have to deal with sexual and reproductive health rights issues in an economically depressed context as well as the reality of more sexual violence and sexual violations against younger women, including girls. Where, in the 1990s to early 2000, women generally had access to basic primary health care and basic contraceptive services were widely available; young women today have to grapple with lack of access to basic contraceptives, childbirth-related services, and attendant support. This is evidenced by the increase in the maternal mortality rate, which has risen from 283 per 100,000 live births in 1994 to 960 in 2010/2011. These realities have given rise to the birth of organizations such as the **Katswe Sistahood**, which aim to address sexual and reproductive health rights issues from young women’s perspectives. Katswe states that it exists to ‘enable[s] young women to mobilize, organize and articulate their needs and aspirations in respect of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education, SRH services and legal protection, and to communicate these to policy makers and implementers’ (www.katswesistahood.org). Part of their work concerns organizing sex workers, and they also focus on high-density suburbs.

The rights of sexual minorities are another key issue that young women have taken up. A slightly more enabling environment for young women to ‘come out’ regarding their sexuality has given rise to the birth of organizations such as the **Sexual Rights Centre** in Bulawayo and **Pa Kasipiti** in Harare. Pa Kasipiti is an advocacy organization working on LGBTI rights (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-, Transsexual and Intersex). It states its vision as ‘a society that recognizes, respects and enables LGBTI to enjoy full sexual and reproductive rights in tandem with economic, social and economic rights’. They seek to provide support services for young LGBTI persons, and to facilitate access to health care services for those who would otherwise struggle to access those. In addition, they provide psychosocial support to young LGBTI persons and tackle sexual and reproductive health from the perspective of young sexual minority women.

BOX 5 Sexual Rights Centre

The Sexual Rights Centre (SRC) is a human rights advocacy organization set up in 2007 in Bulawayo. It works at three levels to affirm sexual rights of all Zimbabweans. The direct stakeholders are the LGBTI and sex worker communities. SRC works primarily with these communities to strengthen their capacity and leadership to support movement building through workshops and mentoring, as well as through use of the arts. As a fairly young organization, the SRC is still predominantly working in Bulawayo and its environs.

It also works with public and private institutions and organizations to promote an appreciation of sexual rights and women's rights. Beneficiaries range from religious leaders to counselors and medical practitioners. This area of work fulfills the SRC's commitment to ensuring rights-based services for key and marginalized populations as well as strengthening existing institutions to provide more effective services for them.

Finally, the SRC is involved in advocacy and lobbying at national, regional and international levels, crafting out their own space and pushing their agenda on sexual orientation and gender identity in instances where others failed or neglected to do so. The SRC has made submissions on sexual orientation and gender identity to platforms such as Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (the CEDAW Committee) and the Global Commission on HIV and the Law. Locally, the SRC made submissions to the Parliamentary Constitution Select Committee (COPAC) on what the new constitution of Zimbabwe should contain in order to protect sexual rights and women's rights.

Local and international economic trends have influenced how younger women organize. In Zimbabwe, the effects of the global economic decline are intertwined with the national socio-economic decline of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Employment is no longer guaranteed, and this has pushed young women into entrepreneurship and other economic activities by design rather than by choice. Given the challenges in patriarchal societies, young women have started to organize to have a collective voice in lobbying for favorable business conditions and access to resources. One such organization is the **Institute for Young Women Development (IYWD)**, created in Bindura in 2009 by young women who run the organization with a small staff of seven that includes the founder Glanis Changachirere. The IYWD recognized the need to create spaces for young women to capitalize on, and engage with, national processes such as the land reform and, more recently, indigenization of sectors such as mining. This led to the development of a training programme for young women in socio-economic rights conducted at the IYWD training centre in Bindura. The organization seeks to empower young women to engage in economic empowerment projects at the community level, and operates in Mashonaland Central's districts of Bindura, Mazowe, Guruve and Shamva. IYWD uses various methods to engage "closed" rural communities; one key intervention strategy is engaging with traditional and community leaders to gain support for their initiatives.

The changing socio-political environment in the country has exposed young women to issues other than those which engaged the mainstream women's movement in earlier years. Although Zimbabwe experienced a liberation struggle and internal destabilization in the early 1980s, conflict resolution and peace-building remained mainstream issues that the women's movement did not directly confront. In recent years, however, the growing political violence in the country has brought these issues to the forefront. Electoral and other political processes have been marked by increasing conflict, repression and violence, which have affected people in different ways. This has necessitated the creation of spaces where young women can address conflict and violence in the society and devise interventions that address their particular circumstances.

For example, politically motivated sexual abuse of women started to accompany elections in the early 2000s, with the 2008 general and presidential elections considered the most violent post-independence elections (see RAU 2010a, 2010b, 2011). The mainstream women's movement struggled to deal with cases of political sexual violence. After 2008, a new wave of young women's organizations concerned with managing conflict in communities in general, and political conflict in particular, emerged, as young women had become aware of the need to address the issue for their own long-term safety. These include the **Zimbabwe Young Women's Network for Peace Building (ZYWNP)**, an organization that aims to empower young women to participate in community conflict prevention and peace-building initiatives, so that communities are able to participate in political activities and be tolerant of divergent views (see Box 6).

In addition, young women seeking political office mobilized to work together across the political divide with the intention of easing some of the conflicts that come with electoral processes. The **Zimbabwe**

Young Women's Network brings together young women aspiring to political and public leadership that seeks to work across political party lines and is led by women from both Zanu PF and the MDC-T (Tendai Wenyika-Gava and Maureen Kademaunga). They are not confined to political party spaces as their predecessors in politics were but see the value in tapping into each other's energies and using social media to raise attention to the specific challenges for young women seeking political and public office, regardless of political background.

BOX 6 Zimbabwe young women's Network for Peace Building

ZYWNP was established in 2008 and presents itself as a non-profit feminist organization with a mandate of promoting young women's meaningful contribution to peace-building and curbing violence. They work on democracy, governance and peace-building with women of different backgrounds between the ages of 15 and 30, and engage in training and capacity-building. A series of conferences brought together 150 to 250 young women in different regions in Zimbabwe to discuss economic and political empowerment of young women and their meaningful contribution to national and community policy debates. The areas they work in include Highfields, Buhera, Mutoko, Bulawayo, Tsholotsho, Gwanda, Bindura, Macheke, Glen View, Chitungwiza, Mutare and Murehwa.

In the 2011 Special Issue of BUWA! on 'What it means to be a young women in Southern Africa', the director of ZYWNP criticized the common understanding of and approach to peace building.

This can be regarded as a limited framework of definition, because it tends to focus on peace and conflict as it pertains to institutions rather than people. This focus on national institutions, by default, speaks of men as leaders in peace building since the reality is that they are the ones that dominate public institutions and domains. As a result, peace building missions and efforts have been a male domain – believed to be best resolved by adult men, who are perceived to be the custodians of wisdom and political clout. [...] It seems to me that this definition limits peace building to policymakers who are in most cases aloof and not in touch with the reality on the ground. The result is that young women are sidelined from being strategic partners in this sector.

It is important to understand that peace building and conflict resolution strategies should include young women because they clearly have a role to play by virtue of their unique experiences. They are young and during conflict times may miss out on education, get raped, become sex slaves and suffer other forms of violence that need to be addressed when considering sustainable peace strategies. It is, therefore, imperative for stakeholders to accept this and begin a process of development that will ensure young women's involvement.

