



Ridza Mhere/Hlab'umkhosi for improved maternal health services

■ ZWRCN launches campaign

The Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre & Network (ZWRCN) in partnership with a coalition of 12 local organizations working in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and active in the field of gender equality on Saturday, 21 April 2012 – launched a campaign on accelerating maternal health service provision for women in rural areas in Zimbabwe. The campaign – dubbed the *Ridza Mhere/Hlab'umkhosi Campaign for Improved Maternal Health Services in Rural Areas* – was initially launched in Mashonaland East at Munyawiri School in Domboshava, and is set to be rolled-out to other provinces in due course. The campaign is made possible with support from UN Women, the European Commission and Amanitare.

Over 5000 men, women and children from Goromonzi and surrounding areas attended the event and participated in a march intended to mobilize women, their partners, families, communities and community leaders to advocate for improved maternal health services. Pregnant women – accompanied by a marching band – wielded placards with various messages calling upon authorities to take action in preventing needless deaths of women giving birth. Traditional leaders, Government representatives, policy makers, funding partners and other key stakeholders were also present and delivered solidarity messages.

The *Ridza Mhere/Hlab'umkhosi* campaign comes in the wake of and seeks to complement efforts of the Ministry of Health and

Child Welfare (MOHCW)'s Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) launched in June 2010. It also seeks improved accessibility of basic and comprehensive maternal health services at rural clinic and district level respectively by 2014 expected to markedly reduce maternal mortality by half by 2015. This will be accomplished through mobilization of a critical mass of persons advocating for improved maternal health services and increased budget allocation and spending in line with the Abuja Declaration.



Naome Chimbetete

In her speech, ZWRCN Executive Director, Naome Chimbetete highlighted that the focus of the *Ridza Mhere/Hlab'umkhosi* Campaign for Improved Maternal Health Services in Rural Areas was to get women speaking out and strengthen extensive advocacy in raising awareness on the issue of high maternal mortality in Zimbabwe to influence the immediate and full commitment of the government in addressing this challenge. She bemoaned

that rural women were dying needlessly from preventable conditions like hemorrhaging and high blood pressure; thereby contributing to increased maternal mortality rate.

UN Women Country Representative, Hodan Addou said that the rise in maternal mortality rate from 725 deaths per 100,000 live births to 960 deaths per 100,000 live births between 2007 and 2010 was alarming and unjustifiable. She emphasized the need for coordinated efforts from all actors for a unified response to the emergency of maternal mortality and called upon government, the donor community, civil society organizations and the private sector to come together in saving Zimbabwe's women.

In Zimbabwe, sexual and reproductive health services are declining with the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) rising to 960 deaths per 100 000 live births according to the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 2010 – 2011. Limited access to comprehensive and basic maternal health services at district and rural clinic levels respectively – is a major contributor to the increase in Zimbabwe's maternal mortality rate. Adequate and timely allocation of and transparency in spending of resources directed at maternal health could significantly reverse this situation such that the costs of failure to do so – in terms of lives and finances – are not passed on to women.

Women's empowerment: pathway to poverty reduction



With support from the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN), the Kadoma City Council and indeed the residents of Kadoma belatedly commemorated the International Women's Day (IWD) on the 21st of March 2012. Hundreds of people from all walks of life including Government departments, churches, and women in business, council officials, heads of departments and people living with disabilities thronged the John Mack Hall to celebrate this day. IWD in Zimbabwe this year was commemorated under the national theme: **"Empower rural women, eradicate poverty and hunger."**

In his official opening remarks – Kadoma Deputy Mayor, Mr D. Chinyan'anya emphasised the importance of gender budgeting for women's empowerment. He encouraged all participants to carefully internalise the lessons learnt on the day keeping in mind that educating a woman is educating a nation. Mr Chinyan'anya also acknowledged the various important roles played by women in the community to alleviate poverty and hunger.

" Educating a woman is educating a nation "

The Deputy Mayor's views were also echoed by one Mrs Mahoya, a gender activist who highlighted that the value of a woman can be equated to the value of salt, which is found in every household. These views were evidenced by Mrs Chidimu who testified

that, in 1998 she opened Eastview College in Kadoma. During her testimonial, Mrs Chidimu said, "I was triggered by the desire for women's empowerment and community development to open this college which to date has trained very successful people in the community." She said despite the economic turmoil which the country experienced in those past years; she did not stumble back and because of that, Eastview College was awarded the prestigious Resilience Award in 2008. This demonstration came as an inspiration to the various women who attended.

The Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD) representative said that it was now 101 years since IWD commemorations began. The Government of Zimbabwe was commended for supporting the women's empowerment and gender equality agenda by signing and ratifying several regional and international instruments among which are the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, CEDAW, the Millennium Convention and the African Charter on Women's and People's Rights. These instruments provide a framework for programming women's empowerment projects that aim to eliminate poverty and hunger. In 2005, a separate Ministry for Women affairs, Gender and Community Development was formed and several National Action Plans were developed for the empowerment of women and girls. The MWAGCD also administers a revolving Women's Development Fund – which was launched in 2010.

