



**National Association
Of Non-Governmental
Organisation**

**EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE LEGISLATURE
IN THE INVESTING IN CHILDREN CASE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE
CHILD SENSITIVITY OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

JANUARY 2017 - JUNE 2017

Background

The National Association of Non-Governmental Organization with support from Save the Children and UNICEF has been implementing a Child Friendly National Budget Initiative (CFNBI). The main objective of the CFNBI is to increase the level of and spaces for child participation in democratic development processes mainly policy planning and budgeting. The initiative has been lobbying for increased public-sector investment in child friendly sectors such as education, health, child protection and social safety among others. Cognizant, of the role parliamentarians, play in providing oversight on policy and legislative development and public expenditure management, Members of Parliament were engaged in a bid to sensitise and lobby them to champion child friendly policies and expenditures. The engagement process involved building the capacity and sensitization of parliamentarians so that they can effectively debate and lobby for the progressive realization of child rights. National Assembly debates, which are sensitive to the development issues of children, are paramount in pushing for reforms, which are critical in creating a nation, which provides children an opportunity to attain their full capacities.

Currently, the child development issues are fragmented within various ministries coordinating piecemeal child development issues. These include the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Health and Child Care, Ministry of Home Affairs amongst others. Thus, lack of a clear institutional framework which can act as a one stop shop for child development issues creates gaps which the Parliament should address as they carry out their work.

The national budget plays a pivotal role in guaranteeing present and future development opportunities for children. As such, the commitment of the government to enhance child development is demonstrated through the development of child friendly policies and expenditures. One of the critical roles of Parliament is to pass/approve the national budget. Over the past ten years the issue of child poverty has been steadily getting prominence in the development discourse with more emphasis on child participation, public expenditure, child rights and investment in children. Debate on ring fencing national income for investing in children has been also getting more prominence in policy dialogue and debate in parliament.

The limited fiscal space which span for more than a decade now has justified more need for advocacy and lobby to ring fence public expenditure for child friendly programmes and projects. This tight fiscal space which the country has been facing over the past years has resulted in the recurrent expenditures taking a huge proportion of the national budget of up to 92%.

Role of Parliament in Child Development

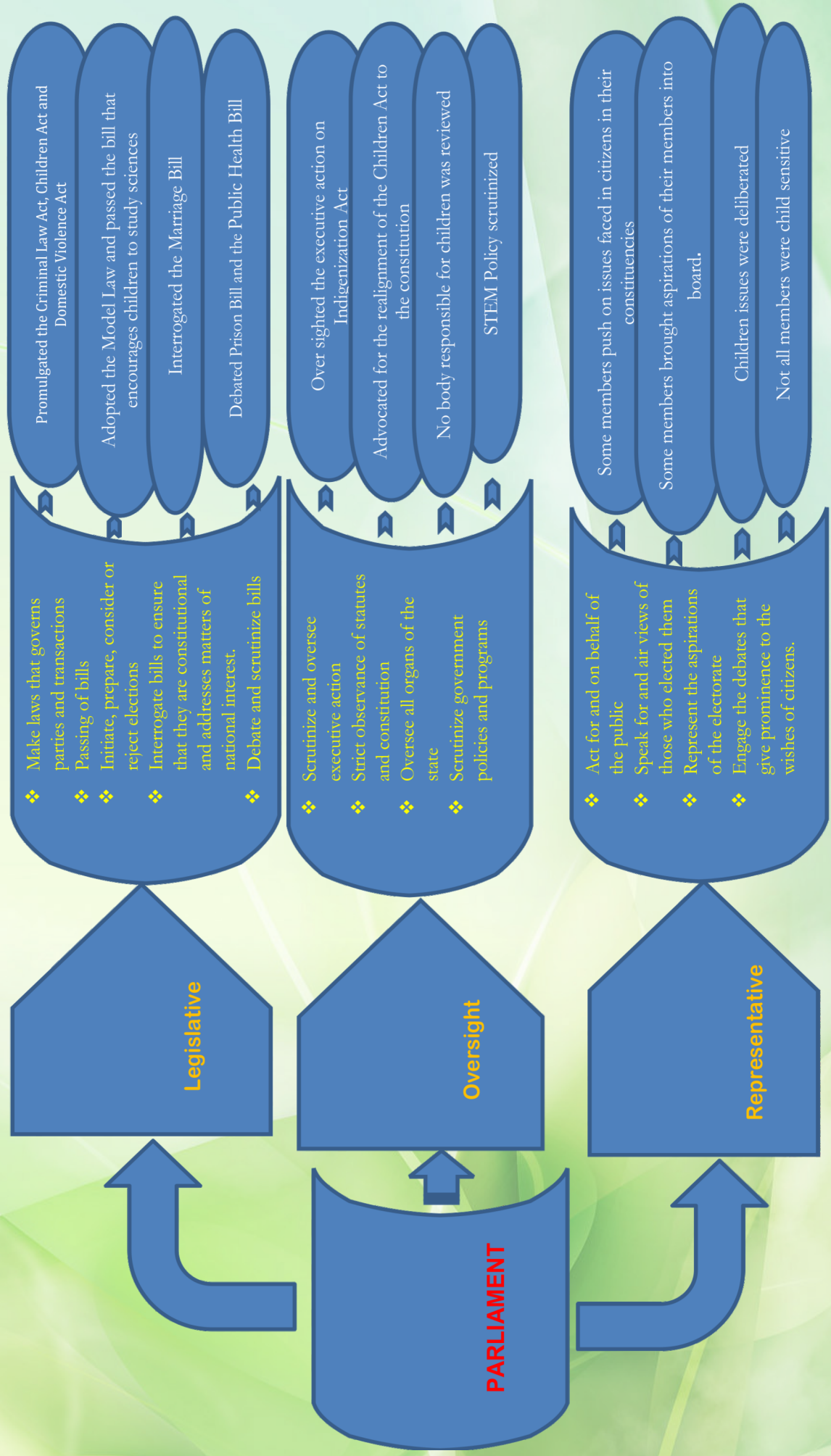
Parliament has clear roles, which are critical in advancing child development if the Honourable Members of Parliament are sensitive to child development issues. The broad roles of parliament are legislative, representational and oversight as well as judicial to some extent.

