

## WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO DURING THE THIRD REPUBLIC

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### Abstract

Democracy as a form of government is based on a quantitative conception of the degree of citizen participation in decision-making and public management. This participation is understood as all electoral and non-electoral activities by which citizens try to influence the selection of leaders and their action. Any State that wishes to be democratic is dependent on the fact that its entire population participates in its construction without discrimination. This implies that the people should be invited to participate in political life in various ways, because a democratic society is a society in which the authorities respect citizens in their rights and dignity. It is a society in which citizens respect each other, in which the poorest and the weakest are helped and rescued. Thus, in the process of establishing the rule of law, the political participation of women is a major challenge in the quest for gender equality in terms of rights in the so-called "countries of the South". This is also the case for the DRC, particularly as regards the vote and the amendment of certain laws, including the law on the implementation of women's rights and gender equality and the revised Family Code. It is in this sense that, in order to bring itself up to date, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has ratified several international legal instruments relating to the specific rights of women, and also has the principles of gender parity in the Constitution in its articles 14 and 15.

**Keywords:** Islam. Religious Nationalism, and Indonesia.

### INTRODUCTION

In the DRC, the fifth paragraph of Article 14 of the Constitution of 18 February 2006, as amended and supplemented by Law No 11/002 of 20 January 2011<sup>1</sup>, enshrined gender equality in the management of public affairs as follows:

*‘‘The State shall ensure the implementation of gender equality in such institutions (national, provincial and local institutions)’’.*

These constitutional provisions have been hailed by most authors as a great leap forward in terms of the representation of women in public institutions. The adoption of Act No. 06/006 of 9 March 2006 on the organization of presidential, legislative, provincial, urban, municipal and local elections and the various revisions successively made to it on 25 June 2011, 12 February 2015 and 24 December 2017 gave him the opportunity. Given that political participation involves several activities, this reflection focuses its analysis on an evaluative study of women's political participation in elections in the DRC from 2006 to 2018. For a better presentation, this discussion is structured in two sections respectively devoted to the legal instruments relating to gender (I) and, Evolution of the political participation of Congolese women in electoral processes (II).

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### Gender-related legal instruments

In view of the widespread interest in gender issues worldwide, the relevant legal instruments are international, regional and national.

#### A. Regional and international

- The Declaration of Heads of State of ECCAS on Gender Equality, January 2004.
- The BEIJING Action Plan: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

#### B. National

- The Congolese Family Code.
- The Criminal Code (men and women are punished in the same way when the offense is established).
- The Comprehensive and Inclusive Agreement, Article 17 (appropriate representation of women at all levels and in all fields).
- The Constitutions of the Transition and the Third Republic (significant representation of women in the Institutions, consecration of the principle of parity between men and women art. 14 Constitution of the Third Republic).
- The Organic Law of the CENI (a good percentage of women for representativeness 30%).

In terms of legislation, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is governed by the Constitution of 18 February 2006, which not only advocates gender equality, but also contains provisions protecting women's rights, in particular article 14 on gender equality and the representativeness of women in institutions, and article 15 on sexual violence.

<sup>1</sup>Official Journal of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 52nd year, special issue, 1 February 2011

In the overall momentum of women's repositioning for development, the DRC has become a party to several international human rights instruments that also guarantee women's rights, including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 of October 2000, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 of June 2008, the Pact on Peace, Security and Peace development and democracy in the Great Lakes region, etc. This at the national level has had implications and has led to national policies and the drafting of texts that promote the involvement of women in national life. Only as mentioned above, these provisions are still deficient both in content and in fact. To be sure, there is a demonstration of the will of social and state actors to change the situation of women in a sustainable way. The translation of this fact is seen in the DRC, through the elaboration of national instruments for the promotion of women and gender and the increased involvement of women's organizations in these processes.

Formally speaking, some markers highlight this will, which is at least obvious:

- 2002: the preparation of the National Program for the Advancement of Congolese Women (PNPFC), adopted by the Government in September 1999 and implemented in 2002;
- 2004: the preparation of the Document on strategies for gender mainstreaming in development policies and programs in the DRC.
- 2005: the establishment of the networking offices of the focal points in Kinshasa and in the provinces, followed by the training sessions of the latter in gender approach;
- 2006: the enactment of the Sexual Violence Act;
- 2009: the development of the National Gender Policy.