When one reflects on young people and their potential, it seems that many times, they are viewed as having limited capacities to participate and interrogate issues of conflict. Their 'involvement' ends at the most basic level such as narrating who was involved in a conflict and how they experienced the conflict. However, conflict resolution has to do with more than this and involves techniques, methodologies, negotiation and diplomacy, which the youth and young women in particular do not have given society's attitudes towards women's intellectual capacity and also young people's perceived lack of wisdom and experience. Therefore, this leads to the perceived incapacity for diplomacy and thus exclusion of young women in processes of peace building. (Chirenje 2011, p. 69)

The new millennium saw a further unpacking of the women's rights discourse that had emerged in the 1980s and especially the 1990s, when Zimbabwean women organized jointly in spite of their varied approaches to issues. In the last decade, new differences and new stratifications were being articulated, or articulated in new ways, for instance, around age, religion, race, social and economic class. Young women were calling for more specific agendas and interventions on their issues. They pushed the agenda of sexual and reproductive rights issues; for them, it is no longer just about women's access to health, education and rights, but also about addressing complex issues of sexuality and sexual minorities that were not recognized by the movement of the 1980s as issues for public advocacy and lobbying. It is worth noting that while in the past it may have been adequate to raise the subject of women's equality as an issue on its own, with the new generation of young women it is has

become important to unpack the meaning of rights. Young women are pushing for clarification in the discourse on rights. If there is talk of violence against women, for example, the question is not just how many women are violated, but 'which women, where, how, and by whom'. Further, they have shown that not all young women are interested in politics and public participation; some are more interested in education or sexual and reproductive health rights.

The birth of a significant number of young women's organizations since 2000 exposes the energy and initiative of this new generation. Their activism and organizing cannot be taken for granted when considering the challenges they face to actively participate in society and policy-making. They want to be agents of change, but their social position does not easily allow them to participate and be heard. Young people are facing challenges with respect to employment, HIV/Aids, violence, etc. but their voices are not well represented in institutional spaces. Their calls for separate spaces for young women to meet, exchange, reflect and strategize, and for intergenerational dialogue that brings together women of different generations to share experiences and realities and discuss agendas and strategies. Donors have shown interest in supporting their organizations, but some young women also say it has proven difficult to secure resources for their work and activism, partly due to the fact that, because they are young, they lack a track record that can convince potential donors. The BUWA! Special issue on young women in Southern Africa (Kanengoni 2011; Changachirere 2011) displays the energy generated by regional networking expressed in the Southern Africa Young Women's Festival of 2010, the young feminist leadership course of the Open Society Initiative in Southern Africa (OSISA), and the Africa University in Mutare. These initiatives offer spaces for young women from different national, political, and socio-economic contexts to develop their engagement and leadership potential.

BOX 7 Regional networking for young women

Thatayaone Nnini wrote about her participation in the young feminist leadership course in Mutare in 2009:

It was then that I – for the first time – had a full understanding of where women's movements were coming from and the role that young feminists can play, and this after I had been part of numerous workshops, conferences and other fora that never sought to make my growth and understanding part of the core agenda! There was a sharing of experiences and ideas between the young representatives from different African countries and by the end of the course, we as young women had made some commitments to each other and to ourselves on what we would do in our respective countries.

At a young women's festival held in Harare, Zimbabwe in 2010, we had another opportunity to nurture and nourish each other as young women. From the exchange, it became clear to me – and to others – that a lot of work by young women was happening in some countries compared to others. Those who had done little were motivated, as they heard what others had achieved so far. All this was quite impressive as it was a systematic way of equipping young women with skills, starting with the courses on feminism from which to build a knowledge base.

One of the strengths of such a regional platform is that it brings together young women from a wide spectrum of experience – some who are leaders in their own right, others with experience of working in women's rights organisations or have some form of relationship with these and other networks, who are university graduates and have potential to contribute to the knowledge base through research and through other forms. (Nnini 2011, p. 76-77).

Mary Mutupa participated in the Southern African Young Women's Festival in 2010 and wrote:

I knew I was in the right place. I am sure many young women would have paid any amount of money to be part of this inaugural experience. Young women from 10 different countries coming together to share experiences and learn from one another is not usual in our region. In fact, it was the first time that a festival specifically for young women and organized by young women themselves had ever been held in Southern Africa! It was awesome to see and experience so much energy in the same space, and the results were explosive, literally speaking! [...]

'Some people have questioned the rationale for such a space exclusively for young women – the argument being why not bring all youth together or (if not all youth) women across the generations to such a space. The reality is that there is a dearth of such safe spaces for young women in the region to share their own experiences and learn from and encourage each other to engage in activism that transforms their communities. Youth-related spaces are often dominated by young men at political and social levels, and these hardly create platforms for young women to speak about issues that affect them. Yet the challenges of society in both the public and private spheres affect women disproportionately, and young women the most. For that reason, it is important to create spaces such as the festival for young women.

Another argument often used against such spaces is that young women lack experience and therefore cannot manage such a space without the input and guidance of older women in the movement and other 'stakeholders'. It's important to understand that young women may not have comparable experience but they surely have great ideas, potential and dreams that need a safe space to be unleashed and to be realised. As the festival brings together young women from across the SADC region, it means that there is diversity in terms of culture, both in personal and in work experiences. The festival is a perfect platform for promoting open societies because of its focus on building a culture of human rights and accountability. As young women share in these ideas and dreams, a space like the festival is open to cross-fertilisation of ideas that contribute towards developing strategies that strengthens activism in a more structured manner. (Mutupa 2011, p. 83, 85)

Social media activism

Social media activism is a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe, a direct result of the increase in technological advancement in the country. The uptake and usage of mobile phones was already at about 86% of the country's population in 2012, while internet usage was at 20% and growing (MDG report 2012). The increase in the use of social media has been directly linked to access and use of the mobile phone, which, for most users, has been the primary point of contact with the internet. Access to and use of social media tends to be dominated by young people. It is worth noting that they have embraced the versatility of social media not just for networking amongst themselves, but also use it for academic and business purposes, to share information and advance and advertise their businesses and enterprises. This, however, is a fairly new area, so very little has been written about the efficacy of these methods.

Against this background, young women have utilised social media to discuss topical issues as well as a form of advocacy. Several are using it to raise attention for issues the women's movement raises. They use SMS, or blogs. *MaDube's brainpot*, for instance, tackles pertinent issues for women in contemporary Zimbabwe (<http://madubesbrainpot.wordpress.com>). Others have created online forums to share experiences and identify and state publicly the women's agenda on various topical issues. Social media is therefore used to facilitate platforms where young women can engage and mobilize, often with their own resources, on issues on pertinent to them. A look at the Facebook pages and Twitter accounts of most of the young women activists in Zimbabwe show that they have used these platforms to raise topical issues with colleagues, friends and networks at almost no cost. The Institute for Young Women Development (IYWD), for instance, does not seem to operate a website, but has an active Facebook page, with posts providing an overview of their activities, announcing upcoming initiatives, and reporting on intimidation and threats their members face.

Social media activism is, however, still a new area with few actors. Two visible ones are **Her Zimbabwe** (see Box 8) and **Chocolate Princess**. Rudo Nyangulu-Mungofa runs the Chocolate Princess Company through a blog (<http://thechocolateprincessco.blogspot.com>). She states that Chocolate Princess 'organize(s) events and activities specifically for women to develop social environments for women to be empowered, network and express themselves'. Thus, while the company is designed to generate profit, there is also a clear intention to empower and mobilize women to better express themselves in demanding their rights in the public and private domains. This is noteworthy in that,

unlike the traditional organizing in the women's movement that made women recipients of aid, this new kind of mobilizing helps young women to discuss issues and be empowered.

BOX 8 Her Zimbabwe

Her Zimbabwe is an internet platform founded in 2012. Its purpose is to 'help to amplify the voices of women, in particular, by providing a space to interrogate popular and unpopular notions of a Zimbabwean, and feminine, identity' (<http://herzimbabwe.co.zw/about-her>). The site is popular with young women and others and has over 4,800 followers on Facebook since it tackles issues everyday issues, particularly those that are controversial and most in society would rather downplay.

