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16 Days of Activism against Gender-based violence begin

THE international commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence started on Monday, November 25, with civil society organisations in Zimbabwe highlighting their main messages for this year's campaign.

The 16-day campaign every year begins on the International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25, and ends on the International Human Rights Day on December 10.

The theme for the 2013 campaign, "From peace in the home to peace in the World: Let's end militarism against women," focuses on violence perpetrated by State actors, and domestic violence and the role of small arms.

This year's campaign comes against the background of serious women's rights violations notably, the brutal assault on several women in August by riot police, after the women staged a demonstration against Hwange Colliery for not paying their husbands for several months, which was a lamentable case of state-sanctioned violence against women.

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) Communications Officer Kumbirai Mafunda said the state remained a violator against women in many ways.

"We have seen the state's penchant and appetite to continue violating the rights of female human rights defenders through persecution and prosecution as shown by suppression of women protesters," Mafunda said.

Mafunda referred to the case of the violent crackdown on Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) peaceful marches by riot police since 2010, a case that the ZLHR has taken to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHRP).

"We remain worried by the arrest and detention of breast feeding mothers. These are issues that should not be happening in a Zimbabwe that we yearn for," Mafunda added.

Charity Katerere of Nyanga together with her toddler were recently arrested barely two months after a similar case in Highfields, despite the fact that the High Court in 2007 strongly condemned the jailing of mothers with their young children after a case involving a toddler, Nigel Mutemagawu and his mother.

Netty Musanhu, the director of Msasa

Project said, although violence perpetrated against women by state actors had remained significant over the past years, most of the gender-based violence occurred in the home.



Netty Musanhu— Director of Msasa Project

"Deriving from this year's theme, we are condemning rape and sexual violence against women and girls," Musanhu said.

"We have researches that show that one in every three girls is raped before reaching 18 years of age.

"If you remove the state actors, you still have very high levels of rape. If you look at the statistics most of the rape is happening in the home.

"We need to look at the underlying causes of rape. We have

even seen rape in the churches, where young girls are also being married off at the age of 13.”

Msasa Project on Thursday, November 21, in collaboration with Women’s Trust hosted an engagement platform with the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus, and will on Thursday, November 28, stage a march in Harare.

The march will start at the Harare Gardens, where the Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development minister, Oppah Muchinguri, the British Ambassador, Deborah Bronnert, and Bishop Nehemiah Mutendi of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) have been invited to grace the occasion.

Female Students Network (FSN) Coordinator Evernice Munando encouraged men who suffer from gender-based violence to come up in the open during the 16 days of campaign against gender-based violence.

“During this year’s 16 days of activism, we are saying men who are abused should also come out and speak about violations against them because the Domestic Violence Act is for everyone,” Munando said.

“We have realized that men are not only perpetrators, they are also victims and they should understand what domestic violence is.”

Munando’s organisation has already carried out a march dubbed *“Walk a mile in her shoes”* in Harare on November 23, where men were encouraged to walk in high heeled shoes, which Munando said *“got them to feel the pain of violence, but also encouraged them to report abuses against themselves.”*

Talent Jumo of Katswe Sistahood said new technological developments were being manipulated to abuse women.

Particularly, she said male partners violently react when they see unusual contacts in cell phones and allegedly breached women’s privacy and trust when they leak videotapes of intimate moments.

“Imagine the emotional violence that women can suffer when someone is holding them at ransom,” Jumo said.

“We need as young people to talk about violence in our relationships and how new technology is causing breach of privacy.”

“Even some newspapers run stories that are centered on this clear breach of privacy, or insensitive stories like one which described a Midlands State University female student who was gang raped as ‘beer loving’ as if she deserved her harrowing treatment.”

Civil society assesses BAZ’s call for broadcasting licence applications

CIVIL society has welcomed the call by the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) for applications for commercial radio licenses, but noted that the existing broadcasting laws and licensing framework are not conducive for a free press.

Speaking to the Crisis Report on Monday, November 25, Media Institute of Southern Africa Zimbabwe Chapter (MISA-Zimbabwe) Director Nhlanhla Ngwenya said the call for applications by BAZ was relevant to the goal of media diversity, but happening under a discredited legal framework that limits press freedom.

“Our main concern is that they will be regulated under the same laws, which are not conducive to a free media environment,” Ngwenya said.

“The regulatory framework – Broadcasting Services Act – under which they are calling for the applications, also prohibits media organisations partially or wholly owned by foreigners.”

The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is a broad based civil society network of over 72 active members comprising churches, women’s groups, social movements, residents associations, labour unions, human rights lawyers, and health professionals. It was formed in August of 2001 to focus on democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable development issues – working locally, regionally and internationally.

"We have been calling for the Broadcasting Services Act to be revised."



Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ) in a statement said it had reasons not to be over-confident of the government's intentions, although it welcomed the decision to call for applications.

compromising its independence from political influence.

"MMPZ remains concerned that despite common agreement during the period of the coalition government soon after its formation that BAZ and other media boards required reform and was a pre-requisite for the holding of national elections.

"The new ZANU PF government no longer considers this a priority before the issuing of new broadcasting licenses."

"While MMPZ welcomes this invitation, there are several reasons why we remain skeptical of the sincerity of government's intention to genuinely free the air-waves," the statement read.

"Chief among them is the fact that BAZ is inviting applications under the same old discredited legal and institutional framework.

"For instance, the BSA, under which the applications were invited, contains restrictive provisions that appear to contravene the letter and spirit of the new Constitution."

Apart from the stringent funding parameters for applicants, MMPZ doubted the impartiality of the BAZ as a licensing authority, and the manner in which the body was appointed during in the Inclusive Government (IG).