### Evolution of congolese women's political participation in electoral processes:

Long before we get into the heart of this item on the political participation of Congolese women in the electoral processes of 2006, 2011 and 2018, let us recall that, given the situation as it is in the DRC, the participation of women in government or in local bodies remains a concern. Existing statistics for 1980-1995 indicate that the number of women holding ministerial positions was 16. The number of men and women participating in local bodies: in 1980 and 5 years later, it rose to 790 men against 24 women (1995). During the transitional period, the number of women and men in the Transitional Parliament and High Council of the Republic of the Transitional Parliament increased to 824 men against 20 women (1990 - 1993)<sup>2</sup>. One of the great achievements of the Inter-Congolese Dialog was the adoption of a transitional constitution that recognized the place of women in the Congo for the very first time. Women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had learned to demand more executive positions, using a range of international instruments, including international human rights instruments. For example, women had mobilized around the SADC Declaration on Women and Development of 1997, the African Union Declaration on Gender of 2004 and the United Nations

<sup>2</sup> UCOFEM, (Congolese Union of Media Women), Study Report- July 2017: "Curbs on the political participation of Congolese people, especially during electoral periods"

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It noted that gender equality was a special feature of the new Constitution. Article 14 of the Constitution provides for gender equality and equal representation of men and women in all local, provincial and national institutions. The same Article also provides for the participation of women on an equal basis with men in the socio-political, cultural and economic development of the nation<sup>3</sup>. How does this participation compare with the elections held since 2006?

### 2006 Electoral process

**Table 1. Distribution of voters by gender**

Gender	Number of voters	%
Female	12 562 989	52.6
Male	11 510 188	47.4
Estimated total	24 073 177	100

Source : CIS

The above table shows that women participated as voters at 52.60% compared to men with a participation rate of 47.40%. Whereas women were numerically the majority in the global population and constituted active and dynamic forces during electoral campaigns.

**Table 2. Candidates in the 2006 Presidential and Legislative Elections**

Total applications	Women Candidates	Men candidates
Presidential 33	4	29
100%	12.10%	87.40%
National 9.709 candidates	1374 Candidates	8 335 Candidates
Legislative 100%	14.10%	85.90%
Provincial 13 474 Candidates <sup>4</sup>	1 531 Candidates	11 943 Candidates
Legislation 100%	11.4%	88.60%

Source: Summary of the literature on the elections in the DRC

In the DRC, parity is a principle enshrined in the Basic Law. Despite this, it was found that in the 2006 elections, only 14% of the 9,709 parliamentary candidates were women. There were only 4 women among the 33 presidential candidates, as for the provincial legislative elections, 1531 women (or 11.4%) out of a total of 13,474 candidates. In addition, the situation was exacerbated by the adoption of an open-list electoral system rather than a closed-list electoral system that would have allowed political parties to exercise discretion and take affirmative action regarding the nomination of candidates. This was the case, despite the fact that women make up more than 50% of registered voters and were much more numerous than men during the electoral process. Women were not only weakly represented in the structures of political parties, but less than 10% of political organizations were led by women<sup>5</sup>.

*"We deplore the small number of women in the various political bodies, we welcome the fact that some of them become ministers, but the denigration and disqualification reactions are not long overdue for them as soon as they intervene..."*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Report of the SADC Parliamentary Forum Election Observation Mission, p.19.

<sup>4</sup> MABIALA MANTUMBA-NGOMA. P, Elections in the Political History of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1957-2011), Kinshasa, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung 2013, p.90.

<sup>5</sup> Mwembu Dibwe K, Problem of Democratic Principles in Political Organizations in the DRC, Graduate thesis in Advanced Studies in Political and Administrative Sciences, University of Lubumbashi, 2010, p.43. Inedit

<sup>6</sup> P. BOURDIEU, Political commentary, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, Lyon, 2000, p.29.