Diagram 1: The roles and mandates of the National Assembly

What are the roles?

What is expected?

What have been done?



Through these core functions parliament provides a mechanism for consent to taxation and control of public expenditure, debate on government policy and legislation and scrutiny of government administration. The constitutional mandates of Parliament are covered in the Constitution of Zimbabwe that was passed by Parliament of Zimbabwe on the 15th of May 2013. Diagram 1 shows the roles of the National Assembly, what is expected of them in line with the specified roles and subsequently what have been done within the analysed period of January 2016 – June 2016.

Challenges faced by children in Zimbabwe

The issue of Child Development in Zimbabwe continues to stick out like a sore thumb. Most children in Zimbabwe face a myriad of problems such as abuse, child marriages, drug abuse, forced labour, trafficking and sexual exploitation. It is against these experiences that there is need for the country to adopt measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child. Some of the major challenges faced by children are as follows:

- 1) Nearly one out of every two inhabitants live below the poverty line. Children bear brand of poverty. Their rights to basic education and health amongst others remain by and large unrealized. (Source: <https://www.humanium.org/en/zimbabwe>)
- 2) The infant mortality rate, though not fully documented, is exceptionally high. Zimbabwe infant mortality rate was at level of 46.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015. (Source: <https://knoema.com/atlas/Zimbabwe/Infant-mortality-rate>)
- 3) Many families, particularly those in rural regions, are forced to use polluted non-potable water with children having to travel long distances to fetch water.
- 4) More than a third of all Zimbabwean children under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition. (Source: <http://zimhealth.org/news/health-in-zimbabwe>)
- 5) The situation of imprisoned minors in Zimbabwe is deplorable. Children are detained in the same cells as adults. In addition to being harassed and abused by their fellow inmates, they are also subjected to violence. (Source: <https://www.humanium.org/en/zimbabwe>)
- 6) In Zimbabwe, more than a quarter of young girls are forced to marry before they reach the age of 18. Parents prepare them from a very early age for life as a child bride. However, these marriages often have deleterious consequences for the health of these young girls who do not understand what marriage entails. (Source: <https://www.humanium.org/en/zimbabwe>)
- 7) In Zimbabwe, more than a quarter of all births are not officially reported. Thus, these unregistered children possess neither an official identity nor a nationality. Such individuals do not officially exist. In the eyes of society, they are invisible and will never be able to enjoy their rights. (Source: <https://www.humanium.org/en/zimbabwe>)

Analysis of the Child Sensitivity of National Assembly debates for the period January 2016 – June 2016

This section analyses the debates and issues, which were discussed in the National Assembly for the period January 2016 to June 2016. The aim is to see how child sensitive the parliamentary debates are and which Members of Parliament are sensitive to children issues and also the frequency in which children issues are deliberated. The roles of the parliament, that is, representatives, legislative and oversight are critical in advancing child development.

