

Gender Focus News

A publication of the Non-Governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council



Volume One

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Gender equality key to development, says Liuwa aspirant

BY NGOCC STAFFER

THE more women in key decision-making positions, the better the chances the country will have to redress the current development challenges the country has, says Mwangala Mwenda Lethbridge.

Ms. Mwenda, an Architect by profession is a member of the Patriotic Front (PF) party and is eyeing the Liuwa Constituency seat in Kalabo, Western Province. *Full story on page 3*

Women have a duty to participate in Governance, says Saboi



BY FRIDAH NKONDE-MUBANGA

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WOMEN FOR 2021

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Campaign Strategy (CECS) at Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka recently, Ms. Phiri said there was need for society to support and vote for women.

Full story on page 2

“Building Solidarity for Women’s Empowerment”

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In March 2020, the Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC) launched the Coordinated Elections Campaign Strategy, whose objective is to among other enhance the participation of women in governance and politics. "It has always been the desire of the government to ensure that we have equal representation of both men and women in politics and decision-making positions. The government through the Ministry of Gender therefore, remains committed to working with Civil Society and the women's movement to ensure that we have more



Gender Minister Elizabeth Phiri

women in Parliament and Local Government after the 2021 General Elections," Ms. Phiri said.

"May I take this opportunity to appeal, firstly, to women, to offer themselves for elective positions as Members of Parliament and Councillors. Currently, women's representation in Parliament is at about 17.2 per cent down from 18.1 per cent, recorded after the 2016 General Elections. This is despite the fact that women constitute almost 51 per cent of the coun-

try's population. President Edgar Lungu has over the years demonstrated his government's desire to bring about greater gender equity and equality at the highest level."

Ms. Phiri said prior to the 2016 elections, President Lungu and the PF party adopted a woman as a running mate who today is the country's Republican Vice President.

She said the Head of State has further appointed a number of women to key decision-making posi-

tions.

And NGOCC board chairperson Mary Mulenga in her welcome remarks said while the women's movement recognized the strides that the country has made towards empowering women for leadership, the yawning gap between women and men in leadership should never be seen as normal.

She said natural justice demands that women are considered equitably even as they aspire for leadership.

"The breaking of barriers that hinder women's participation in politics cannot happen by accident. Every person that is alive to the fact that women can and do play a critical role not only in the home but in matters of national development, will agree that deliberate interventions have to be seriously applied in order to effectively facilitate women's participation. There should be no room for discrimination or any form of stereotype. The Coordinated Elections

Campaign Strategy is premised on unity of purpose by all stakeholders," Ms. Mulenga said.

"The narrative of women aspiring for political leadership; be it at Local Government, Parliamentary and Presidential levels remains heart rending. That is why, the women's movement saw it befitting to join hands with various stakeholders to create a deliberate plan to spur women's participation in politics especially in view of the fast approaching 2021 general elections," said Ms. Mulenga.

Meanwhile, Zambia National Women's Lobby Executive Director Juliet Chibuta said it was unfortunate that globally, girls and women continued to be marginalised from the political sphere due to obstructive laws and institutional obstacles, prejudiced cultural practices, and disproportionately low access to quality education, healthcare, and resources.

"But as a movement, we say no to this and we refuse to see this in future because it is possible to reverse discriminating policies and practices. Education, amongst all other factors, is recognized as one of the most important causes of the problem that prevents women's voices from being heard in government. Girls being forced to stay at home to do domestic work, and missing out on schooling, will have lower self-esteem as a result, one of the factors for low political participation," Ms. Chibuta said.

"Furthermore, it is the male-dominated nature of politics in most countries that puts a glass barrier against women trying to enter it. More women need to be empowered to speak up in the public sphere. It creates a vicious cycle that the fewer women are in politics, the more their needs are being unmet; and the more unconfident they are, the less likely they can voice out their opinion in the government."

Take up leadership, Women challenged

BY FRIDAH NKONDE-MUBANGA

WOMEN should take interest in politics because most of the decisions made by politicians affect them, says Democratic Party (DP) Lusaka Central Constituency 2021 aspiring candidate Linda Mwamba. Ms. Mwamba says Zambia needs more women in decision-making positions.