**Table 3. Statistics of candidates and elected officials by sex, 2006**

Gender	Presidential		National Legislative		Provincial Legislative	
	Candidates	Elected	Candidates	Elected	Candidates	Elected
Male	29	1	8389	458 (91,6%)	11943	589 (93,19%)
Female	4	0	1320	42 (8,4%)	1531	43 (6,8%)
Total	33		9 709	500/100 %	13474	632/100%

Source: Summary of the literature on the elections in the DRC

In the light of the data contained in the table above, it can be seen that the failures of women in elections have been very glaring and have thus caused their under-representation in democratic institutions resulting from free, democratic, transparent and independent elections. The second-degree elections were conducted by provincial deputies to select senators, governors and deputy governors. In the Senate elections, women represented 9.2% of candidates and 4.6% of elected officials (108 provided by the constitution). In the governor's elections, out of 76 candidates, there were 2 women (2.6%) against 74 men (97.4%) and in the deputy governors' elections, out of 76 candidates, there were 11 women (14.5%) against 65 men (85.5%). Of the 11 governors elected and the 11 deputy governors, there were no women<sup>7</sup>. In the transitional senate, for example, which was even more masculinized than the national assembly, there were only 3 women (2.5%) against 117 men (97.5%), while 120 seats were to be allocated. Provincial Assemblies had a relatively low percentage ranging from 0% (Maniema) to 18.7% (Kinshasa), and between the two other very low percentages, including: 2.3% (North Kivu) and 2.7% (Ecuador), to name but a few.

In the light of the reality on the ground in relation to the political participation of women in the 2006 electoral process in general, it must be said that the Act still contained provisions that contravened the DRC's international commitments and the Constitution, in particular in the Family Code, which regulates:

*'The wife must obtain her husband's authorization for all legal acts in which she is obliged to perform a service in person'*<sup>8</sup>.

On the other hand, the Law on public financing of political parties provides that in order to benefit from State subsidies, a political party must:

*'Take gender parity into account when drawing up the electoral lists'*.

However, this law has not yet been implemented<sup>9</sup>.

**Table 3. Territorial distribution of elected women:**

Province name	Total Candidates	Total elected	Women elected
Kinshasa	58	10	
Katanga	69	9	
Province Orientale	63	5	
Nord – Kivu	48	4	
Bandundu	57	3	
Equateur	58	3	
Kasaï Occidental	40	3	
Kasaï Oriental	39	2	
Bas –congo	24	2	
Sudkivu	32	1	
Maniema	12	----	
Total	1 374	500	42

Source: Synthesis of the Literature on the 2006 Electoral Process

Given the realities on the ground, it must be said that the Congolese political field remains a male world. The will expressed in recent political speeches on the fate of Congolese women by the delegates to the National Consultations did not fail to take a recommendation in this direction. The government was recommended to "require political parties to nominate at least 30% of women on each candidate list in constituencies with fewer than three seats, both nationally and provincially." Another recommendation is to "establish in the Electoral Act the system of co-optation of women in deliberative assemblies, like that of customary chiefs in provincial assemblies"<sup>10</sup>. Is this a matter of men's unwillingness to enforce these laws, or of women's own guilty silence?

### DRC 2011 Electoral process

According to statistical estimates, while the number of registered voters was 25,712,552 in 2006, the expected electorate in 2011 was 32,143,613, an increase of 20.56% compared to 2006. The actual electorate enrolled was more in the order of 31,817,075 voters. In order to participate in the electoral cycle of 2011-2013, there were 417 political parties, of which the most recent 100 were created between July and September 2011, on the eve of the submission of presidential and legislative candidates<sup>11</sup>. To be a candidate in the presidential election in 2011, one had to be of Congolese nationality, be at least thirty years old, enjoy full civil and political rights and have at least a diploma or have at least five years of professional experience in one of the following areas: political, administrative, economic or sociocultural. In addition, a non-refundable deposit of USD 55,000 was required. For the national legislative elections, the candidate had to fulfill the same conditions as for the presidential election, except for the age requirement of at least 25 years and the payment of a non-refundable deposit of USD 270 per list/candidate. Of the 31,817,075 registered voters, 18,911,752 voted, a turnout of 58.81%, with a total of 18,143,104 valid votes cast<sup>12</sup>.