This edition looks at the child development issues, which were debated by Members of Parliament for the period January 2016 to June 2016. This will give an appreciation of how the parliament push for child development issues taking into account the critical role which parliament plays in oversight, legislation and representation. The analysis is done through an in-depth study of the Hansard. The main child development issues, which were deliberated upon during the session conducted between January 2016 – June 2016 are as follows Child Labour, Child Marriage, Social Protection, Child Rights, Child Birth Certificate Registration Act, Child Abuse and Child Education.

The analysis highlights key child development issues through depiction of motions where such issues were discussed in the National Assembly and explore contributions on Child Development that are made during debates. Additionally, the analysis also reflects on the nature of child development issues, which emerged during the discussions. Further, frequency of key issues discussed is taken into account in trying to see whether the Members of Parliament are responsive enough to children issues. As a way of applauding and appreciating Members of Parliament who are so sensitive to children issues, this analysis also looked at members who frequently and consistently push for child development issues and also the demographic composition of such members. The analysis also focuses on whether the members argue for and/or against proposals that are brought forward for Child Development during their sessions.



Picture: Children in rural areas of Zimbabwe Photo by UNICEF (2016)

Unpacking the debates for the period January 2016 – June 2016 Sessions conducted within the period

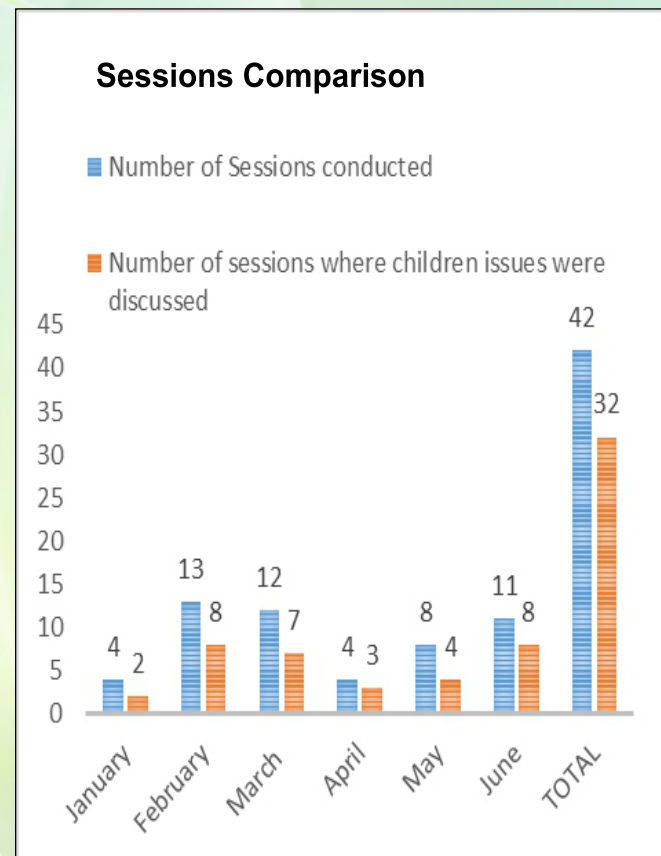
There were 48 sessions conducted within the period and children issues were deliberated in 38 sessions, that is, 79.2 percent. Considering this statistic, it shows that the Members of Parliament were sensitive to child development issues during the period under review. However, what is most critical is the depth and impact of the issues discussed and also the implementation and practicality of the issues that promote child development. Table 1 below shows number of sessions conducted on monthly basis, the number of sessions where children issues were discussed and key children issues deliberated on that particular month.

Table 1 and figure 1 showing number of sessions conducted and Child Development Issues deliberated

Table 1

Month	Number of Sessions conducted	Number of sessions where children issues were discussed	Children issues discussed (MOTIONS)
January	04	02	Marginalization of children
February	13	08	Child education as key driver of Child development
March	12	07	The role of Junior Parliamentarians
April	04	03	Children's rights
May	08	04	Government policies on schools
June	11	08	Building of satellite schools and school infrastructure development
TOTAL	42	32	-

Figure 1



Source: www.parlzim.gov.zw/hansards

Figure 1 above depicts what is on the table 1, comparing sessions of the month where children issues were discussed in relation to total number of the sessions conducted. Generally, most child development issues came on board in the month of June where children issues specifically child education and school infrastructure development were deliberated on eleven sessions out of fifteen sessions conducted on that month.