Her Zimbabwe is managed by Fungai Machirori, and run as a non-profit organization. It works mainly through a network of writers based across the globe, who produce opinion pieces and initiate a significant portion of the debate. Over the few years that Her Zimbabwe has been online, it has become a hub for activity on issues affecting women by hosting online campaigns; for instance on ending stigma against women who are survivors of violence, or on sexual and reproductive health rights for young women.

In 2011, Fungai Machirori wrote in one of her blogs:

I started blogging in 2009 after I realised that a Zimbabwean media outlet that would not censor my views on important societal issues around sexuality and sexual rights would remain a dream for a long time to come.[...] In the last two years, I have posted 83 articles and received over 870 comments and 60 000-plus hits. One of my most popular blog posts is one in which I questioned societal and personal perceptions of the vagina. Needless to say, I believe that I have created a community, a safe space where women – and men – can freely discuss issues. [...] In the absence of diversity and non-conformist mainstream media views, many young Zimbabwean women are turning to blogging to discuss the issues that affect them.

She continued:

What emerges from this short investigation into Zimbabwe's women's blogosphere is that these voices belong to young, well-educated and opinionated women who are empowered – socially and technologically – to critically analyse their society, as well as their position within it. A question naturally follows from this observation; 'Does their discourse speak to the ordinary Zimbabwean woman, more than likely excluded from participation through lack of access to the Internet?'

In answer to this question, she quotes her 'fellow Zimbabwean blogger', Delta Milayo Ndou, who started her blog 'It's Delta' in 2009:

Ndou is optimistic and feels that blogging has created a platform through which women with access to ICTs can share the stories of those who do not. "If we were to wait until every woman had access to ICTs before recommending blogging as an empowerment tool, we'd be like idiots who do nothing because they feel that what they could do is too little," she says. "And idiots we definitely aren't!"

(<http://yfa.awid.org/2011/12/young-zimbabwean-women-bloggers-voice-roar/>)

While SMS and Whatsapp have the potential to mobilize large groups of women for action, these services have not been widely used for that purpose. WOZA uses SMS to mobilize women for its street marches. Social media could be used to raise awareness on topical women's issues and generate debate to inform policies through such services as 'bulk messaging'. Most mobile phone services in Zimbabwe have a bulk message service, which actors in, for instance, the health sector have utilized effectively to run awareness campaigns on cholera and waterborne diseases during the rainy season. The Traffic Safety Council uses it to send messages during public holidays or periods of congested travel on the national highways. However there is still limited uptake of social media for mobilization purposes by actors in civil society in general and women in particular. Win (2014) observes: 'it would appear that feminist organizing in Southern Africa has not quite modernized and is yet to find its new media voice' (2014, p. 34). Many websites and Facebook pages are not regularly updated, 'barely talk

to the issues of today', present limited new research or knowledge, or 'have very scanty material/information', and are not interactive. Win also points to some potential negative implications: apart from the fact that new media offer a space for sexism and abuse, there is also 'individualism, personal branding, and celebrity culture at the expense of the collectives of women', as well as the fact that 'anybody can now speak on behalf of women, about women, rather than rights holders or the women affected by issues speaking for themselves' (Win 2014, p. 35).

BOX 9 ICT and young women's organizing

For the article 'The potential of ICTs for young women's organizing', Jan Moolman interviewed Moreblessing Mbire, from the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRWCN). Mbire argued:

ICTs can help young women across the continent share experiences and learn from each other. It is encouraging to hear how others overcame certain challenges in their activism. Pulse Wire and the Association for Women's Rights in Development's (AWID) Young Feminist Network, for example, are platforms that we can take advantage of as they provide an opportunity for young women from different countries to interact. Pulse Wire often requests interested members to write about their lives and experiences in activism. This promotes a sense of solidarity among young activists from different areas....

[ICTs have] changed my perception about life. I have had an opportunity to exchange information with other people outside Zimbabwe whose experiences on women's rights enlightened me. It has been encouraging to have conversations on how ICTs are used in different places for mobilisation. On the different platforms I blog, I have received feedback on email which shows that through these fora, there is an audience that I have been able to reach out to. This has been my source of strength to keep me going ... Pulse Wire and AWID's Young Feminist Network help me meet like-minded young women ... I often get information on women from other countries and refer to it in my own work. (Moolman 2011, p. 94)

Economic associations and groups

The beginning of the new millennium brought grave socio-economic challenges for the vulnerable in Zimbabwe. The continued decline of the economy saw industry shrink and unemployment increase to unprecedented levels, pushing women, men and youth into the informal sector. Ironically, the government started Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, a large-scale campaign against illegal housing and commercial activities that was condemned by churches, the political opposition, NGOs and the international community for its harsh effects on the livelihoods of the urban and rural poor. The informal sector absorbed the majority of economically active citizens, and is now dominated by women (MDG report 2012). This economic decline generated a shift in gender roles; women, whose incomes from vending and cross-border trading are traditionally supplementary in the home, became the primary bread-winners in their families as most men lost their jobs in the formal sector, which all but collapsed by 2008. The activities undertaken include, but are not limited to vending, cross-border trading, small to medium enterprises focused on farming and agro-processing, small-scale manufacturing and processing, and, in recent times, mining and other land use, such as eco-tourism. Despite the fact that women make up the majority of the informal sector, and informal entrepreneurship has become key to economic survival in the harsh conditions of the Zimbabwean economy, there is little documentation on female entrepreneurs and their businesses. The few publications that exist are based on data of the 1990s or early 2000s, and the analysis is often economically framed and emphasizes individual characteristics and strategies (Osirim 2003; Mboko & Smith-Hunter 2009; Siziba 2010; Muzvidziwa 2012; Chirisa 2013). These publications shed no light on how women organize themselves collectively. This can be due to the low level of organizing around economic issues, but might also be due to a dearth of research and writing on these collective processes of organizing.

The rise in informal economic activities has led to a decline in active organizing through associations and groups such as trade or labour unions. Where, in the past, workers generally organized through

their professional associations and groups, the increase in informal activities saw a decline in formal organizing both for men and women. Survival became the key issue, and time for organizing was spent on work and related activities. Formation of and participation in associations became a luxury because time had become a scarce resource. Most professional associations and groups required subscriptions which were often high, which meant that the majority, who were being retrenched or losing their jobs, stopped participating.

In the informal sector, organizing has not been a priority, but does occur. It is more ad hoc and not as structured as in the formal sector. Within communities, women, for instance, organize through the creation of savings clubs and burial societies to help mitigate the challenges brought on by economic hardship. Around informal trade, women have, more often than their male counterparts, managed to organize. There is evidence that, at the grassroots level, where women vendors sell fruit and vegetables, they form working groups to facilitate transportation of their goods from farms to the various markets. In some instances, they have savings groups where they invest their small profits. These funds are also used to inject additional capital for group members or eventually apportioned among the members at the end of the year. These groups are rarely formalized, and the rules are agreed to orally, but often not followed by documentation. Integrity and good faith is what keeps members of these groups in check.

Those involved in slightly higher-level economic activity have also started to organize themselves. The push into the informal economy exposed women to different forms of organizing around survival. Attempting to navigate the terrain of vending and cross-border trade, women worked in groups that represented their interests in specific sectors. These were not formally established organizations. Rather, women coalesced in groups to source foreign currency for use in their travels, pool resources for transport and accommodation in foreign countries, or provide support to each other for such expenses as import duty and other taxes. In the early 2000s, women traders initiated the idea of cross-border traders associations and groups to address challenges. These included barriers to quick and effective access of foreign currency or passports, delays at borders, harassment by immigration and customs authorities, and absence of clear policies and procedures. A study by UN Women on informal cross-border trading recommended either strengthening the existing associations or creating new ones to address the specific needs of women cross-border traders (UN WOMEN 2008).

