Chapter 3

# Political Dis–Empowerment of Women by ICTs:
## The Case of the Zambian Elections

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores how bloggers in two Zambia online publications represent women politicians and how interlopers 'frame' such politicians so as to exclude them from the public spaces. It argues that although ICTs are generally thought to be facilitators of women's empowerment, they can also be used to dis-empower the women with the full utilisation of cultural or religious frames and practices. It is further said that ICTs have both a positive and negative edge to them and thus should be used much more carefully.*

## INTRODUCTION

Shortly after the 50th anniversary of Zambia's independence in October 2014, its President Michael Sata died in a London hospital after a long illness. Inevitably, this sparked-off an intensive and bitter struggle for power both within and outside the ruling Patriotic Front (PF) party.

Sata was an acerbic, caustic, ascorbic and sharp-tongued personality who almost individually founded the PF in 2008 after breaking away from the then ruling Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) party which was then led by Frederick Chiluba. Sata, who was until then the second most powerful man in the MMD government as its Chief Executive and Secretary General, left the Chiluba cabinet when he was over- looked by Chiluba during the succession process.

Chiluba preferred his protégée who later became Zambian president Levy Mwanawasa. Sata was in the lurch and thus he went on to bid for the presidency from a nascent PF party that initially had only one Member of Parliament.

Sata subsequently lost three elections to the MMD before, thanks to his tenacity and populist appeal, emerging victorious by defeating his former party in 2011. He became Zambia's 5th president while his medical doctor wife, Dr. Christine Kaseba-Sata became the nation's first lady. Sata died within three years of taking office, an occurrence that propelled Kaseba into positioning herself as a contender to the presidential office.

That aside, but in line with the national constitution, Zambia was led in interim capacity by vice president Dr. Guy Scott, who although being the founding member and Sata's deputy in the PF and Zambia, he was constitutionally disqualified to bid for the presidency because of his Scottish origins.

Nonetheless, the white Oxford educated Scott oversaw the three-month transition period from the benches during intra-PF party and inter-party political tussles. In January 2015 Scott gracefully handed over power to his Defence and Justice Minister, lawyer Edgar Lungu, who months before was a mere junior minister in Scott's Vice presidential office. Lungu had won the election narrowly with a one per cent margin.

However, Kaseba's ambitions did not go far. Her candidature crumbled and fizzled out within weeks of the announcement. This chapter is not overly concerned with whether or not Kaseba should have stood for the leadership of her husband's PF party, but rather how she and the other woman politician Silvia Masebo, were treated by internet-based media institutions after taking what some people may have considered as controversial political positions.


## BACKGROUND

Zambia is a land-linked country at the northern end of the heart of southern Africa. At independence, some 50 years ago, it had about 4 million inhabitants. Today there are 13 million people. Out of these about 51 per cent (or 6.6 million) are women and about 2.5 million are youths between the ages of 15 and 35. Among the youths,

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