4.1.2 Prioritization of children issues by members

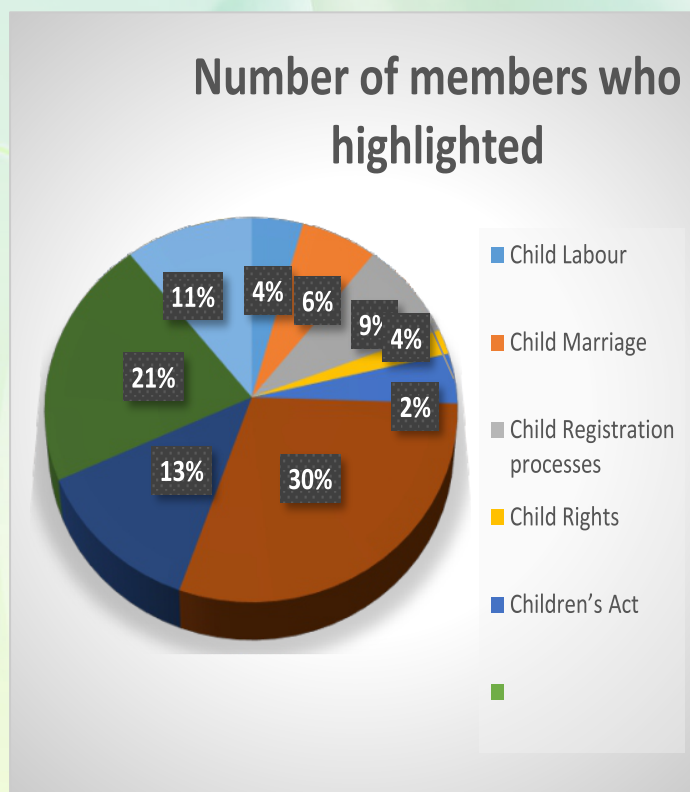
This section highlights different Child Development issues advocated for by members of parliament and the corresponding number of members who explored the issues as tabled below:

Table 2 and Figure 2 showing prioritization of Child Development issues according to number of members.

Table 2

Issue	Number of members highlighted
Child Labour	02
Child Marriage	03
Child Registration processes	04
Child Rights	01
Children's Act Children's Bill	02
Social Protection Child Health	14
Child Abuse	06
Child Education	10
Child Poverty	05

Figure 2



Source: www.parlzim.gov.zw/hansards

As reflected in the pie chart above, child education is the main key issue discussed within the period as reflected by the number of members who raised the issue followed by social protection. Conversely; deliberations on child labour, children's Act and Child Abuse were less debated within the period as reflected on the pie chart.

Prioritization of child development issues can also be analyzed by looking at the frequency of the issues deliberated during parliamentary debates. Table 2 shows frequency distribution of Child Development issues discussed.

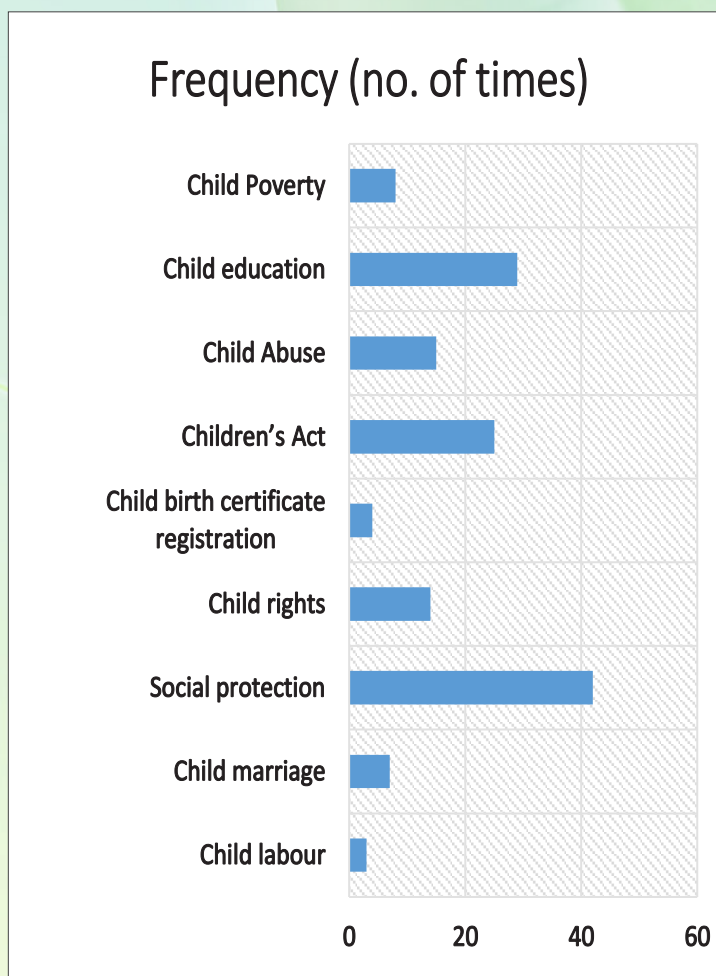
As highlighted in the table 3, child education remains the key child development issue as evidenced by its frequency followed by child marriage as well as Child birth certificate registration processes. Figure 3 reflects the information in the table above.