It would seem that women in small- to medium-scale trade and business do organize but the priority is on the relationships they build as co-traders rather than on the formalization of associations.⁽¹³⁾ The writings on the characteristics of women entrepreneurs, businesswomen and traders in the informal economy also provide clues on factors that affect levels of collective mobilizing. The enterprises tend to be small; one study observed that in the last ten years 'only a small percentage had grown in terms of employment and turnover' (Mboko & Smith-Hunter 2009, p. 158). Limited resources presented a major business challenge, and women faced barriers in accessing finance. Moreover, all women entrepreneurs experience a hostile business environment, including negative attitudes towards entrepreneurial women. Economic decline has challenged business operations, with more people entering the informal sector and thus increasing competition in a declining market with lower demand (Osirim 2003). Whereas it has been observed that associations can be important vehicles to address some of the challenges (e.g. Chirisi 2013), there is little documentation and research on actual collective action, except from references to female entrepreneurs forming clubs or groups to pool resources for buying stock, travel for buying imports, obtain and share information on market development, or share skills and competences (Siziba 2010, p. 77-78).

Recently, a new crop of groups and associations of young women entering the informal sector has emerged. These have grown up in an era when a formal job or employment is a dream, and they understand that, in order to survive, they have to participate in the informal business sector. They

¹³ A more formal, but not exclusively women-focused initiative is the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economic Associations (ZCIEA), which was started in 2002 and launched in 2004. It organizes all people engaged in informal business activities. It is a national alliance of 150 member associations that include market and street vendors. ZCIEA's objectives are to protect the interests of informal economic actors, develop their entrepreneurial skills through training, and mobilize resources to improve business.

recognize the need for collective lobbying and action while struggling to access capital at concessionary rates and facing challenges with policies and legislation that were designed for formal rather than informal business activities. To date, there are a few organizations set up by young people, mostly women seeking to participate in the country's economy, especially as Zimbabwe has set up various funds to encourage indigenous business activity. In addition to the larger women's associations, such as the **Zimbabwe Women in Mining Association**, young women have set up entities such as **Young Women in Development** to lobby for access to resources that are being distributed to businesses and other persons, or seek financiers that support access to capital for young people, especially young women, at concessionary rates. There is also a new trend, where former students' associations are being turned into business and entrepreneurship forums. However, because they are new, while there is a lot of anecdotal information on their operations, there is very little recorded about this particular group.

It is common knowledge that many women have survived through the informal economy, as well as that women, young and old, organize around economic activities. More informal than formal, and possibly at micro-level. Little is known, however, of how different groups of women organize, what their agendas are, how they collaborate, and what their strategies and dilemmas are. What do these less formal and more ad hoc ways of organizing mean for women's mobilizing? What new opportunities can they generate for women's collective action, and what constraints do they face? In what ways do these associations articulate a structural or feminist understanding of women's economic challenges? In addition to that, while this type of collective action addresses women's immediate concerns and constraints as informal traders and vendors, one can wonder how far it goes in terms of engaging with and confronting macro-economic trends that affect the well-being and rights of women and their families.

Other key economic trends in this respect are extractivism and related land acquisition that greatly affect the rights of the poor and excluded and of rural women. Women are largely excluded from the vast mining sector, either as workers or decision-makers, and so do not benefit from it (Moyo 2011; Mlangeni 2011; Win 2014, p. 22). The marginalization of agriculture affects women's livelihoods, and the expropriation of land in 'secret deals' robs women of their land. Moreover, what has happened to the rights of women to own or access land in the move towards private land ownership and titling (Win 2014, p. 20-22)? 'The struggle for women's land rights is no longer just about nasty local black men refusing to give their wives a share of the (poor, non-productive) land,' because land is taken by 'local traditional leaders, corrupt local governance and land administrators, military officers, as well as well-connected politicians or individuals based in capital cities... linked to so-called international or global investors' (Win 2014, p. 21-22). For these reasons, and

the violent nature of the military and locally connected elites notwithstanding, this is an area in which feminists can make a marked difference by actively researching, mobilizing excluded women and more importantly expanding the discourse on human rights from the narrow household/tradition arenas to the bigger economic policy and resource governance from national to global levels! (Win 2014, p. 23)

Win also observes that 'movements of women dealing with the extractive industry and its intersection with land and agriculture' are 'emerging' (2014, p. 23), but that the attempts 'to bring women into the center of the debates [...] have tended to be few, and scattered' (p. 22).

Part IV – Emerging insights

The women's movement in Zimbabwe has been challenged since the late 1990s by a multitude of factors. The way women have organized and mobilized has evolved over the past fifteen years. It is increasingly clear that the movement continues to exist and is partly redefining itself. In this last part of the paper, we pull out some emerging insights and reflections on the contemporary mobilizing and organizing of women. The rich history of mobilizing and organizing also allows for reflecting on strategies for transformative change, and on the role of the state in realizing justice for women. We also look at the shape and role of platforms and coalitions. We conclude with emphasizing the value of the multiple generations of women in organizing and mobilizing, and the heterogeneity and differences in the current women's movement.

We would like to stress at this point that these insights emerge out of a literature review and interviews with 'old' as well as 'new' organizations and individuals in the movement. These sources have provided a rich ground for reflection, but it also needs to be acknowledged that women's engagement with other civil society organizations, the role and position of the national women's machinery, as well as a deep analysis of the political landscape and struggles are critical to a deeper understanding of women's organizing and mobilizing. We were often only able to allude to these factors that merit further documentation and investigation. Put differently, the insights below emerge from our conversations with actors in (and around?) women's organizations and from what has been written and published, but we hope they can be supplemented and deepened by other studies and analysis of other factors and trends in order to generate a full-fledged analysis of the status of the women's movement.

Transformative change: the state, civil society and community mobilizing

In the first decade after independence, gains were made at the level of the State, especially through the enactment of legal reforms critical to women's lives. However, 'these did not reflect a consensus on gender relations within the country' (Ranchod-Nilsson 2008, p. 645). It was not a 'gradual realization on the part of society for the need of equity' but 'organized political action' that led to the legal changes (Seely et al. 2013, p. 439-440). The second decade after independence saw the development of a more explicit radical consciousness and a higher level of organizing and campaigning. Ironically, this decade was marked by a gender backlash, with the State reasserting the patriarchal social order, that intensified in the economic and political crisis of the 1990s and 2000s (Ranchod-Nilsson 2008; Essof 2013, p. 36). That political and economic context of crisis and collapse had large effects on the shape, form and effectiveness of the women's movement. The status of this movement in the early 2000s have to be 'understood within the context of an "increasingly shrinking space" for the civil society in general' (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008, p. 34).

This backlash and shrinking space raised questions about how to relate to, and what to expect from, the State. First there was a realization of the State as a dynamic entity, responding to challenges and contestations to power. Some argued that the backlash was due to 'growing authoritarianism' of the government, emphasizing 'the political mobilization of women in support of a de facto one-party state' (Ranchod-Nilsson 2008, p. 647). Another perspective saw the backlash as 'indicative of the movement's success in destabilizing the patriarchal base of women's subordination and oppression' (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008, p. 28). It argued that resistance was dynamic, and that the state responded to the challenges to the status quo with power holders seeking ways to reinstate their capacity for and exercise of power (Ranchod-Nilsson 2008, p. 648-649).

Patriarchy has reconfigured itself and the political will to meaningfully address gender inequality in Zimbabwe diminished rapidly, being replaced by the desire to regulate and control women both in the private and public sphere. This was done through the very sophisticated and powerful invocation of counter-revolutionary nationalist and culturalist discourses that tended to interpolate any women's organizing as feminist and feminism as being anti-nationalist, and pro-imperialism. (Essof 2013, p. x)

Indeed, the postcolonial state is not a fixed entity or a given, but a dynamic one which is under construction, reconstruction and constantly reconfiguring (McFadden 2005).