**Table 4. Distribution of voters by gender**

Gender	Number of voters	%
Female	16 015 522	50.01
Male	16 009 117	49.99
Estimated total	32 024 640	100

Source: CIS

When asked to comment on the identity of the voters who took part in the referendum on the draft constitution of the 3rd Republic, the CENI revealed that there were 25,420,199 registered in 2006. Only 15,505,810 took part in the vote, of which 8,032,010 were women. This represented 51.8% of

<sup>7</sup>MABIALA MANTUMBA-NGOMA. P, op cit, pp.91-92.

<sup>8</sup>Art. 448 of the Family Code.

<sup>9</sup>Art. 3 A1.5 Law on public financing of political parties.

<sup>10</sup>Cfr General report of the work of the national consultations, Kinshasa, 5 october 2013, p. 9-10.

<sup>11</sup>MABIALA M, op cit, p105.

<sup>12</sup>Idem

female voters versus 48.2% of male voters. The mobilization of Congolese women was still evident during the 2006 elections, and according to the CENI, it must be acknowledged that Congolese women had acquired the status of voter, candidate and even observer. All these qualities combined gave him the opportunity to be elected to political office<sup>13</sup>.

UN Women's election expert Clémentine Sangana approached the issue with great reservations as follows:

*"It is true that women voted overwhelmingly in the last elections. In 2006, 52 percent of women had voted, and that meant that women didn't vote for women. In 2011, they exceeded men by less than one percent, or 50.01%, the same in 2015 for the election of deputies at the provincial level"*<sup>14</sup>.

**Table 5. Candidates in the 2011 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections**

	Total applications	Women Candidates	Men Candidates
Presidential	11 100%	0 0	11 Candidates 100%
National Legislation	18 864 candidates 100%	2.209 Candidates 11.71 %	16.655 Candidates 88.28 %

Source: Summary of the literature on the elections in the DRC

Compared to the 2006 election, the 2011 election had only two votes: presidential and national legislative. In terms of gender, it should be noted that no woman was able to run for president. Only one woman took the initiative but failed to complete her default registration of \$54,000<sup>15</sup>. While the number of candidates in the presidential election was thirty-three in 2006, eleven candidates (100% men, 0% women) were selected for the presidential election in 2011, i.e. one third of 2006<sup>16</sup>. As for the parliamentary elections, while in 2006 there were 9,907 candidates, in 2011 the number of candidates increased to 18,864 successful competitors (94% of the additional candidates, almost double the 2006 candidacies), of which 2,209 women or 11.71%<sup>17</sup>. Widespread unemployment and the privileges granted to national MPs (fine vehicles and high salaries) are among the reasons for political enthusiasm<sup>18</sup>. In 16 out of 169 constituencies, no women were candidates. All 16 constituencies have one seat and are located within the country. There are no mandatory measures in the electoral law that allow the effective presence of female candidates. It should also be noted that financing an election campaign is even more difficult for women who generally do not have financial resources.

<sup>13</sup>J. Tshibwabwa Kuditshini, *Elections and gender democracy in the DRC: Gender, political field and legitimacy external political power*, Doctoral thesis in Political Science, University of Kinshasa. 2010, pp.227-228.

<sup>14</sup>[https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/201710/Internews\\_DRC\\_WomenParticipation\\_French\\_FullReport\\_2017-10.pdf](https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/201710/Internews_DRC_WomenParticipation_French_FullReport_2017-10.pdf)

<sup>15</sup>Final report of the Carter Center, on the presidential and legislative elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo of 28 November 2011, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup>To be a candidate in the presidential election in 2011, one had to be of Congolese nationality, be at least thirty years old, enjoy full civil and political rights and have at least a diploma or have at least five years of professional experience in one of the following areas: In addition, a non-refundable deposit of USD 55,000 was required.

<sup>17</sup>The candidate for the national deputation had to fulfill the same conditions as for the presidential election, except for the age requirement of at least twenty-five years and the payment of a non-refundable deposit of USD 270 per list/candidate

<sup>18</sup>MABIALA MANTUMBA-NGOMA, P (dir), op cit, p.126. MABIALA MANTUMBA-NGOMA, P (dir), op cit, p.126.