Table 3 and Figure 3 showing the frequency distribution of Children Development issues discussed

Table 3

Child Development issue	Frequency (no. of times)
Child labour	03
Child marriage	07
Social protection	42
Child rights	14
Child birth certificate registration	04
Children's Act	25
Child Abuse	15
Child education	29
Child Poverty	08

Figure 3



Source: www.parlzim.gov.zw/hansards

5.1.4 Members' contributions on Child Development:

This section focuses on individual Members of Parliament in a bid to see the most contributing Hon Member and the issues they pushed for during parliamentary debates. The main thrust of this section is to know and also have an insight of Members of Parliament who are more sensitive to children issues. In that regards, table 4 below shows the results obtained for the reviewed period indicating the member, sex, appearances and children issues highlighted.

Contributing members on Child Development issues:

Table 4 shows that child education is the main children priority that was discussed by the National Assembly relative to other child development issues.

Table 4: Individual members' contributions on Child Development

Honorable Member	Sex	Appearances	Main Child Development issue(s) highlighted
Hon Bunjira	F	1	School fees payment systems review
Hon G Chimankire	M	1	BEAM Policy
Hon D Sibanda	F	3	Junior members of parliament
Hon L Dokora	M	15	School ZIMSEC registration & STEM initiatives review
Hon O Mandipaka	M	4	Roles of Junior Parliament
Hon J Mapiki	M	6	Government policy on schools in rural areas
Hon Matangaidze	M	3	Impact of cash shortages on school children
Hon Misihairabwi	M F	11	Child rights and child marriages
Hon P Mpariwa	F	1	BEAM funds
Hon O Muchinguri	F	3	School feeding programmes
Hon A Ndebele	M	3	Age of consent for girls
Hon D Nduna	M	4	Zimbabwe Education System
Hon Nyamupinga	B F	3	Forced labour
Hon J Toffa	F	1	School drop outs
Hon A Chibaya	M	1	Headmasters withholding students' results
Hon J Maridadi	M	4	Cadetship scheme for students
Hon I Zindi	F	2	Children in prisons
Hon J Holder	M	2	The use of online registration at schools
Hon G Sithole	M	1	Scripture Union at schools
Hon P Masuku	M	2	Children with disability
Hon G Kwaramba	F	2	Building satellite school
Hon F Chasi	M	1	School feeding programme
Hon A Musiiwa	M	2	Gender equality issues
Hon M Mkandla	F	3	School infrastructure development
Hon F Majome	F	1	Provision of boreholes to schools
Hon E Cross	M	1	Child marriages
Hon A Chipato	F	1	Technological Advancement
Hon T Saruwaka	M	1	Promotion of Maths and Sciences
Hon M Mudan	M	1	ZIMASSET
Hon K Uta	M	1	Empowerment and funding through BEAM

From the table above, the most contributing members who seem to be child sensitive as indicated by the number of appearances they advocate for child development during parliamentary debates are as follows:

Table 5: TOP 5 members

Position	Honorable Member	Sex	Appearances
1	Hon Misihairabwi	F	11
2	Hon Mapiki	M	6
3	Hon Mandipaka	M	4
4	Hon Nduna	M	4
5	Hon Maridadi	M	4