A second and related lesson was that the state was not necessarily part of the solution. In fact, the state is a site of struggle over power and resources. McFadden places the notion of postcolonial citizenship central in her history of women's activism since independence, and uses the notion of citizenship to capture 'the path [...] to becoming autonomous subjects, which a consciousness of rights and entitlements that enables one to demand protections and obligations from the state' (2005, p. 5). Women's activism developed from its state-sponsored origins to the recognition in the 1990s that the realization of women's rights was a structural issue, calling for profound transformations in the legal and governance systems. This would imply 'a more radical process' that 'went further than the liberal pronouncements and "negotiated" settlements with the state' (Mc Fadden 2005, p. 11). The experiences with Amendment 14 of the Constitution in the mid-1990s had already proven to the women's movement

the limitations, and sometimes futility of appealing to the courts for social justice, let alone for gender equality. [...] The problem with an overreliance on the judiciary to right certain wrongs is that the judiciary itself is a product of an historical process, with its own class and gender biases. This is more often than not inimical to the interests of women, particularly poor women. (Nkiwane 2000, p. 335)

Indeed, whereas 'feminists continually call upon the state to intervene and to protect [...] the state is not a neutral arbiter, though, nor are the courts as its judicial arm' (Nkiwane 2000, p. 337).

A third lesson was that legal reform does not do the whole trick.

The struggle for gender equality is more than a constitutional issue, and certainly more than a citizenship issue. [...] What the right hand has given, the left hand can take. [...] Gender equality therefore demands a variety of changes in both the notions of political legitimacy and the notions of social justice. [...] The fragility of women's rights in the hands of patriarchal institutions [demands ...] a protracted fight, especially by societal groups, for social justice and gender equality. This is the ever-present challenge for women and men in Zimbabwe. (Nkiwane 2000, p. 337)

Or, as one of the interviewees in Essof's work puts it: 'You can demand from the state laws from A-Z but it will not work, we have seen it. Our battle is in fact not with the law per se, but with patriarchy' (Essof 2013, p. 70). This recognition has implications for the strategies required to realize gender equality and women's rights. In her analysis of how women's legal rights organizations in Zimbabwe pursue a feminist agenda, Siveregi concludes that the strategies of these organizations shifted after 'having realized the incompleteness of simply advancing legal rights in circumstances where practical steps to attain substantive equality are problematic' (2006, p. 36). The effect of legal solutions on improving women's lives are 'compromised' by 'social issues'; and this has called for a broader set of strategies to realizing change, strategies that link legal reform with 'confidence-building, income generation and other empowerment and gender sensitization programmes' (Siveregi 2006, p. 36). The pursuit of justice and women's rights requires legal and social reforms, and includes both material and intangible aspects.

The realization of a protracted struggle and the limits of legal reform has implications for the relations with the State. The perception of 'the state as a monolithic entity' has 'exploded', to paraphrase Essof (2013, p. 69). She explains.

...the state is a highly complex and contested terrain, compromised not only of a president, but cabinet ministers, the legal system, law enforcement agents, constituted commissions, discourses, and institutions, which all come together to constitute it. But the state is also a shorthand term to describe a network of power relations existing in co-operation and also in tension with and against each other. (Essof 2013, p. 69)

This leads to a conceptualisation of the State as 'a multiplicity of sites' (*Ibid.*) which in turn implies that a range of strategies for change as well as different relations with different parts or sites of the state may or should be pursued in order to bring about transformative change. It requires a somewhat

pragmatic approach, in which one can work with the state selectively, but always aware of its limitations (*Ibid.*). This does not only count for the state, but also for civil society as a whole, which can be an ally but can also be exclusionary. Based on an in-depth study of four civil society groups in Goromonzi district, Mudege & Kwangari observe limited changes in the position of women resulting from the participation of women in civil society. Rather, they conclude that civil society spaces are predefined as men's spaces, and that 'without challenging the gender division of labor and resources, and social/community attitudes and perceptions, civil society may not realize its empowerment potential for women' (Mudege & Kwangari 2013, p. 258). In short, neither the state, nor civil society,

is ideal for the furthering of the movement's agenda, but both offer opportunities for engagement that need to be weighed and assessed strategically to ensure that women's agendas are furthered and not co-opted or overturned. (Essof 2013, p. 72)

Interestingly though, since 2000, several organizations have emerged to support women in politics (WiPSU, Zimbabwe Young Women's Network). This complements the legal and policy reform lobby and advocacy work. It also resonates strongly with the international attention for women's representation in decision-making, which became visible on the agenda after Beijing. In Zimbabwe's political history, capacity-building of politicians became a new strategy with the entrance of an opposition in the parliament. Apart from questions around the feminist agendas, values and leadership styles of elected women, and what they imply for the realization of women's rights, another pertinent question is whether parliaments and governance bodies are really the places where decisions are taken(14):

The locus of power has shifted from national/local structures to more distant and oftentimes invisible centers and actors; Washington, Beijing, or the HQ of mining companies based in Australia! Multinational companies, banks, investment bankers, shadowy business cartels. All these have been identified as the power brokers and power holders. It is also increasingly clear that in countries such as Zimbabwe, the military is playing a very big role in national politics. [...] in this context, women must interrogate whether their investment in women's political participation is targeting the right spaces. [...] It is hard to see how investing in getting more women elected into Parliament will alter the power balance in the country. (Win 2014, p. 10)

The results of the most recent elections raise new questions about the directions this politically-oriented work of engaging with women seeking or in political office will take.

The history of the women's movement in Zimbabwe is not only about engagement with the state, but also in community-based organizing. The positive effects of community-based organizing in terms of improving livelihoods or facilitating access to services are widely acknowledged, in diverse domains, such as entrepreneurship, savings and credit and HIV/AIDS. But community-based organizing 'transcends the mere function of providing finance', and 'opens the space for women to connect with each other within their community and with women in other communities in the city', allowing for women to 'begin to identify their collective issues and seek collective solutions' (D'Cruz & Mudimu 2013, p. 33). In the domain of reproductive health and sexuality, participatory processes have proven to be of critical importance in raising awareness and changing behavior (e.g. Damba et al. 2013). Community-based approaches have been key to 'open up and address difficult issues of sex and sexuality and women's rights and needs... for sharing and questioning everyday behavior both in terms of women's rights and of its implications for HIV' and 'to increase in confidence and solidarity between HIV-positive women, enabling them to challenge discrimination' (Feldman et al. 2002, p. 171).

Moreover, as we observed earlier, women are organizing in the informal sector, but the question is: does the informal and ad hoc way of organizing engage with the structural barriers to women's rights and livelihoods? Also, novel generations as well as existing organizations are using new social media,

¹⁴ See also the notion of shadow power, referring to 'the actors who operate behind-the-scenes or "under the table" to control public agendas, information and discourse, and to prevent alternatives – ideas and ways of life – from gaining ground and respect. Today, corporations and other non-state actors, like religious fundamentalists and organized crime, use both money and might to control policy agendas (often embedded in the state) and actively manipulate aspirations and perceptions about what is possible. In this way, shadow power uses invisible power – norms, beliefs, values and accepted behavior – to maintain control or reverse progress' (JASS 2013, p. 2).

but has this enabled large-scale mobilization and engagement of women? Movements around extractive industries and land grabbing emerge, but have not (yet) reached the level of fundamentally challenging those macro-economic trends undermining women's lives. And how much is known about these realities:

Perhaps what has hobbled many a women's organization is the lack of knowledge about what women's lives really are like and how women are organizing themselves! Case in point; in a country like Zimbabwe where somehow women have survived the catastrophic economic and political crises that dogged that country in the last decade. What the women did? How? What support structures they counted on? Many of these are still a mystery to the NGOs of old. (Win 2014, p. 39)

There are many concerns about how prominent community mobilizing has been in recent strategies. Rueben (2006) makes critical observations about the lobbying and advocacy campaign for marriage law reform that ZWLA engaged in at the beginning of the 2000s. She criticizes the way communities were consulted, and especially the fact that the consultation process itself did not empower communities to stand together and speak out. Her conclusion is that more explicit and articulated links are required between lobbying for legal reform and civic education and community mobilizing.