**Table 6. Statistics of candidates and elected officials by sex, 2011**

Gender	Presidential		National legislative	
	Candidates	Elected	Candidates	Elected
Male	11 (100%)	1	16 587 (88%)	436 (90%)
Female	0	0	2277 (12%)	47 (10%)
Total	11 (100%)	18.864 (100%)	483 (100%)	

Source: Summary of CENI results

Compared to the 2006 election, which had a voter turnout rate of 52.6% for women compared to 47.4% for men, 12.10% for women compared to 87.40% for men in the presidential elections, 14.10% for women compared to 85.90% for men in the national legislative elections, and which resulted in 0% for women in the presidential elections and 8.40% for women in the national legislative elections after the election, the 2011 election appears to show a slight increase in the female turnout rate This is due to 0% of presidential candidates, followed by 12% of parliamentary candidates and finally 10% of elected officials.

## 2018 Electoral process in The DRC

Following the identification and enrollment of voters, the CENI published the election statistics on 6 April 2018, showing a register of 40,287,387 voters, after delisting 5,381,763 duplicates and 902,290 minors<sup>19</sup>. The president of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) announced this week in Kinshasa the end of the voter identification and registration operations.

**Table 7. Distribution of voters by gender**

Gender	Number of voters	%
Female	21 790 257	47.34
Male	24 234 196	52.66
Grass Total	46 021 454	100

Source: CENI

According to Corneille Nangaa, a total of 46,021,454 voters registered nationwide as of January 29, 2018, including 24,234,196 men and 21,790,257 women. According to the president of the Electoral Commission, these figures represent an overall achievement rate of 11% compared to the expected voters<sup>20</sup>. Corneille Nangaa clarified that the data provided is raw and will be sent to the processing center. The president of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), said that this file has as a major asset to present cleaned data before the distribution of seats, unlike the elections of 2006 and 2011. Cleaning has eliminated homonyms, illegible or non-existent fingerprints, invisible photos, invalid registrations, and multiple voters with the same fingerprints. At the end of all this work, the total number of effective voters is 40,287,387 people. But Corneille Nangaa warns that this figure may change after Congolese enlistment abroad.

Long before the analysis of the above table, it must be emphasized that there is a constitutional provision affirming equality between citizens, and in particular, in its article 14 and the principle of gender equality.

<sup>19</sup>Decision No. 007/ceni/bur/18 of 06 April 2018 on the publication of voter statistics by electoral entities

<sup>20</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/rdc-46-millions-d-lecteurs-enregistres-pour-l-lection-p>

**Table 8. Candidates for Presidential and Legislative Elections**

Total applications		Women Candidates	Men Candidate
Presidential	21 Candidates 100%	1 Candidate 4.70%	20 Candidates 95.30%
National Legislation	15 276 Candidates 100%	1786 Candidates 12%	13 490 Candidates 88.30 %
Provincial Legislation	19640 100%	2 313 12%	17 327 88.20%

Source: Summary of the literature on the elections in the DRC

However, statistics from the final lists of candidates show that women were less than 3%<sup>21</sup>:

### Applications

- Only 1 woman out of 21 presidential candidates, or 4.76%;
- 1 786 candidates out of a total of 15 276 candidates, i.e. 11.48 per cent in the national parliament;
- 2 313 candidates out of a total of 19 640 candidates, or 11.68% in provincial legislative elections.

### Provisional Results

- Presidential: 0 women elected, i.e. 0%;
- National legislation: 50 women out of 485 elected national deputies, or 10.30%;
- Senatorial: 19 women elected out of 100 senators, or 19%.

According to MOE SYMOCEL, these low percentages of women candidates are due to insufficient implementation by political parties that do not comply with Article 13 of the Electoral Law requiring them to take into account the representation of women and persons with disabilities when drawing up lists. The Mission notes, however, that, while promoting the participation of women, these provisions of article 13 of the Electoral Act also constitute a step backwards in relation to the constitutional acquis of gender parity for access to positions of political responsibility. This is because it introduces the concept of representation of women in the drawing up of electoral lists, instead of the concept of parity.