"The legitimacy of BAZ itself has been a subject of serious debate, as the Media and Information Minister at the time, Webster Shamu, unilaterally appointed it in September, 2009 during the existence of the coalition government," MMPZ said.

"Notably, the BAZ board he constituted was packed with former military men and ZANU PF allies, thus

MMPZ said the concerns derived especially from BAZ's previous partisan handling of applications for national broadcasting licenses, which resulted in the controversial licensing of Zimbabwe's first two private commercial radio stations.

ZiFM stereo owned by businessman-cum-deputy minister in the Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services, Supa Mandiwanzira, and Star FM owned by State-owned Zimpapers were licensed amid criticism of BAZ's alleged bias in November 2011.

"MMPZ believes the authority bent the regulations regarding the transparency and accountability of this process by not disclosing the type of scoring system and related criteria employed in evaluating prospective broadcasters.

"We are of the view that BAZ acted irrationally in awarding licences to Star FM, in which the state has a controlling stake, and ZiFM, which was run and owned by a prominent ZANU PF member, as this entrenches ZANU PF's monopoly of the broadcasting sector."

CCDZ Statement on the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence



The Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe (CCDZ), a grassroots non-profit making organization carrying out human rights, citizen participation and governance work in Zimbabwe joins the rest of the world in commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the ensuing 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, commemorated every year globally between 25 November and 10 December which is International Human Rights Day to raise awareness and trigger action on gross human rights violations.

To CCDZ, this period marks time to reflect on the strides made by women in challenging oppressive systems and the hurdles they still face in their struggle for a just world for women. It is sad that in Zimbabwe despite the fact that women constitute close to 52% of the population, they still lack representation in decision making bodies at all levels. Their lack of control over key productive resources is also worrisome. Women remain the minority in such sectors as mining, farming, manufacturing and construction. Retrogressive attitudes and views of women as second class citizens to be seen but not to be heard should be buried.

Despite the gender equality provisions of the new Constitution, such as 60 seats reserved for women in the lower house of assembly and 50-50 representation in the senate, the participation of women in democracy and governance remains very pathetic. Most women who contested in the July 31 harmonized elections did not make it in either council or parliament due to negative attitudes of their male counterparts who argued that 'women already had their share in parliament (60 seats) and senate (50%) and so there was no need for them to contest under the First Past the Post System.'

With only 4 female ministers and a few others deputising men, Zimbabwe cannot boast of being progressive in the area of women empowerment. This on its own is a sign of lack of political will and lack of confidence in women by the powers that be. This wrong precedence, set at the highest political level, is already replicated at the local level where on average a fifth of the women have 'token' leadership positions in Ward Development Committees (WADCs), Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), School Development Committees (SDCs), councils and even in churches to window dress the gender balance needs. CCDZ laments the absence of a safe political space for women to participate freely in politics and development.

The Gender Commission, a body provided for by the new Constitution, to monitor and raise a voice on such gender injustice issues as these has to date remained on paper.

CCDZ is greatly concerned about the attitude of some police officers, who, despite the presence of the Domestic Violence Act, dismiss genuine domestic violence cases brought by women as private matters to be privately settled. Because of this attitude, serious human rights abuses committed against women and young girls remain hidden and unreported. CCDZ will not tire in its efforts to educate communities on their rights and through human rights monitoring, to expose violations of the rights of women.

CCDZ appeals to the government to speedily ensure the implementation of the laws which protect and enhance women's rights as well as ensure that the Gender Commission is constituted and functional. We strongly believe that development will not be achieved without the meaningful participation of women and respect for their rights and needs.

-By The Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe (CCDZ)

ADZT takes constitution awareness to rural Matabeleland

TSHOLOTSO – THE Artists for Democracy in Zimbabwe Trust (ADZT) held a community theatre forum aimed at spreading awareness of the new Constitution in Tsholotsho, Matabeleland North province on Saturday, November 23.

The community meeting was held at Makhaza Shopping Centre in a bid by the organisation to extend awareness of the new Constitution (Amendment No.20), particularly people's entitlements as enshrined in the expanded Bill of Rights, to the Tsholotsho community.

ADZT Director Mehluli Dube said the initiative was also aimed at lessening the knowledge and information drought in the remote area.

"No newspaper reaches this community and few have radio receivers," Dube said from the Makhaza village under Chief Gampu. "Very little information is getting to these communities from the outside world."

"Artists are raising awareness among the marginalized and underserved groups. The project is based on marginalized communities awareness efforts, and the Bill of Rights."



ADZT at Makhaza Shopping Centre

The new Constitution became fully operational in August after the harmonized elections, and government is yet to align old laws, which consist of 87 old Acts that have been earmarked for alignment to the new Charter.

The Constitution in Section 7 mandates the State to spearhead initiatives to raise public awareness of the document to citizens, although government has not lined up initiatives for that purpose; civil society has already started

its complementary role as outlined in Section 7 (c) as a way of sowing the seeds for constitutionalism.

The ADZT event had as its main attraction, a drama performance by Shaba theatre group, additionally the drama highlighted that the tragedy of human rights protection in the country was that those officials, who are mandated to protect peoples' rights are sometimes reneging on their responsibility, and instead becoming violators.

According to Dube, the issues that were raised by the theatre performance were also of a socio-economic nature such as perceived marginalization of the rural area, and unavailability of information on developmental matters.

ADZT distributed 100 copies of the Constitution to the community as part of the awareness building effort, which is being carried out under an Artists Constitutional Awareness Raising among Marginalized and Underserved Groups (ACARMUG) initiative.

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