Win argues that movement building should go back to the basics:

The basics of political education, feminist thinking and analysis, how to talk to less educated and excluded women, basic organizing skills how to build genuine rights holder driven, led, and focused groups and movements, and communication skills. There is also need to invest in building feminist leadership skills linked to the aforementioned. Without strong individual feminist leaders then there will be no movements. And at the same time, these individuals must have the knowledge, skills and politics in CONSTITUENCY BUILDING. While the NGOs had their eyes on the elections etc. women were getting on with their lives and finding new ways surviving, particularly in urban areas where many moved into in large numbers. (2014, p. 38, emphasis hers)

Over the past decade, WOZA has been one of the most explicit and visible organizations emphasizing the vital importance of combining civic education and community mobilization. WOZA builds on the power of the collective, based on a strong belief in the critical importance of consulting and including grassroots women and the general population on the options regarding, and pathways to, various forms of transitional justice (see e.g. Ndlovu 2009).

Coalitions and platforms

Coordinated action has been key to the gains made on behalf of women's interests and needs in Zimbabwe from the first decade after independence up to the recent adoption of the new Constitution (Win 2004b; Hellum et al. 2013; Essof 2013). The Women's Coalition is an example of how the women's movement has organized and how that collaborative organizing has produced results. The success of the WCoZ in lobbying for specific provisions in the constitution, as well as pulling women's organizations together for this cause, is proof that women in Zimbabwe can organize and work across ideological differences. This is buttressed by the fact that, prior to the formation of the WCoZ, there had been other successful collaborations within the women's movement.

In the 1980s, there was, for instance, a strong linkage between research, legal and policy lobbying and activism, with research findings influencing policy-making processes and women's activism (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008). These included what could possibly be argued to be the oldest collaboration by Zimbabwean women, the Association of Women's Clubs (AWC), which was instrumental in creating the culture of organizing in Zimbabwean women from the village level, through church associations, and finally into organized women's organizations. The lobby against Amendment 14 indicated the role alliances play in coordinated action, and underlined the importance of unity of purpose (Nkiwane 2000). In the mid-1990s, the Women and Land Lobby Group (now known as Women and Land) spearheaded the campaign for women's rights to land to be incorporated into the land reform programme. This collaboration proved successful, useful in influencing legislation and policy on access to land by previously disadvantaged women. Another success story from that era was the Women and Aids

Support Network (WASN) that became a platform for organizing on issues related to HIV and Aids, including lobbying for legislative and policy reform. There were also other platforms created to share information; the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRN) became a hub for information on what various actors in the women's movement were engaged in, both in Zimbabwe and in the region.

Interestingly, feature of coalitions in the history of the Zimbabwean women's movement is fluidity: it should 'be loose, flowing, interactive' (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008, p. 46). By the mid-1990s, women's organizations 'came to constitute a loose network... despite initial atomisation', with complementary roles played by various bodies (Essof 2013, p. 38). 'The coalition which fought against Amendment 14 dispersed as quickly as it came together', but in the struggle against the *Public Order and Security Bill*, many of the same groups 'once again came together to speak as a united force', and again organized in the NCA (Nkiwane 2000, p. 336). The coalitions and alliances were marked by loose organization that allowed for rapid action. The strategy allowed organizations, networks and individual to come 'together in various configurations depending on the issue, disbanding and forming again in yet another constellation' (Essof 2013, p. 48). Networks and alliances were built and maintained in multiple ways. The need for continuous re-strategizing, and for identifying and seizing opportunities, is also evident in the advocacy and lobbying for a gender-sensitive Constitution from 2009 onwards (e.g. Mushonga 2011).

The experiences of early regional networks, as well as those of younger generations of feminist activists underline the significance of networking beyond national borders. Win observes that there is now 'a desperate gap in terms of regional feminist networks', and, referring to WLSA and WiLDAF, that the 'impact of the collapse of two strong regional networks [...] has been deeply felt in the region' (2014, p. 39). Regional networking offers linkages and space for developing consciousness and leadership, and also assists in linking to global feminist networks and activism. One recent regional example is Gender Links, a formal NGO coordinating the SADC Gender Alliance in its work on the adoption and implementation of a regional protocol on women's rights (see e.g. Made & Morna 2009). Another example of regional mobilizing and advocacy is JASS Southern Africa (Just Associates), working on holistic movement building 'to train and support activist leaders, promote grassroots organizing, and build and mobilize broad alliances'. JASS works in nine countries in the Southern African region, among which Zimbabwe, where they support the building of collective strategies of young women, sex workers, LGBTI rights activists and women organizing against violence (www.justassociates.org).

Networking among women's rights and women's organizations is obviously of first importance, but needs to be complemented with alliances with other human rights or social justice organizations, as well as mainstream NGOs. Effective strategies also imply the systematic search for those parts of and individuals in the government and ruling party 'who could support its causes', 'on a case-by-case basis' (Hellum et al., p. 44, 40). National alliances of women's rights organizations can also build on strategic alliances at the regional and international level, with civil society organizations and NGOs, and through the participation in meetings and conferences (see also Win 2004b).

Coalitions do not come without challenges. The Zimbabwean women's movement has experienced and is experiencing difficulties in working together, networking and coalition building. There were 'premature attempts in 1997 to consolidate this strategy through a co-coordinating body called the Women's Federation', but they failed (Essof 2013, p. 48). 'Although there were arguments in favor of a more formalized and hierarchical structure, the informal view prevailed' (Nkiwane 2000, p. 332), even though this informal and non-institutionalized coalition building had the disadvantage of quick dispersement. Obviously, the fissures and fragmentation resulting from the fast track land reform and the constitutional reform process around the turn of the millennium pointed to the challenges of coalition-building. There have also been diverging perspectives on the effect of the institutionalization of the Women's Constitutional Coalition, now known as the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) on the women's movement in Zimbabwe. Some were critical of how the Women's Constitutional Coalition evolved from a coordinating body into a separate organization that directly implements

programmes and competes for resources with membership organizations. Some argue that there has been a flawed perception that the women's coalition equals the women's movement in Zimbabwe and that non-participation in the WCoZ means not being part of the movement. Yet, even after, or amidst, those frictions, there was a successful lobby for the Domestic Violence Bill (Hellum et al. 2013, p. 40). The adoption of this law in 2006 illustrates how again 'the women's movement came together and worked in unison' (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008, p. 45-46).

Many generations

The contemporary terrain of women's organizing and mobilizing is populated by multiple generations of women's rights activists and professionals. These include the generation of activists who built feminist organizations in the late 1980s and 1990s, politicized the women's rights agenda in that period and mobilized to challenge power. This generation of activists, known as the 'Beijing generation', brought the women's rights discourse to the ordinary citizen, and got society to talk about gender equality. Some of these seasoned activists have since left the movement, and in some cases the country, for various reasons. Other women have moved into leadership positions in civil society locally and internationally, while others have left the civil society arena and have taken leadership positions in national government or politics.

The second generation of activists in Zimbabwe are the current staff of women's rights organizations. These include some of the individual activists from the 1980s and 1990s who have remained affiliated to or are working in the women's movement in various capacities, but the greater part of those in this second generation entered these organizations in the early 2000s. These activists inherited or took over leadership of the various women's organizations that were worn out by the challenges faced by civil society at large at the turn of the century, and in particular the unsuccessful constitutional reform process of 2000. This generation has contributed to the professionalization of some of these organizations, despite the lack of resources and the tensions of the national economic and political crisis. In some quarters this generation has been viewed as 'the least political', as it has concerned itself with professionalizing both organizations and movement. This generation also had to confront and embrace the gender equality discourse over women's rights. This is the generation that has sought to balance the radical feminist principles of the majority of the first generation and the need to achieve gender equality and therefore balance in society.