This contradiction is all the more important because the Law on Gender Equality provides for "reserving at least 30% of positions of responsibility for women" in national institutions. The Mission also noted that the reforms introduced by the new Electoral Law of 2017 do not promote equal participation of women and men in decision-making bodies. The requirement of a threshold of representativeness has led political parties to regroup, thereby thwarting the inclusion of women candidates. In the same vein, the introduction of the letter of consent of candidates and nomination of parties/groupings has further disadvantaged female candidates. Since few women are party leaders and most party leaders - mostly men - have run for office, the opportunities for women candidates have been reduced. Finally, the increase in the application fee may have contributed to discouraging women from applying, given the limited financial resources of most women. These fees are 160,000,000 FC (equivalent to 100,000 USD) for the Presidential Office, 1,600,000 FC (equivalent to 1,000 USD) per seat for the National Assembly and 1,000,000 FC (or 625 USD) per seat for the Provincial Assembly.

<sup>21</sup>Synergy of Citizen Election Observation Missions (SYMOCEL), Final Report of the 2018 and 2019 direct and indirect elections observation in the DRC.

Socio-cultural factors, family responsibilities, the environment within political parties and in public life, as well as women's personal equations, also underlie the low representation of women. For the national legislative elections, 73 political parties or groupings submitted lists of candidates, for a total of 15,276 candidates, including 116 independents<sup>22</sup>. Women represent 1,786 of these applications, or 11.7%. The five political parties/groupings with the most candidates of both sexes were AFDC-A (493), AAB (488), MLC (482), ADRP (478) and AABC (471). It should be noted that 27 parties/groupings have lined up at least 300 candidates across the country. The highest percentages of women are reached respectively by RASSOP (17% of their 442 candidates), FUPA (16% of the 326 candidates aligned), REP and allies (14% of the 359 candidates aligned), PRP (14% of the 394 candidates aligned), and PPRD (14% of the 392 candidates aligned). In absolute numbers, the parties/groupings that aligned the highest numbers of women were RASSOP (76), AFDC-A (60), ADRP (59), PALU and allies (57), and PRP (54). It should be noted that all these political parties/groupings come from the majority in power (FCC platform). When responding to the questionnaire, the majority women stated that their bonds had been paid by their parties/groupings, which may explain this result. They hoped to receive funds from their parties/groups to fight their election campaigns.

Nationally, four parties/groupings have scrupulously complied with the law on parity by aligning women for 50% or more of their candidacies. Among them, two parties put up only one candidate in total, so they reached a total of 100% women (LIDEC and CRC). A third candidate (MIS) nominated three candidates including two women (67%) and a fourth candidate (MPR) nominated two candidates including one woman (50%). The provinces with the highest rates of candidate alignment are: Kinshasa (18% of the 2,556 candidates) and Haut Katanga (17% of the 935 candidates). These two provinces also had the highest number of women candidates, followed by North Kivu with 152 women out of 1,419 candidates aligned. The provinces with the lowest percentages are respectively North Ubangi (5% of the 185 candidates) and Kasai (6% of the 512 candidates). Maniema (a province with a large Muslim population) stood out with 33 women out of 388 candidates, or 8.5%<sup>23</sup>. In the provincial legislative elections, 107 political parties/groupings across the country nominated a total of 19,638 candidates, including 2,313 women candidates for 715 seats in the 26 provinces. Of the 107 political parties/groupings, 30 registered more than 300 candidates in

<sup>22</sup>The CENI grouped all candidates who did not have a political party or grouping into an "independent" category."

<sup>23</sup>NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE (NDI), « Parity in DRC: A target not yet reached, Analysis of female candidates on party lists: political groupings at national level and in three provinces: Kinshasa, Haut-Katanga and Nord-Kivu », With the Consortium of Women's Organizations for Women's Political Participation, January 2019

provincial legislative elections. It is worth noting that the parties/groupings that lined up the most candidates were also the ones that lined up the most women. Twenty parties/groupings aligned 50 or more women across the national territory. With regard to the alignment of candidates by province, it is noted that Kinshasa is the leader (349 or 17% of the candidates aligned). However, in terms of percentage, the province of Katanga had 233 women, or 20% of the candidates aligned<sup>24</sup>. The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) published on Friday, March 15, the results of the elections of senators in 24 provinces out of the 26 in the DRC. Of the 100 senators elected, 19 are women. This figure is up from the previous legislature, which had only 5 women senators<sup>25</sup>.