"Being a woman comes with a natural sense of details. As a mother, I am always forward looking. This is the gift that will help me serve my people with high level of forecast. The gift to make decisions comes naturally. I know that I will not struggle to ensure that all the decisions made for the people are properly

assessed as to their viability," Ms. Mwamba says.

"Women should take interest in politics because most of the decisions made by politicians affect them. It is therefore important to have women in decision-making positions because we need more women to add their voices and speak out against the many challenges that women face. There are so many women out there who are oppressed and there is no one to speak for them."

Ms Mwamba, 43, and a mother of three says women were capable of developing Zambia.

"I went to Matete Primary School in Kitwe from Grade 1 to 5. I then moved to Muchinka Primary School in Mansa where

I did my Grade 6 and 7. I did my Grade 8 to 12 at Mumbwa Secondary School in Mumbwa. I later studied Business Administration and Sales. I have been working in Sales for the past 14 years. I am currently in charge of retail and chain stores," Ms. Mwamba says.

She says she decided to join politics because she has always wanted to serve the people.

"There is so much that women can do in decision-making positions. We all know that women have so much to do in the homes; they take care of the children, have to ensure that there is food in the house, and they are the ones who take care of the sick in homes. I would like to encourage women not to

shun politics. Women should be motivated to help being spear headers in Central governance," Ms. Mwamba says.

"I picked on Lusaka Central because it is a very special Constituency. It is composed of a wide portfolio of stakeholders ranging from the working class, the employable youth and the hard-working mothers and men in the markets. The working class needs water, proper markets, affordable schools and hospitals. When we talk about the youth...they need support to establish viable businesses. I would like to help the young people access finances to help run their own activities. Using my position, I will be lobbying from the existing NGO to come up with activities that would help young people."

Women have a duty to participate in Governance, says Saboi

BY FRIDAH NKONDE-MUBANGA

WOMEN should know that it is not only their right to take up decision-making positions, but it is also their duty, says NDC Kafue Constituency aspiring candidate Saboi Imboela.

Ms. Imboela says women should not wait for others to better the country but should get up and take up leadership positions.

Aged 41, Ms. Imboela studied Political Science and Development Studies at the University of Zambia and has a Masters in International Law and Politics from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. She has worked for the University of Zambia as a lecturer, Save the Children as a Communication and Advocacy Coordinator, UNDP and the Electoral Commission of Zambia as a youth Projects Coordinator where she was in charge of all youth campaigns and communications for the 2011 General Elections. She is currently running a school called SaboiImboela and is Chief Executive Officer of Galaxy Media Limited.

“Women should know that it is not only their rights, it is also their duty to take up leadership positions. Women owe it to their country to ensure that there is good governance. If women want good governance, it should start with them. They (women) should not wait for others to better this country. They should ask themselves what they are doing to better this country and take up leadership positions. I would like to urge women to aspire for leadership and better this country. They will be doing it for their children and their children’s children,” Ms. Imboelawho is also into part time lecturing says.

“We need more women in leadership positions. There are very few women occupying influential positions. From the time we had the Millennium Development Goals, as Zambia we signed to have at least 30 per cent of women in leadership positions. But now almost all the international protocols have moved from 30 to 50 per cent. Up to now as a country, we are struggling and we only have something like a 10 per cent women representation. If you look at our Parliament, you look at our Council...most of these decision-making positions; you will find that the women are very few. So, the critical mass of just 30 per cent, has failed to be achieved and one of the reasons we have very few women in political leadership is the fact that women fail to

avail themselves for leadership, so it is important that women avail themselves for leadership,” Ms. Imboela says.

Ms. Imboela says more women should be encouraged to take up leadership positions in society.

“Inasmuch as we may go out there to encourage our fellow women to participate in elections, it starts from all of us. I feel it is important that women join...and if I am going to tell other women to join politics, it should start with me. The other reason is that a woman’s perspective is different...men and women were created differently. My perspective is definitely different from that of a man. If a man looks at a bad road today, for example, they will look at the economic aspect of a road...in terms of what is transported there...their cars...what will happen to their car if they drive on a bad road. But I will look at it from a social aspect...if a pregnant woman is taken to the hospital using the same bad road, how will it affect her? When I look at a bad road, as a woman, I will think about human life, a pregnant woman’s health and not just the economic side of a road.”

Ms. Imboela says women should never forget who they are and what they are capable of doing.