The third generation consists of the younger and novice but, not necessarily young, women activists, who are organizing themselves in newly established organizations. In this new organizing, where they would not feel accountable to their predecessors or bound by their previous ways of working, these young women activists seek to re-politicize the women's rights agenda. Their agenda tackles both the obvious political issues of women's rights in the public sphere, but also takes on the challenges young women face both at personal and public levels to assert their rights. This is also the generation that uses new technologies to push their agenda. These young women are also re-introducing the feminist politics of the pre-2000 era, for instance with respect to abortion or LGBT rights. They are (re)claiming and owning the feminist labels of the pre-2000 era that many activists had abandoned. For example, Katswe Sisterhood presents itself as a feminist organization, guided by its feminist charter. The organization, which started as YOWLI (The Young Women's Leadership Institute) focuses on young women and leadership; it seeks to address the 'sacred cows' issues' in the women's movement, such as bodily integrity for women, including abortion. Katswe is one of many such organizations created by young women who recognize the potential they have and utilize it to raise young women's issues without fear.

This generation is determined to challenge and also seek power, and not in the traditional ways of the older generations, but through the various tools at their disposal including social media. For example, the ZYWN a platform for young women across political parties to engage and network is created to facilitate the entry and participation in political and decision making spaces by young women. Young women have also created platforms where they train each other for leadership in politics, and also to

take leadership in mainstream civil society. Increasingly umbrella bodies such as the Women's Coalition now have young women in the Board, while others have taken positions in the male dominated bodies such as the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition or the Zimbabwe Students Union.

Young women activists do not enter a neutral space, but one marked by efforts and reactions to women's activism from earlier generations. These trigger reactions from both the earlier generations, and from other actors in civil society, government or society at large. Young women activists hence enter a terrain that is marked by diverse and sometimes incorrect understandings of the term feminism:

We are living in a time when feminism continues to evoke strong responses and even a backlash, and for many young women misconceptions about feminism mean that they would not openly identify with a feminist movement. Some young women feel that by labelling their activism as feminist they marginalise certain groups in their community who may not label themselves feminists and thus sideline these people from becoming leaders and/or advocates in their community. Other young women openly choose the identity as they feel that it is a way to start subverting the restrictions and impositions of socialisation on women. (Wilson 2011, p. 32)

Earlier and older actors in the movement have questioned the ways of working of the newer actors in the movement, probably because the emergence of a radical feminist consciousness and politics was and is so meaningful to their struggle for gender justice. They argue that the women's movement has been depoliticized when actors do not identify with any political framework, whether women's rights, gender and development or outright feminist. Or, as Chigudu observed in 2006

There are many organizations guided by feminism and other ideologies, beliefs and values. But there are also many other with no philosophical and ideological depth. In such organizations, it is easy to wander, get lost and actually replicate the philosophies that led to women's oppression. (Chigudu 2006, p. 33)

The argument here is that if one cannot identify with a framework for development and rights, then it becomes difficult for them to properly contextualize and locate their interventions in equality and non-discrimination. One woman in the interviews, however, remarked: 'the challenge with organizing in Zimbabwe, is you cannot just be an activist'. Whereas in the earlier days, activists could be feminist, loud and proud of it first before the issue, the newer actors have experienced the disadvantages of being labeled and dismissed both by rights holders and fellow civic actors when they have dared to be confrontational and political.

Recognition of the different generations in the movement enables the recognition of different stories of what happened, what is happening in the movement and how the challenges of fragmentation and disruption of the past fifteen years have had different impacts and meanings for the different generations of women's rights activists and actors. Different generations and differently located activists will have different 'herstories', need to be recorded and exchanged to ensure that the history of women's organizing is not told in one but rather multiple dimensions. There is no single story of the women's movement, rather the stories vary from generation to generation, also due to the different political histories they have faced over time. While the earlier generations in the movement concerned themselves with seeking the legal rights of women, later generations have elevated the fight to seeking voice and agency. Further, the socio-economic and political developments in the country also meant that some gains were lost, such as in health, access to education and the general poverty situation of women. This has resulted in the latter generation having to also address issues that were being addressed in the late 1980s and 1990s such as poverty alleviation interventions in rural areas. The political challenges also pushed some activists out of the country or out of civil society, thereby creating gaps in the leadership and appreciation of issues. Possibly the political and economic conditions of the 2000 decade, did the most harm to the women's movement in terms of fragmenting it, as women realigned themselves for survival either within the movement or government, and therefore having to adapt to the State in its form then or leaving the country to pursue professions, studies or just new lives.

Challenges to the women's movement

The contemporary status, and the future, of the women's movement in Zimbabwe has been the subject of much discussion and debate. In the early 2000s, a returning concern was that 'women's movements have lost their vibrancy and resilience, and are no longer as effective in representing women's interests in their counties, as they were in their formative years' (Masvaure & Wamwanduka 2008, p. 1). Essof also positioned her 2013 book *Shemurenga* in relation to discussions in the early 2000s, when 'some questioned whether women's organizing actually constituted a movement', others argued that the movement had been 'weakened ideologically', whereas others 'recognised a movement but saw it as weak and dismantled' (Essof 2013, p. ix). But it might be an unfair question to ask whether the movement still exists. Some have argued that it is unnecessary to discuss the status of the movement, and stressed that it is a movement, and therefore fluid. This implies that its status could not be fully appreciated by mere analysis at a particular time or point, given the various nuances of a movement.

This notwithstanding, there are varying perceptions of the movement's status. Some emphasize that the movement has become fragmented over the years because of the political polarization that has characterized Zimbabwean politics and society in the last twenty years. The proponents of this argument suggest that the movement has therefore been disadvantaged by the fragmentation as there seems to be no cohesion in the manner that the movement interfaces with women's rights issues, as well as among the key players. This group further posits that the movement is under threat of total collapse and seems to indicate that there is value in women's organizations seeking to work together as a collective for meaningful impact. The fragmentation in the women's movement does not necessarily have to be perceived as a disadvantage to the women's rights cause. Some see the fragmentation as a natural process in the cycle of any movement. The women's movement has undergone many cycles, as the historical overview in Part I also reveals. Women and women's groups have come together to work on a particular issue collectively and then disperse and revert back to their traditional spaces once that challenge has been overcome. Clear and separate identities of players in the women's movement can also be an advantage, as it shows that there is enough room for all the actors to work together on the various aspects of women's rights. In this light, the question of the status of the women's movement is redundant, because it presupposes that the women's movement is a single, homogenous entity when in fact the movement is fluid and heterogeneous by nature and constantly adapts to the constantly changing environment and issues. This raises new questions, as to which different ways of organizing and mobilizing occur, and how organizations work together, with constituencies and key power holders.

A key concern has been the issue of the professionalization of the movement. Increasingly women's rights' work has become an industry; a space in which women (and sometimes men) get jobs and they make a living, regardless of whether or not they believe in making a difference in the lives of the women they purport to work for. One interview informant noted that 'it is almost as if the organizations just exist to make salaries for a small group of women, whether or not their interventions make any difference'. The professionalization has been spurred by donor requirements and practices, and might have been affected by the survival mode that Zimbabwean citizens found themselves in during the crisis years. The focus on legal and policy reform of much women's organizing has also called for a legal and technical expertise in organizations, possibly at the expense of skills and engagements of staff and volunteers in constituency building and mobilizing.

That the women's movements have become so NGOized is not in question. Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with the NGO as an organizational form. What is problematic is the fact that most of the NGOs do not spend enough time talking to, and directly engaging the rights holders the women who are at the front line of whatever issues their mission focuses on. [...]