The province of Tanganyika has sent the most women to the Senate. Of the four elected, three are women. The provinces of Upper Katanga, Central Kasai, Kwango and Kwilu each sent two female senators to the upper house of Parliament. Upper Lomami, Kasai, Kinshasa, Kongo-Central, Mongala, South Ubangi, and Tshopo will also have a representative for each of these provinces in the Senate. Other provinces, however, have seen men take all the senators' posts. No women were elected. As in the provinces of Ecuador, Haut-Uele, Ituri, Kasai-Oriental, Lomami, Lualaba, Maniema, Nord-Ubangi, Sankuru, Sud-Kivu and Tshuapa. Kinshasa, which has 8 seats, has only one senator. Compared to a previous legislature in which the Senate had only five women senators, the upper house of Parliament elected in 2019 has almost quadrupled the number of women elected. The current Senate will therefore have 19 senators, pending the holding of senatorial elections in North Kivu and Mai-Ndombe<sup>26</sup>. Unfortunately, of the 24 provinces in the DRC, only 2 women applied for the position of Governor. They are Eve Bazaiba for the province of Tshopo and Marie-Claire Kengo daughter of the former President of the Senate, Leon Kengo who applied for the province of North Ubangi. And 12 women as running mates<sup>27</sup>. So of all these women, none was elected. Once again, women have not been well represented in this race to the governorate at a time when parity is being advocated at all levels. Many women politicians talk about financial reasons, especially as the MPPs demand a bribe from the candidate governor. Corruption is rife among the leaders of candidate senators and governors. Several candidates who have applied for the Senate and the governorate have denounced what they call the corruption to which some provincial deputies are accustomed, thus causing some to withdraw their candidacy.

## Conclusion

We will therefore note from this evaluation study that, during the 2006-2007 electoral cycle, CENI recruited 52.6% of women and registered 4 out of 33 women candidates in the presidential election, which represented 12%; and in the National Assembly, there were 44 women elected, or 8.4%, and 5 women in the Senate, or 4.6%. Provincial Assemblies have not escaped this under-representation of women: out of a total of 5,955 files received, only 64 were for women candidates, 8.63%, and out of the 632 elected provincial

deputies, only 43 were women, or 6.8%. No woman elected Provincial Governor of the 15 files filed by women out of a total of 156 candidates Provincial Governors. In 2011, the situation did not improve, with women enlisted by CENI at voter registration accounting for 49.7%. There were no women candidates in the 2011 presidential elections; of the 13,197 candidates for the national legislative elections, only 1,415 were women candidates, a rate of 11%. And in December 2018 and March 2019, women enrolled represented 51%, for a total of 20,549,430 women; and there was only one female candidate out of a total of 21, or 4.7%, and out of 15,355 candidates for the national deputation, 1,795 (11.7%) concerned women and there were 49 women elected, or 11%. The current Senate has 19 women, or 29%. In the provincial legislature, 2,319 applications were registered for women, or 11% of a total of 19,640 applications registered. Our PAs have so far elected 73 provincial MPs, two female provincial Assembly presidents, and no female provincial governor. This table shows the paradox between the rate of potential women voters and those actually elected for their participation in the DRC's political institutions. There is an urgent need not only to sensitize women to their participation in municipal and local elections, as well as in future elections (2023 cycle), but also to mobilize and invest to increase their representation in institutions.

The reality on the ground is that the political scene remains overwhelmingly male. The DRC's political landscape is dominated by men. Women are struggling to find a place despite some progress in recent years and their demographic weight at national level. For women who want to get involved in politics, they have to overcome a number of barriers to getting involved. The obstacles identified are of various kinds. Some are inherent to women themselves, such as lack of self-confidence, while others are related to the sociocultural environment in which women live. As regards the obstacles caused by the environment, mention was made of the lack of solidarity between women, of cultural constraints which would confine them to secondary roles, and above all of poverty which does not enable women to have the means to achieve their ambitions<sup>28</sup>. Despite these obstacles that would explain the low representation of Congolese women in elections, many women do not disarm and their involvement in political life is explained by various reasons: among other things, the desire to be among those who decide on the country's path and future, to contribute to the fight for gender equality and the protection of women's human rights, to improve its leadership capacities through numerous training courses and also to the practice of power.

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