

WiPSU UPDATE

No turning back on the demand for

In the last few months WiPSU has been conducting lobby and advocacy meetings with the women's wings of political parties to encourage them to lobby for 50/50 within their political parties

Recently Zambians went to the polls. Unfortunately despite the hard work put in by female candidates and women's organizations supporting them, the percentage of women dropped to 11.3% from 15% in Parliament. The former ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) put up only 19 women out of 140 candidates for the elections sets a poor example on the eve of the only election that Zambia had before 2015. The other parties did not do much better, yielding the low percentages as they stand currently.

Is this the trend that Africans and Southern Africans more specifically are following and if so what is the plight for Zimbabwean women? The last few months have seen letters written to editors of newspapers, and journalists writing to say that women want to

Women Take Home The Nobel Peace Prize

Nobel Peace Prize 2011 has been awarded to Her Excellency President Ellen Jonson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman. They are being acknowledged for their non-violent struggle for safety of women and for women's rights to fully participate in peace building work.

an aim to facilitate the implementation of protocols and processes that the Zimbabwean government has committed itself to.

Zimbabwe is a member of the United Nations, African Union and SADC communities. The United Nations Millennium Development Goal 3 which Zimbabwe is working towards achieving by 2015 speaks to equal representation in decision making and more specifically a 50% quota. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development was signed by His Excellency President Mugabe and ratified by Parliament of Zimbabwe in October 2009. This in effect means that the only debate to be had is how equal representation can be achieved in terms of frameworks and laws that need to be put in place,. Whether we should have equal representation is not debatable.

50/50 representation does not mean that women will be given seats and that the democratic right of voting for a candidate of the electorate's own choice should and will be taken from the voters. There are many systems of ensuring gender parity that are already in place within Zimbabwe's current context that can be applied. After the 2008 elections political parties were in a position to appoint representatives to Cabinet and to Senate. It is at this stage that political parties can implement their gender parity quotas and ensure that women are appointed. Both ZANU PF and MDC T showed that this is possible when the names of Hon Oppah Muchinguri and Hon. Masara were put forward to take up seats that were vacant in the House of Senate and the House of Assembly. This does not mean that these women are not capable and seasoned politicians who are not competent.

Women represent their parties at all levels from Cell to National in the Women's and main Wings of their political parties. Therefore the argument that there are no competent women is not a valid one. Women are mobilising and campaigning for their political parties and make up a critical mass of the political parties' support base. They are not asking to be given but to be allowed to have the opportunity to continue doing what it is that they do already.

The mixed electoral system provides even more opportunity for political parties to prove to their women supporters that they are indeed committed to gender parity. The proportional representation system means that votes are allocated to parties proportionally to the percentage of votes they require. Voters do not vote for a specific candidate but for a party. Under this system therefore political parties should implement their constitutions and ensure that their party lists are in line with their gender parity quotas.

Zimbabwe has only one election and 3 years to meet its commitments to SADC, the AU, the UN and more importantly to the women of Zimbabwe. 50/50 by 2015 YES WE MUST!!!!

Congratulations

Hon Lucia Matibenga was
appointed to Minister Of
Public Service

Zimbabwe now has 8 women Cabinet
Ministers

Women's Parliamentary Caucus Media and Advocacy Training

In September WiPSU in partnership with IPS facilitated a media and advocacy training workshop for women Parliamentarians. 32 members of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) attended and among them was the Deputy Speaker of Parliament Hon Nomalanga Khumalo.

Hon Khumalo noted that alongside Parliament, the media plays a pivotal role in the political, economic and social development of our society as such, the relationship between parliament and media should be symbiotic as both thrive to uphold and protect the virtues of good governance for the benefit of our society. She also said that considering the recently re launched 50/50 campaign, and the need to engender the constitution drafting exercise, this engagement between ZWPC and media has come at the right time. The need for a good working relationship between media and the women Parliamentarians, on crafting a gender sensitive constitution cannot be overemphasized.

For WiPSU it is important that whilst the media should play its role in allowing equitable coverage of female politicians, the women Members of Parliament should also play their role in actively engaging the media. It is most important at this time of Constitution making, that the WPC as a whole and the female MPs individually ensure the media presence of women specific issues. As the Deputy Speaker of parliament said "We are aware that objective gender sensitive media reports on engendering the constitution will galvanize key stakeholders into requisite collaboration and cooperation. The attainment of the 50/50 representation is not an event. It is a process. Similarly, constitution making process is also a process not an event. The two processes are similar, and both require inclusive and multi stakeholder participation. I call on the media to join hands with the ZWPC and play its role of informing and education our people at all levels on the need for gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable economic and political development."

The Current Status of Women's Participation in Silobela (Midlands Province)

In July WiPSU carried out a feasibility study in Ward 21 and 28 Silobela, Midlands Province. The organization visited the wards, one with a male councilor and one with a female councilor. The aim was to assess the status of women's participation in the area in comparison with that of men.

- The women lack information that is necessary and relevant for them to improve their way of living.
 - The women are not aware of their human and women's rights.
 - Women lack confidence and as a result do not see themselves as potential leaders and decision makers.
 - Patriarchy is very rife amongst the Ndebele people in these two wards of Midlands. Discussions around participation, culture, religious values and norms specific to the roles of women were very intense and heated.
 - Women accept maltreatment as what they feel God created them for.
 - Women are considered and consider themselves as second class citizens with no rights but privileges and favors.
 - Women are equated to children.
 - Women due to their many household roles are not able to attend meetings. The time that meetings are set is also a factor that hinders their participation.
 - Women do not have the ability to demand for accountability from the people they elect and put into power.
 - Women do not understand what full and meaningful participation in politics is, they think singing, dancing and voting is all they are good for.
 - There is no deliberate effort to involve women in decision making processes.
 - Gender discrimination and gender based violence is rife in the area.
 - There are no initiatives to enhance and uplift the status of women.
- Even when in positions of power, women are still apologetic for being in positions of power

- they and do not know how to be influential leaders, and are not aware of the power they wield.
- Women feel being in a position of power is a privilege not a right.
- Women have a very strong belief that only men have the right qualities to be leaders since they are born with the qualities and women just know how to be nurturers.
- Men still believe women belong in the kitchen and their understanding should be limited to domestic chores only. They feel that they are present to make all the other necessary decisions on behalf of the women and children.
- Women do not believe that a woman can own properties of value as this is a privilege reserved for men even if the women have worked for and bought it ,it is not hers but her husband's and his relatives if he dies
- Women are only getting information from their churches. These institutions can be very patriarchal.
- There is a deep absence of democratic processes as decisions are made by one part of the community which is less than a third of the population in the two wards.

WiPSU re-launched it's 50/50 Campaign on the 5th of August 2011





Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU) is a feminist

non- governmental organization (NGO) that is non partisan, working with and providing support to women in politics with the aim to increase women's qualitative and quantitative participation and influence in policy and decision making.

Women in Politics Support Unit

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