It is imperative that movement builders in SADC region invest a bit more time in generating knowledge about all kinds of women [...] The key point is that most of the interventions by women's NGOs are still largely based on old notions of who or what women are, where they live, and what they do for a living. The women of all three countries have moved, literally and figuratively. (Win 2014, p. 38)

It is the seeming lack of ideological direction of the movement that has raised questions about the relevance of the women's, young women's organizations and other actors working in the area of women's mobilizing and their significance to society, especially to the marginalized and so called grassroots women whom they purport to act for. As a result, women's and young women's organizations have largely been labeled 'too urbanized' or 'too disconnected from the people that need them the most' and generally existing to be self-serving. There have been questions about the authenticity of a women's movement in Zimbabwe, given that more often than not 'the movement' is perceived to be about a few women's organizations pursuing issues, ostensibly on behalf of women in Zimbabwe, without the mandate of the women they purport to represent. That a number of women's organizations also do not necessarily have constituencies they account to, in terms of reach and activities, has also raised questions of whether or not there is a women's movement; because the question is whether a grouping of women's organizations that work on women's issues, becomes the women's movement, by virtue of that work.

The professionalization is hence strongly related to concerns about the loss of political identity. Many of women in the organizations and movement is that, over the years, the women's movement has become depoliticized in the sense that most of the actors in the movement do not readily accept the radical or liberal feminist label. Whereas in the past, the women's movement had a clear ideological framework and grounding for their interventions, which was largely liberal feminist, this seems to have fallen away. A number of organizations and actors in the women's rights movement have moved away in recent years from acknowledging and or owning the feminist ideology and the women's rights language and terminology. In fact some of them do not wish to be publicly known or labeled feminist, sometimes despite the fact that their interventions maybe feminist in ideology and strategy. In a number of cases, women's organizations now work on issues without articulating how their work contributes to the broader goals of human equality, human rights, democracy or even just the greater good for society.

The realities of the past decade have been very different from the context in which the earlier generations organized and mobilized themselves. The terrain of action has changed, and in the earlier days, organizing was more likely voluntary and therefore required minimal resources to raise the voices and issues of women. With the political polarization of Zimbabwean society, women's organizing has become more complex and in some instances impossible. In addition to the challenges related to legislation regarding demonstrations, picketing and meetings, there are also real issues of having to deal with law enforcement and in some cases extra-legal groups that limit the operations of women. Another challenge of at least the past ten years is the ongoing shrink in the size of the global purse for women's rights mobilizing which has not spared Zimbabwean women. This stands in contrast to the earlier years when resources for women's rights could easily be mobilized and availed for women's actions and interventions. Nowadays, resources are more scarce, and those that are available are channeled to 'priorities' such as salaries and administration costs, at the expense of visible mobilization and public programme interventions.

In addition, actions of women's organizations have been affected by the expectations and standards imposed by donors. For example, a number of women's organizations have been encouraged to work collaboratively and receive basket funding. While this is convenient for funding partners and donors, it has compromised the individuality and therefore the mobilizing strengths of the different organizations. Added to this, organizations have also been pushed to work on issues that they may not necessarily prioritize because that is what donors will fund, at the expense of their mandate and therefore their opportunity to mobilize stakeholders. Moreover, resources are increasingly availed for very specific projects/interventions and leaving women's organizations, with little or no room to maneuver for around the broader issues that the movement maybe facing. This has impacted on the efforts at nurturing common ground amongst the actors in the women's movement.

Diversity as sign of maturity?

Against this bleak background, there is evidence that in its fragmentation, depoliticization and its inability to positively influence the women that need it most, the women's movement in Zimbabwe has survived and is able to resurrect itself as and when the need arises. New forms of organizing and mobilizing (see Part I and II) point to continuous evolution of the movement. Despite the challenges, the women's movement in Zimbabwe has defied the odds. It is increasingly stressed that it needs to be recognized that the movement continues to exist. In fact, it has continued to evolve and is partly redefining itself. The movement has in that sense moved beyond the stage of fragmentation and fissures of the early 2000s. This is not to claim that tensions or differences are no longer present, but that the story of fragmentation does not do justice to the current state of the movement, which has started to reconfigure. This underlines the dynamic nature of women's organizing and mobilizing, and the resilience of activists and actors to engage with gender inequality and strategy for change. The 2009-2012 constitutional reform process is one example, of how despite all the identified challenges, women and young women's organizations were able to come together and influence the input of the constitution for better gender provisions. One of the interview respondents noted that 'it is not important that the movement conform to labels and definitions, rather it is important to regard it as fluid and flexible to the various demands it meets; and it still delivers when it matters'.

In the post-2000 era, it has become clear that the women's movement has never been a single homogenous entity. Moreover, increasingly actors in the movement recognize that their thinking and values need not necessarily be fixed for them to be credible actors. Thus among the movement, there is no pressure for all the actors to believe in the same causes, with equal intensity. Rather, some see a growing tolerance of diversity of views, values and thinking. This means that while actors may not agree on an issue with its proponents, they may be able to offer solidarity; or in the worst-case scenario not antagonize an actor with an issue that they do not agree with. Thus the heterogeneity in and even lack of agreement on views, frames and strategies, while emerging as a challenge, can also be seen as a manifestation of and testimony to the growth and maturity of the various actors in the women's movement. That does not do away with engaging with critical interrogation of and reflection on the political discourses in which different actors position themselves, as such conversations and engagements would imply a recognition of feminisms in the plural. In that perspective, the fragmentation of the women's movement can also be seen a sign of maturity; the movement has grown into distinct independent actors with their own clear definitions and understanding of women's rights and equality ideologies.

Already in 2001, the critical value of diversity and difference for a movement were stressed. Reflecting on how the constitutional reform process of the late 1990s fragmented the women's movement, and observing that the sharing of a female identity did not prove enough to hold the movement together, Everjoice Win argues that it is key to acknowledge and recognize differences and diversity of values:

Recognizing and affirming difference, particularly fundamental difference, is a critical part of effective strategizing. It allows groups to negotiate and renegotiate the terms of coalition, and how far they will go with one another. (Win 2004b, p. 26)

This is crucial to ensuring that the Zimbabwean women's movement can 'coalesce once more around shared interests, with our sense of these interests made stronger by an awareness of the differences between us' (Win 2004b, p. 19). In 2014, she stresses diversity again:

A key conclusion [is] that women's movements do indeed exist, they are in fact movements, plural, not one single and singular movement as the question is often framed. These movements are diverse both in terms of their strengths and capacities as well as in terms of their visions and how they organize women. Such as they should be! Again in contrast to and firmly dismissing the notion that all biological females must agree with one another and must always work together around one thing/agenda. (Win 2014, p. 36)

The recognition and affirmation of diverse values resonates with concerns expressed about the philosophical depth of the movement and the organizations in it. In 2006, Siveregi positioned her thesis in the urge to understand and bridge the gap between feminist theory and practice, and pointed to:

The apparent paucity of feminist theoretical analysis and foundation for activist work as a major concern [...]. There is a disconnect between feminist theory and activism in Zimbabwe. (2006, p. 8)

Chigudu also observed that:

Women's organizations have not yet reached a stage where issues of differences are discussed openly and handled well. This often leads to infighting and antagonism within organizations regarding governance, succession and intergenerational aspects. (Chigudu 2006, p. 33)

Diversity then calls for solidarity, and the ability to come together when the situation demands. The past few years have shown that organizations and actors with their diverse identities have pulled together when they need to. This points to a more heterogeneous sense of solidarity, in which actors and activists can be and are part of a women's movement, without all being one and the same. It is not necessary to be one bubble in order to be able to team up and work together when needed. That does not mean deeper questions on values and strategies should be avoided; in fact, the diversity in the movement, in strategies, experiences, generations and so on, provides rich ingredients for sound discussions and building solidarity. This is key to effective strategizing, and offers a basis for new modes of coalition-building and collaboration that go beyond the image of women as a homogeneous group with identical interests and is focused on the realization of justice for women in particular contexts.

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