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THE WOMEN'S VOICE

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WWDs in Masvingo Speak out on the Constitutional Amendment Bill #2

by staff writer



ICOD ZIM stakeholder meeting at Flamboyant Hotel Masvingo

The government of Zimbabwe gazetted the constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Bill (2). On 22nd of May 2020 the ICOD Zim convened a stakeholder position paper development on the Constitution Amendment Bill (2) in Masvingo Province with women with disabilities. During the meeting held at Flamboyant Hotel in Masvingo workshop participants agreed to the idea that all the proposed 27 amendments under the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.2) 2019 affect women with disabilities in Zimbabwe since they are people living in Zimbabwe. Participants noted that they are certain provisions which affect these women collectively as a group in terms of the protection of their group rights, participation in politics and decision making positions and these are clause 6, 11, 17, 18 and 20 of the Bill.

During the workshop the general sentiment was it is trite to note that women are not a homogenous group. Therefore there is need to look at the different groups of women such as women with disabilities and promote their participation in political matters and decision making positions. Speaking during the work one participant noted that “WWDs are a vulnerable group in our country who have been marginalised, discriminated against and excluded from decision making positions, over the past years their voices in the political sphere have been relegated to the periphery of the political discussion”. The main cause of this is the lack of political representation and the failure of government to implement policies that will allow and secure seats for the political representation of women with disabilities.

Covid-19's impact on WWDs

By Tanyaradzwa Munhazu

Institute for Community Development Trust (ICOD) conducted a research on the impact of COVID-19 on Women With Disabilities (WWDs) in Masvingo urban, Zimbabwe. Despite the surging corona virus being universal, its impacts and effects have proved not to be the same across different socio-economic divides. The ICOD Zim observed that vulnerable social groups in low - income countries include disabled, women, unemployed orphans and other minority groups.



WWD follow proceedings

The assessments done by the ICOD Zim confirmed that people with disabilities (PWDs) top the list of vulnerable groups to impacts of COVID-19. The WWDs are a social group which is usually ignored and marginalized in many socio-economic and political platforms.

Therefore, the study took a unique dimension and interrogated the WWDs lived experiences during the lockdown caused by the outbreak of COVID-19. The experiences scrutinized include domestic abuses, pronounced ostracism, infringed human rights, lack of access to adequate healthcare services and food. To improve the welfare of WWDs the ICOD Zim is engaging the Government of Zimbabwe, concerned and active stakeholders in making sure that WWDs are given adequate information on mitigating and managing the spread of COVID-19 virus. These stakeholders must establish and implement vibrant awareness campaigns so as to educate guardians, WWDs and their caregivers on how best to reduce chances of increasing infections in households.

ICOD Zim engages Masvingo City Council on behalf of PWDs

By Staff writer

On the 24th of April 2020, the City of Masvingo acting on a government directive ordered the demolition of Chitima market stalls. The demolitions took all informal traders including the PWDs a constituency ICOD Zim represents by surprise as no formal communication was served.

The Masvingo City Council in a statement on the demolition claimed that they were cleaning the area in preparation for a major renovation. The Masvingo City Council promised to erect new structures to accommodate the ever growing population of informal traders. On the 11th of May 2020 Masvingo City Council commenced the registration process for all potential informal traders to be allocated space/market stalls at the Chitima market. ICOD Zim through its lawyers Matutu and Mureri legal practitioners has engaged the Masvingo City Council for a percentage (10%) of marketing stalls or vending space at Chitima market to be allocated to people with disabilities. The engagement process requires Masvingo City Council to consider the names of People with Disability submitted on behalf of the PWDs by the ICOD Zim. Aware that PWDs are not able to stand in long queues for a long time due to their physical conditions and some are not able to travel due to the lockdown, ICOD Zim raised a concern that they are supposed to be considered as the majority of PWDs are informal traders. A few weeks later, Muccheke Housing Officer Mr Gwamure advised Icod Zim that they signed the letter and send it back to the Housing Director at Masvingo City Council Offices Civic Centre. This totally shows progress and hope for getting space for trading at Chitima market stalls.