The fund supports lucrative women's empowerment projects in Zimbabwe.

Despite all the efforts being made by the government and other stakeholders; there are certain social problems that deter progress in eliminating poverty and hunger. Among these are challenges of domestic violence and HIV/AIDS. It was noted with concern at the commemorations – that cases of domestic violence and child abuse were rife in Kadoma district. Domestic violence coupled with high HIV and AIDS prevalence rates among women are real causes for concern that require urgent attention. In Zimbabwe, among the 1.3 million people who are living with HIV, 60% are women. This shows that women remain at the extreme lower part of development despite the fact that they provide care and support to the infected and affected people. This is further exacerbated by women's lack of negotiating power for safer sex. Notwithstanding the fact that all clinics in Kadoma have Voluntary Counselling and Testing facilities; people are not fully utilising these services due to fear of stigma and discrimination. It was recommended that women must make full use of available health facilities.

Part of the main theme messaging for the commemorations sought to spread awareness around the government's 4Ps campaign against domestic violence that is also intended to popularise knowledge of the Domestic Violence Act particularly among women. The 4Ps campaign focuses on prevention, protection, programmes and participation. Knowledge and use of the law and police victim friendly units was encouraged as measures to curb domestic violence.

The celebrations wrapped up in style, with an exciting modelling contest where women showcased various African attires celebrating the essence of African womanhood and indeed the dynamism of being a Zimbabwean woman.



Kadoma women on IWD

Gender budgeting made simple

Following rigorous gender budgeting training for parliamentarians and government officials conducted by the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN); Zimbabwe's Ministry of Finance recently allocated specific budget lines for gender mainstreaming to six line ministries in the 2012 Budget. The ministries receiving the allocations were: the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development; the Ministry of Public Works, Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development; the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education and the Ministry of Regional Integration, International Co-operation, Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs.

This positive turn of events was a demonstration of increased understanding, awareness and commitment by the government to ensuring that gender mainstreaming permeates all its critical structures. The timely training for government officials and lawmakers was made possible through financial support from the UN Women Gender Equality Fund (GEF).

ZWRCN's gender budgeting work seeks to ensure that public resource allocation is pro-poor and gender equitable, thus the organization advocates for the formulation and implementation of gender sensitive policies and budgets that take into account the differential needs of women, men, boys and girls in Zimbabwe.

ZWRCN – in partnership with the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ), the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, and the Ministry of Finance - is also implementing a four year National Gender Budgeting and Women's Empowerment Project intended to ensure equity in resource distribution between 2011 and 2014.

Gender budgeting recognizes and incorporates into the economy - unpaid care and other contributions not valued as money usually undertaken by women.

According to ZWRCN Executive Director, Ms Naome Chimbetete, "Gender budgeting in this



regard thus seeks to advance women's economic empowerment by advocating for increased recognition, reduction and redistribution of women's unpaid care work. The project will also review policies that impact positively on women's economic empowerment such as Tourism, Mining, Small to Medium Enterprises, Youth and Indigenization, which are currently gender blind."

As a strategy to increase awareness, ZWRCN will undertake to build the skills of government officials, the legislature, civil society and the media in gender budgeting. Gender budgeting remains a relatively new concept and building a critical mass of experts is very critical for sustaining the process and ensuring institutionalizing. Having champions of gender budgeting in key positions of authority will go a long way in strengthening the programme.

A parliamentary report recently prepared by the Gender Budgeting Committee states that gender equality constitutes a major dimension for human development in Zimbabwe and one of the ways by which this can be achieved is through gender responsive budgeting.

Gender responsive budgeting is not about increasing allocations or having separate budgets for men and women. It is about realigning programmes within key sectors to promote effective use of resources in ways that address the different needs of men and women. According to the report, it is impera-

tive for ministries to reflect gender mainstreaming in their budgets, through adequately funded gender specific budget lines.

The Parliamentary report is an add on to Government's commitment towards achieving the development goal of gender equality and equity signified by the ratification of related regional and international conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW), the SADC Gender Protocol, the National gender policy, among others.

Gender budgeting involves gender mainstreaming in the budgetary processes such that the formulation, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation consider the differences among social groups.

“ Gender budgeting - pro-poor, gender equitable resource allocation that takes into account, the differential needs of women, men, boys and girls ”

Civic education for gender budgeting critical for community participation

The Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre & Network (ZWRCN) in partnership with Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CZZ)- held a series of Gender Budgeting Civic Education workshops in 10 Provinces of the country, viz - Harare, Manicaland, Masvingo, Matebeleland South, Bulawayo, Matebeland North, Midlands, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Mashonaland West. The aim was to raise awareness on the value of gender budgeting and how to influence it at the grass roots level.