“Some feminists say that women should work as hard as men and also try to integrate in a man’s environment. Other feminists say that inasmuch as we may both work in the same environment, we should never forget who we are as women. Those feminists advance a view where they say that people like to say that women are emotional...but the reason why most Parliaments are so unresponsive to the needs of the people; women and children in particular is because they lack emotions. So, those feminists say we need emotions in Parliament...we need those emotions in Parliament. When something is going wrong, women will look at it emotionally and will sort it out. If we have so many men in Parliament, they will detach themselves from the women’s problems. I agree with those who say that we need women who will treat any problem as theirs,” Ms. Imboela says.

“The negative portrayal of women in the media is a problem and this should be looked into by the women’s movement between now and the 2021 General Elections. The women should be profiled positively. I can safely say that I am one of those who talks to different media houses about almost anything; from economics,

politics and anything. You will find that most women will only be interviewed on light issues. When a woman does something, women are judged harshly by the media. We need positive aspects about women to be brought out and not just negatives. A lot of capacity building is needed in public speaking, mobilisation. A lot of women lack confidence, self-motivation to go out there and become leaders. We need more women in leadership positions. For example, political parties would want to adopt women but where are the women?”

Ms. Imboela says it is unfortunate that society still has a problem with women leadership.

“It starts from the homes, churches...what are we telling the girls as they grow up? What are we telling the boys

in terms of how they should respond to women leadership? The women’s movement has a big role to play when it comes to sensitising people on women leadership. My advice to women who shun politics is that they should not shun away from politics. Any society that is disadvantaging half of its population disadvantages itself we have seen very good examples of countries that have used both men and women in leadership positions... these countries are doing very well. Let’s look at Rwanda, it is one of the shining examples in Africa...we have Sweden, Finland. These countries are doing well in health, education,” says Ms. Imboela. Ms. Imboela is currently working as a consultant in gender, children and women’s rights programming, as well as communication and media.



NDC Kafue Constituency aspiring candidate Saboi Imboela

EDITORIAL

The Gender Focus News (GFN) is a publication of the Non-Governmental Gender Organisations Coordinating Council (NGOCC). The Gender Focus News is one of the many activities NGOCC and indeed the women’s movement are implementing to try and increase the participation of women in decision making position specifically politics. The publication is born to compliment the good work that the Zambian media is doing in amplifying the voices of women in the media. Specifically, the publication which will initially be published monthly aims at profiling women who are aspiring for political office ahead of 2021.

The publication will therefore be available for potential women candidates from across the political divide. As a nonpartisan organisation, our only objective which is in line with the our mission is to increase women’s participation in politics.

Over the years, women have remained marginalized and discriminated from both participating and benefiting from the various development processes. Women’s participation in governance and decision making has remained extremely unacceptably low over the years.

Since Zambia’s independence in 1964, women have been absent from the decision making tables despite the fact that they are in the majority.

Statistics indicate although there has been some marginal increase in the number of female Supreme and High Court Judges at 45%, the lower courts are still at 27% and 12% female representation at Magistrates and Local Court Justices respectively.

At Cabinet and Permanent Secretary level, statistics have been averaging 20% while at traditional leaders’ level, females represent a paltry 9%, the same as female Chief Executives

in corporate institutions. The same trend has been registered at Parliamentary and Local Government level where women’s representation has always been very low currently at 18.1%, (29) women Members of Parliament, 26 elected and 3 nominated, out of the 164 MPs) and 9% (132 women out of 1,648 Councilors elected) respectively. A number of reasons have been cited for the low numbers of women under-representation but largely attributed to the entrenched patriarchy. According to the United Nations women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women.

Research has shown that a number of factors act as barriers to woman political participation. Political, socio-economic and cultural barriers predominantly constrain or prevent women’s participation.

These include; Violent and Sexual and Gender Based Violence In many African states, Zambia inclusive, politics is marred by violence. While both genders are victims of this, it presents particular barriers to women’s engagement and political participation. According to the United Nations (2015) an Afrobarometer survey showed that women feel “a sense of vulnerability to political intimidation and violence”. Electoral violence is one problem that has been identified as a stumbling block to robust participation of women in the political process and in governance. Violence against women is used as a targeted and destructive tool in various ways throughout the electoral cycle to dissuade women from participating as election administrators, voters, and candidates.