Exclusion of Children with disabilities to access education

Children with disabilities are more likely to miss out on school than other children even if they managed to go to school, they are more likely to leave before finishing their primary education. ICOD Zimbabwe on 23 May implemented a community engagement meeting with Women with disabilities at Chipezeze in Zaka where many issues were raised on children with disabilities.

Women with disabilities highlighted that many rural areas school buildings are not accessible to children with physical disabilities and there may be no way for children with physical disabilities to get to school. Most of the teachers there lack the training and resources to teach children with disabilities and to adapt their methods to address their needs. In Zaka six children with disabilities dropped from Chipezeze primary School in 2017 due to lack of trained teachers to teach those children. Participants also noted that cultural beliefs sometimes lead to

negative attitude from teachers, parents and other children towards children with disabilities leading to bullying, abuse and exclusion from school. Due to stigma and discrimination, students can suffer from low self-esteem which affects their academic work. Some children even hide their disabilities because of their fear of rejection and stigmatisation and so they will not manage to get the support they need.

They also pointed out that special schools are expensive, many parents cannot afford them. Many special schools require the parent to pay fees for certain years then BEAM will finish off but the fees to cater for the specified period is not there and many children with disabilities are ending up missing school. There is no longer equal access to education for all but children with disabilities are being left out in the process of learning. Everyone has the right to education despite race, ethnicity or any disability.

WWD's Paucity representation in Parliament.

By Tanyaradzwa Munhazu

According to the Amendment Bill, section 124 clause 11, 60 women must occupy positions as Members of Parliament from across the political divide. The Zimbabwean House of Assembly has only two people with disabilities at Senate level highlighting that the PWDs sector is underrepresented in the Zimbabwean Parliament. On the 23rd of May 2020 ICOD Zim implemented a stakeholder meeting with 40 women at Westwood Lodge in Chiredzi. The major objective of the meeting was to analyze and unpack the amendment bill number 2 and its implications to women with disabilities. Chiredzi based Human Rights lawyer Emmanuel Chibudu facilitated the engagement meeting and made the contribution that the constitution of Zimbabwe has never been tasted yet the Government of Zimbabwe is already mulling the option of making 27 amendments to it.



Honourable Member of Parliament Muchirairwa Mugidho

INCREASE OF COVID-19 CASES IN MASVINGO

By Staff writer

Masvingo has witnessed a surge in the number of cases which have been confirmed as positive to the deadly CORONA Virus pandemic. The surge has been attributed to by a number of factors chief among them the increase in number of people crossing into the country using illegal points along Botswana –Zimbabwe boundary line in Bulilima and some are running away of quarantine centers. Many reports are recorded of returnees from South Africa and Mozambique are sneaking into the district. Undetected through the porous Zimbabwe borders.

A survey by ICOD Zim through its community members in Zaka, Bikita, Masvingo and Gutu has revealed grave concern over laxity of security measures at quarantine centers in Masvingo where many returnees are escaping. During random interviews conducted by the ICOD Zim with members of the public Masvingo residents also raised concern over the laxity of police officers that are manning roadblocks leading to Masvingo town who are allowing easy access for people who have not been tested into the city or without movement exemption letters. In most rural areas most business centers are not observing opening and closing hours, social distancing or even wearing of masks and this could actually lead to more community infections. In its awareness programs ICOD Zim continues to encourage the observance of social distancing and other WHO recommendations.

The participants to the meeting felt that there should be a disability quarter to ensure people with disabilities are properly represented. Member of Parliament Honorable Mugidho who attended the meeting said there is need for the Parliament to allocate number of seats per Province which are meant for People with disabilities in the constitution. The Parliament to implement proportional distribution of positions to WWDs in the House of Assembly and Senate. The Parliament to craft a law basing on constituency and let the youths contest in both parties so that the WWDs will be able to vote for their representatives