The workshops also sought to build a critical mass of citizens capable of demanding accountability and transparency from national and local government on issues pertaining to budgets and service delivery. Diverse citizens were targeted to be inclusive of people with disabilities, youths, the elderly, residents associations, community based organizations,

faith based organizations, informal traders, and HIV and AIDS support group members.

At the civic education workshops, communities were acquainted with knowledge of what the concept of gender budgeting is concerned with. Gender budgeting is basically an attempt to analyze the impact of budgets, programmes and policies on women and men, girls and boys and how the people respond to them. Emphasis was made that gender budgeting is a *tool* for mainstreaming gender into local and national government budgets, hence it is critical for fulfilling the government's commitments to gender equality.

The thrust of the workshops was to encourage citizens to take part in all budgetary process within the national and local government levels and to voice out their needs to councils as the latter are responsible for delivering essential public services such as sewer reticulation and housing among other things. Citizen participation is critical in ensuring that the needs of the people are met and that they

are capable of holding government accountable to them with regards fulfilling the intended goals of the national budget.

Some key observations from presentations made by participants in the civic education workshops included that: resources are always limited and there is poor prioritisation in the allocation of limited resources; a selected few influential individuals always make the decisions regarding resource allocation and there is need for greater stakeholder involvement in drawing up budgets.

Of critical importance to ZWRCN is also building the capacity of civil society on gender and gender budgeting as a critical mass in a position to check laws, track budgets and hold local government accountable.

According to Ms N. Mutongwizo of ZWRCN, a need remains to "continuously build capacity in civil society in order to strengthen the demand side of governance."

Value of woman to woman free basic ICT training

Since 2011, the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre & Network (ZWRCN) has been conducting woman-to-woman basic ICT training for ordinary Zimbabwean women interested in advancing their use and understanding of computer technologies. In line with ZWRCN's aim to build knowledge and promote gender equality and women's equality at all levels, the ICT training is open to women from all walks of life and includes use of Microsoft Word, web surfing and content searching, email address opening and usage. Women are trained every Thursday and Friday between 0830 - 1130hrs at the organization's documentation centre.

The overwhelming responses by women to an advertisement announcing the ICT training is indicative of the importance women have started attaching to being able to use latest technologies in order to stay ahead of developments. In Zimbabwe's technology environment, this is not farfetched as according to Poynter (2011) at least 60% of the population has access to mobile phones that are now being used to check emails, conduct mobile banking and browse the web among other things. To date, ZWRCN has trained over 100 women in basic ICT skills.

Some of the women trained in basic ICT have placed value on being able to now visit internet cafes and communicate with loved ones in the Diaspora.

Some quotes from various women who received ICT training:



"...maita zvenyu ZWRCN.
Ini ndaitya kana kuenda pacomputer.
Manje kubva nhasi ndavakutoendawo paFacebook
ndichitaura nemukoma wangu kuBritain."



"I have found on the internet, some designs I plan to use for my dressmaking work. Thankful that I learnt how to search for things on Google"

"...ende ndafara, ne training. Ndaibvunda ndichidzidzisa vana kuchikoro nekuti programme yemacomputers yakatanga. Manje kubvunda kwapera, vana havachandiseka kuchikoro."



Have you been following??

In an effort to increase media space, discussion and dialogue on issues affecting women's empowerment and development, ZWRCN has been contributing to a weekly column in the Monday newspaper edition of The Herald Business. Watch that space for interesting and topical discussions around women's issues on various thematic areas including economic empowerment, climate change, health, gender budgeting, agriculture and social services among other things. If you have missed it, below are links to some original content and articles published by ZWRCN in the last quarter: Click to view

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 [Women still on the fringes: ZWRCN](#)

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What's happening in this quarter?

- Ridza Mhere/ Hlab'umkhosi Campaign for Improved Maternal Health Service for Rural Women - Scaling up to other provinces
- Woman to woman basic ICT training - ongoing exercise, women encouraged to apply!
- Baseline survey - ZWRCN will be conducting one into Gender and Health budgets in Shurugwi and Mudzi, focusing of financing for sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR).
- Civic education on gender budgeting - In partnership with CCZ, we'll be taking it to the grassroots community structures including residents associations, informal traders associations, youth groups, and women's clubs in particular consumer action clubs and other stakeholders!
- Gender budgeting training for local authorities - targeting council technocrats and counsellors in six key districts.
- Gender budgeting training for budget review officers in government for gender mainstreaming in the following 10 ministries: Higher & Tertiary Education, Mines & Mining Development, Industry & Commerce, Water Resources & Development, Small & Medium Enterprises, Health & Child Welfare, Agriculture, Energy & Power Development, Labour & Social Welfare and Youth Development

Watch our website for further updates and specific dates

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