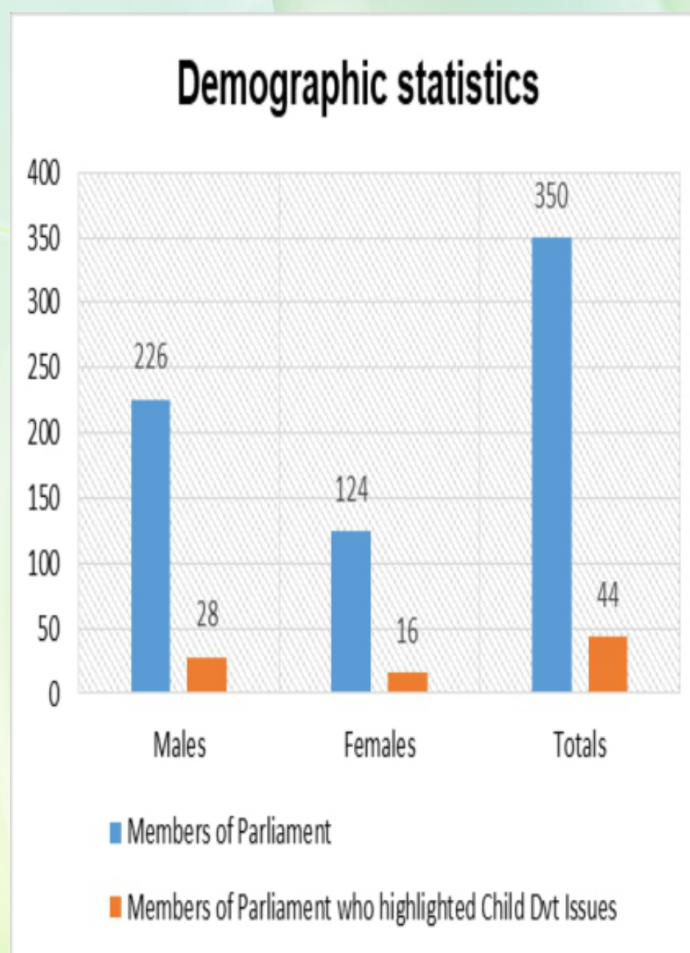
Table 5 shows that Honorable M. Misihairabwi was the number one champion of Child Development issue during the period under review with 11 appearances she is the only female member among the top five. This again shows, of the top five contributors by sex, 20% of the contributors are female and 80% are males

Table 6 and Figure 4: Demographic presentation of members who highlighted children issues:

Table 6

GROUP	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
Members of Parliament	226	124	350
MPs who highlighted children issues	28	16	44
Percentage (%)	12.4%	12.9%	12.6%

Figure 4



As reflected in the table above, males contribute more in pushing for child development and creation of room and opportunities for investment in children relative to females. However, looking at the contributing members by sex as a proportion of total number of members who seat in the parliament the females still lag behind by 0.8% calculated as a proportion of total number of females / males thus generally males seem to be more child sensitive than females. Also, considering the percentage of members who advocate for child development issues in parliament as a proportion of total number of members that is 33 out of 350, 9.4% it shows significant insensitivity by the majority of the members and it contradicts with the oversight and representation mandates of the parliament. The variances shown on the figure above clearly shows that most members are less sensitive to children issues as reflected by the difference margins.

Table 7: Analysis of ministers who participated and contributed to Child Development issues

Table 7

Minister	Ministry	Appearances	Attendance	Issues put on board
Minister L Dokora	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education	15	04	Ministerial statements of grade 7 and 'O' level results (Child Education)
Minister O Muchiguri	Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate	1	14	The need for safe water (Child Health)
Minister ED Mnangagwa	Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs	3	12	Sports inclusion in the new curriculum (Child Education)
Minister P Chinamasa	Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment	2	02	2017 Budget Presentation (Child Social Protection, Child Health, Child Education)
Minister P Mupfumira	Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare	-	10	Food Aid provision for children

Conclusion

The analysis of the parliamentary debates for the period January 2016 to June 2016 has shown that the parliament is lacking in pushing progressive child development policies that are child friendly in view of their judicial role. There is therefore need for advocacy and sensitization of child friendly initiatives both at local and national level with Members of Parliament spearheading. Also, the contributions from Junior Members of Parliament are missing in the parliamentary debates and hence the need for room and opportunities granted to them so that they air their views and aspirations during parliamentary sessions. More analysis will be carried out on biannual basis to track the issues Members of Parliament deliberate on in a view to lobby and advocate for policies, legislations and government expenditures that facilitate child development.

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