

50/50 BY 2015
YES WE CAN!!

WiPSU UPDATE



April 2013

LET'S END GBV

Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU) celebrated this year's International Women's Day in Bulawayo. This year's celebrations are being held under the theme: "Peace begins with me, Peace begins with you, and Peace begins with us all: Act now to end violence against women and girls."

While continuous calls have been made to end gender based violence, WiPSU is saddened by the incessant cases of violence permeating in our country. On the 20th of February 2013, the nation woke up to the shocking news of the ten year old Stacey Munjoma who was raped and found dead in a Maize field in Rugare, Harare. Stacy, who had been reported missing on Monday morning, was found half naked with her blouse stained with blood, a post-mortem conducted on the Grade 4 pupil revealed that her death had been caused by the shock and trauma she endured after being raped.

Recently Hurungwe East MP, Honourable Sarah Mahoka was also hospitalized after she was allegedly attacked by youths during a meeting. Perpetrators of such inhuman atrocities should be brought to book. It is society's responsibility to protect women and children.

Although the government of Zimbabwe has made strides towards promoting gender equality through the enactment of legislations and policies that support gender equality, the plight of

women remains in a sorry state. There is still a long way to go before women can fully enjoy their fundamental rights. It is appalling that women are



still not paid equal-

ly with their male counterparts; women are still not equally represented in business or politics and decision making positions. Women still experience, limited access to education, unequal job opportunities and cases of violence against them has remained high.

There is an upsurge of rape cases in Zimbabwe. Violence against women is a serious concern. Women suffer daily the effects of domestic, sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in the country. It is sad to note that such cases are still happening when we have the Domestic Violence Act. More needs to be done by all stakeholders who include the community, legislature, executive and judiciary to ensure the problem of violence against women and children is dealt with holistically. Most countries are run by men and we have witnessed a lot of gender based violence; we need to have women in key positions in

order to end violence.

WiPSU congratulates the women of Zimbabwe for their hard work and efforts that led to the adoption of the draft constitution which provides for gender equality and the Protection of women from all forms of violence which includes gender based and domestic violence.

WiPSU applauds efforts by women politicians who handed over a petition to Senate president Edna Madzongwe over rising cases of violence against women and children in Zimbabwe ahead of the referendum and general elections. More efforts need to be done for the total eradication of gender based violence.

Zimbabwe is set to hold elections in this year, there is need to ensure that the country avoids unwarranted violence and intimidation that has characterized previous processes as women and children happen to be the most affected in such situations.

WiPSU remains committed to fighting for a democratic space that allows for the respect of the rights of women. Under the 50/50 campaign, WiPSU urges everyone to vote for a woman, for a violence free Zimbabwe.

**Together against violence,
together we can make it**

Celebrating our female leaders

We celebrate women's participation as it is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development

WiPSU celebrates the work done by our female politicians. These are courageous women who are working tirelessly for the emancipation of fellow women and the development of the country as a whole. These are women who have fought side by side with men regardless of intimidation, overlooking their fears and doubts and grabbing opportunities for them to make a difference. These are motivated women who are driven by their will to make a difference. We celebrate the passion and determination of our female Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Senators, Governors, MPs and Councilors who are working tirelessly for the development of the country, to transform the lives of Zimbabweans and to uplift the plight of women. WiPSU applauds efforts by these women in the draft constitution that led to the adoption of the draft that promotes gender equality. These are strong women who face challenges, criticism and hate speech every day because of the work they do. They are criticized for their womanhood or looks and not because of their views and ideas. It is important that society develops an attitude of constructive and decent criticism. We celebrate women's participation as it is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development and peace, in addition to their biggest role of caring and nurturing families. They have been playing a critical role in society for generations and their contribution cannot be ignored. We need to have more women in key positions in order to alleviate the plight of women and for the development of Zimbabwe.

In the picture: Hon Theresa Makone, Cde Sandi-Moyo and Mrs. Thandiwe Mlilo



WiPSU POLITICAL EDUCATION FORUM

WiPSU held a political education forum in Harare as part of the organisation's efforts to increase women's political participation. The workshop sought to educate women about politics and the importance of their involvement.

women from different walks of life who included teachers, the youth, traders, business women nurses, women from different civil society organisations as well as women from different political parties were taught on how to participate in politics including registering to vote, becoming a member of a political party, contesting for leadership positions and contributing to electoral processes as polling agents or observers.

