



WI PSU UPDATE

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wipsuadmin@mail.com

Women in Politics Support Unit

Ratification of the SADC Protocol on gender and Development- a very welcome development indeed!!

In October 2009 the Parliament of Zimbabwe ratified the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. It now seems that Zimbabweans have no excuse for not putting gender on every agenda of the lives of Zimbabwean people. The SADC Protocol which addresses every aspect of life, including media, HIV and AIDS, Gender Based Violence and participation of women in decision making, is a tool that can be used by the Zimbabwean women to fight for the creation of structures, and implementation of processes and rights that will allow their participation as full citizens of Zimbabwe.

Women in Politics Support Unit has been advocating for the implementation of the SADC protocol since 2008. Article 12 and 13 provide for the equal representation of women in all areas of decision-making, both public and private and suggest that this target be achieved through Constitutional and other legislative measures and other strategies, policies and programmes to ensure that

women participate effectively in electoral processes and decision-making by amongst other, building capacity, providing support and establishing and strengthening structures to enhancing gender



THE WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCAS

mainstreaming. The Protocol and before it the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development provides for the 50/50 representation of women in all decision making positions whether private or public life. Thus was born the 50/50 Campaign which has been spearheaded by WiPSU since November 16, 2006.

This has since begun a slogan popular to all in the women's movement and it was this combined advocacy (on 50/50 and other issues for women

articulated in the protocol) and the lobbying of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus that has resulted in the ratification of the Protocol. The Caucus needs to be applauded for their hard work and dedication on behalf of the women of Zimbabwe.

It is now vital that the protocol be fully implemented. During this time of Constitution making it would be opportune to ensure that the principles enshrined in the protocol are enshrined in the new Constitution on Zimbabwe. For us as an organization, the equal representation and participation of women in all decision making spheres is vital for women and should be enshrined in the Constitution. Without women having a seat at all tables where decisions are made there is no way that their views and concerns as full citizens of this country will ever be tabled adequately. We as women want to be at the table with men, making decisions that impact on our lives.

Tsitsi Mhlanga

Information Campaigns and Advocacy Officer

Special points of interest:

- SADC Protocol on Gender and Development was ratified in October 2009



Facilitating the empowerment of women.



The Deputy Prime Minister of Zimbabwe Hon. T. Khupe whose Constituency is part of the Constituency Effectiveness Program (CEP) and has a vibrant Constituency Consultative Forum

In working towards fulfilling its vision of a society in which women exercise and enjoy their human rights and participate as equals in all political processes with full citizenship rights Women in Politics Support Unit sets up Constituency Consultative Forums (CCF) in the Constituencies represented by women Members of Parliament.

The CCFs are part of the Constituency Effectiveness program which aims to raise women's political, social and economic consciousness, capacity building and mobilisation of women within the elected women's constituencies or wards. It mainly thrives on linking the women representative with women in her constituency or ward encouraging accountability from the grassroots. The program trains up to 500 women per constituency and sets up groups of 50 women per constituency. These are referred to as Women's Constituency Consultative Forums (CCF) or Ward Consultative Forums (WCF).

Constituency and Ward Consultative Forums have over the years been instrumental in strengthening the effectiveness of the women representatives at constituency level. These structures have also provided/ created a space and developed mechanism through which women in the constituencies can participate/ contribute in decision making in the areas that affect their lives. It is

through the CCFs which are sustainable forums that the constituencies are able to meet their leaders, demand accountability and ensure that their needs and concerns are represented in Councils and also in Parliament

Siziwe Dube is a woman in the Constituency Consultative Forum of Deputy Prime Minister Khupe whose constituency is Makokoba in Matabeleland Central. She is a 38 year old married woman with 4 children, 3 boys and a girl. She got involved in politics early 2008 after seeing the things that were happening during the pre election period. She joined the MDC T party as she thought she could make a difference through the party. She also wanted to support the female Member of Parliament who was in office at the time, Hon Thokozani Khupe.

When she joined the MDC she was just an ordinary party member but quickly became branch chairperson after a month. She attributes this to the support that she got from her husband and the women already in politics.

She became part of the CCF that was set up by Women in Politics Support Unit in early 2009. She has gained a lot from the personnel empowerment and presentation skills. These have given her confidence and she is now able to chair meetings for the Bulawayo Progressive Residents Association. Due

to her involvement with the CCF she had the confidence to run for the position of Chairperson of her Ward for Progressive Residence Association. She managed to be elected into the position.

She with the support of the other women in the CCF are pushing to have more women in key positions on the committee and push to have 50/50 Representation in the committee of women and men. She feels that she is a people person who is concerned about the dignity of old people and hopes to continue to progress in politics. She also wants to motivate other women and let them know that they should not be afraid of politics. She was inspired by the Deputy Prime Minister Khupe and she is now participating fully in politics.

Siziwe says that the CCF opens women's minds. "I see the Makokoba CCF as the branches of a tree and that tree being Hon DPM T. Khupe in terms of the support she gets in terms of her work.

WiPSU continues to set up CCFs in women MPs' represented Constituencies and in selected wards represented by women Councilors, and follow up on the work that they are doing.

Come election time these women are going to be instrumental in ensuring the re-election of women Members of Parliament in these Constituencies.

"We must meet the uncertainties of this world with the certainty of the world to come" A. W. Tozer

The Untold Stories

Marilyn wakes up from a deep slumber and wonders what happened to her the previous night. How, what, when she ponders did she go to sleep? Suddenly a rush of coldness washes over her, alarm at first then relief that she is actually alive. So many questions go through her mind and tears start to flood her eyes and various questions come to mind. Self pity, shame and confusion overwhelm her. "What did I do wrong that God has to punish me like this" she ponders. "Is God really there if so why does he allow all this to happen to me"

These are the rhetoric questions Marilyn asks herself. It had all started the previous week when Merlin decided to participate in the local council elections. She never thought it was relevant and necessary to run home and inform her husband. When she got home her husband was waiting for her with a shambok in his hand. Marilyn saw him and jokingly asked him if he was going to tend to

their cattle in the fields. The husband burst out telling her she was the cattle that he was out to beat, he began to whip her and all she could do was sit and cover her head with her hands. When he finished, her arms were blue and black from the beatings.

He did not explain to her why he had beaten her up neither did she ask as it was not acceptable for her to question her husband's actions.

This is not an isolated case at all for many a woman goes through this whenever she decides to do anything considered to be out of the norm in that society. Being a woman politician is considered taboo as it has always been considered a man's domain and women who attempt to enter this arena are considered and labelled as wanting or pretending to be man in women's clothes.

It is important now more than ever for more women to be involved in political

issues as this could be one of the most effective ways to meaningfully participate in decision making process that could see women's issues tabled and taken for discussion and considerations.

The constitution making process is an opportunity that could come only once in most women's lives and it is this opportune moment that due to attitudes like the one Marylyn's husband has, that, most women will miss the greatest opportunity to be heard as they are excluded and treated like second class citizens.

Every woman should contribute to a betterment of women in Zimbabwe and should be challenged to make a difference.

Thando Makuvazva

WiPSU Local Government
program Officer