Cultural and traditional norms

Women’s ability to engage politically both within and beyond the voting booth—particularly as community organisers and elected officials—is often shaped by norms that drive wider social structures. Fundamental to the constraints that women face is an entrenched patriarchal system in which family control and decision-making powers are in the hands of males. Traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes—especially as regards women’s roles and status in society—remain strong, particularly in rural areas. Traditional roles and the division of labour are still clearly gendered. Social norms that make it more difficult for women to leave their traditionally domestic roles for more public roles outside of the home. Women’s gender identity is still predominantly conceived of as being domestic in nature, and continues to act as a barrier to women’s entry into formal politics.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Socio-economic status of women to a greater extent play a significant role in enhancing their participation and representation in political decision-making bodies. The lack of an economic base for women has been a factor in their participation—or lack of—it in politics because the cost of campaigning is very high. Lack of financial resources can limit participation given the costs associated with elections (WPL, 2014; Kayuni & Chikadza, 2016; Common Wealth, 2017). Independent funding and placing limits on campaign spending may support women in overcoming the barriers to political participation.

The Gender Focus News therefore will provide a platform for women to market themselves to the electorates in the various constituencies and wards. As we go towards 2021, we therefore appeal to women across the country to offer themselves for leadership. We also appeal to society out there to support women leadership.



NGOCC

Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council

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ABOUT NGOCC

The Non-governmental Gender Organizations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC) is an umbrella organization active in coordinating and strengthening member Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and Community Based Organisation (CBOs) working to uplift the standards of women and children in Zambia. Established in 1985, NGOCC has been active in addressing gender and development for the empowerment of women. Amid the various challenges and for a more focused approach towards equality, NGOCC does recognize the importance of women's role in social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation and determined to uphold the women's human rights and ensure their empowerment. Over the years, NGOCC has grown from just being a co-coordinating body to a focal point for women's issues in Zambia and a voice for the women's movement. The current membership stands at 97 organizations spread across all the 10 Provinces with a presence in 62 districts of Zambia.

OUR VALUES

1. Equity
2. Equality
3. Activism
4. Team work
5. Volunteerism
6. Integrity
7. Professionalism
8. Commitment
9. Transparency and Accountability
10. Being a learning Organisation

NGOCC BEMOANS LOW NUMBERS OF WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING

BY NGOCC STAFFER

Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC), Executive Director, Engwase Mwale says the 2021 general elections presents an opportunity for Zambia to attain gender parity with regards the decision making positions held by women and men.

Ms. Mwale says the discrimination of women from participating and benefiting from the development

processes was a human rights violation against women.

Currently the National Assembly has a total of 166 members of which only 28 are women.

"Over the years, NGOCC and the women's movement at large, have been concerned about the low participation of women in decision-making at all levels. The 2021 general elections present an opportunity," Ms. Mwale said.

"Women's participation in decision-making is not only important but also a development imperative. As we have continually stated, sustainable development will remain elusive for as long as women are excluded from occupying positions of influence at all levels; Parliament and Local Government among others." She says.

Below are some current female members of Parliament. The Remaining members will be added in the next edition



*Inonge Mutukwa Wina
Republican Vice President*



*Catherine Namugala
First Deputy Speaker of Parliament*



Dora Siliya
Constituency: Petauke Central (PF)
Minister - Information and Broadcasting



Olipa Mwansa Phiri
Constituency: Nyimba (PF)
Minister - Office of the Vice President



Kampamba Chilumba
Constituency: Kalulushi (PF)
Minister - Community Development and Social Welfare



Jean Kapata
Constituency: Mandevu (PF)
Minister - Lands and Natural Resources



Sylvia Bambala Chalikosa
Constituency: Mpika Central (PF)
Minister - Works and Supply



Nkandu Luo, MP
Constituency: Munalu (PF)
Minister - Fisheries and Livestock



Godfridah Nsenduluka Sumaili
Nominated MP (PF)
Minister - Religious Affairs and National Guidance



Attractor Malungo
Chisangano
Constituency: Gwembe (UPND)



Mirriam Chinyama Chonya
Constituency: Kafue (UPND)



Pilila Mwanza Getrude Jere
Constituency: Lumezi (Independent)



Emerine Kabanshi
Constituency: Luapula (PF)



Chushi C Kasanda
Constituency: Chisamba (UPND)

"Building Solidarity for Women's Empowerment"