Speaking at the forum, Cde Nyasha Chikwinya encouraged women to participate in politics saying women should continue fighting for their voices to be heard. She gave her background of how she entered into politics telling women that they have to be strong and courageous and grab opportunities that come.

Honourable Makone said it was a cause for concern that women are not forthcoming when it comes to politics.

"Politics is the way of life and women should claim their positions by standing up for themselves. As women we must have women in mind first, let us go out there in our numbers vote for other women

to achieve equal representation," she said.

MDC Deputy Chairperson of the women's assembly, Elizabeth Chinyanga, encouraged to continue fighting for their cause saying women have much capacity as men have.

Women also voiced their concerns highlighted factors impeding them as political violence, lack of financial resources, cultural attitudes and their roles as mothers.

Women's participation in politics is important to ensure that decision making takes into account women's perspectives and concerns.

*women
should take
it upon
themselves to
challenge the
status quo*



A participant at a political education forum



WiPSU staff

50/50 The time is now!

WiPSU is at the forefront of championing the 50/50 campaign which is aimed at contributing to attaining gender equality in political decision making.

As we near this year's elections, the time has come for women to get the equal share of the steak of all levels. Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU), is fighting for shared authority at all levels, where men and women work side by side to create vibrant options. There is need for increased numbers of women at the top government so that they do not continue to be marginalized. As women of Zimbabwe we declare that the time is now. It's time for changing the status quo, for women to step up to the plate and run for office. We want a large number of women running for council, parliament and presidential elections. It is time for real permanent power sharing and change, women ruling side by side with men, allowing their voices to rise and be heard.

Women's political participation including standing for and holding public office, is a democratic right which is upheld by various regional and international policy frameworks. While the country is a signatory to several international and regional conventions on women and human rights, it has registered modest progress towards promoting gender equality by enacting laws and policies that support gender equality; however, there is still a long way to go before women can fully enjoy their fundamental rights. As a result, women's participation has remained low. WiPSU believes that

women are equal partners with men and have the same potential. It is natural for a woman to hold power as it is for a man.

Women's representation and participation in decision making is low in Zimbabwe. There are many barriers such as cultural attitudes on women's roles, lack of policies within political parties and government to adequately promote their participation and the general political climate of intimidation and violence. Although women are affected by decisions made in Parliament and local government, they do not participate equally in making those decisions. Their voices, needs and priorities are not fully taken into account.

The current parliament has 18% women which dropped from 22% in the 2005 elections. The 18% is a far cry from the 30% allowed for by the AU Protocol and even further from achievement of the 50% benchmark set by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the Millennium Development Goal 3, as it reflects 75% of women's demands. The inclusion of many of the women's demands in the constitution marks a real step for-

ward for enhancing gender equity and women's rights in Zimbabwe.

The organisation also urges young women to take advantage of the opportunities that will open up because of the Draft Constitution. It is indeed a new dawn for the Zimbabwean woman.

WiPSU is working hard with other organisations to ensure that women's rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are met and advocating for their inclusion in governance. As we prepare for the referendum and elections, there is need to work together as women and actively participate in all processes to enhance 50/50 representation of men and women in decision making processes.

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WiPSU commemorates IWD

WiPSU held a workshop in Bulawayo to commemorate International Women's day. Running under the theme: "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women", the workshop sought to create a platform for women from different political parties to share on issues around violence against women and girls and to compare methods of reducing intra and cross party violence against women and girls.

The women agreed that violence was rife and alike across political parties. Men also noted the relevance of attending such gatherings and highlighted the importance of giving women platforms in their political

parties to discuss such issues as violence and how it affects them.

Women condemned the tactics used by men to outdo and down play women. They spoke of different forms of abuse including verbal abuse and the attack on their personal lives like their relationships and their looks which makes women feel less confident and stripped of their dignity.

The women present said law makers should put in place stringent measures to punish perpetrators of such crimes. All the speakers from the three political parties condemned violence against women and girls and encouraged victims to report such crimes



Political party representatives at the IWD commemorations



Participants at the IWD commemorations

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