



# Voice Of Habakkuk Trust

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Influencing Biblical Transformation of Local Communities Through Advocacy, Information Dissemination, Capacity Building And Research

## ACTION TEAMS CALL FOR WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN TRADITIONAL COURTS

By Blondie Ndebele

Habakkuk Trust Community Advocacy Action Teams from Umzingwane, Gwanda, Matobo, Mangwe, Nkayi, Bubi, Insiza and other women are not represented in most traditional courts in their areas. These traditional courts are presided over by either the village head, Headman or the area Chief.

Section 17 of the Zimbabwe's Constitution stipulates that the State must promote the full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society on the basis of equality

with men.

Presenting a position paper drafted by women at a policy dialogue meeting organized by Habakkuk Trust in Bulawayo recently, Habakkuk Trust Action Team Vice Convener for Umzingwane Ward 5, Mrs. Mollet Dube said men have continually dominated traditional courts making it difficult for women to access justice.

"Traditionally, women were not allowed to speak in front of men and this has continued

even though women have been empowered," she said. "Women are not able to fully express themselves in issues affecting them as most traditional courts are male dominated. The absence of women assessors in these courts has made it hard for women to seek justice on various crimes committed by men."

The Action Teams noted that even though there are some areas where there are female traditional leaders and assessors, the majority of traditional courts have no female representation.

"As such, traditional courts are biased in favour of men," said Mrs. Dube. "Women are mere listeners and do not actively participate in these courts. We therefore call for appointment of women assessors in traditional courts to allow women to access justice."

Arts, Culture and Heritage Officer in the Ministry of Rural Development, Promotion and Preservation of National Cultural Heritage, Mr. Cannan Mathema, who was at the meeting, said there was a need to train traditional leadership on the contents of the Constitution.

"Traditional leaders must be taught on what the Constitution says regarding equal representation so that they can include women in their team of assessors," he said. "In most cases, assessors have the power over the outcome of a case more than the Chiefs."

Mathema also encouraged communities to attend parliamentary public hearings on bills so that they can input on the policies that affect them.

### FROM THE C.E.O'S DESK



Mr Dumisani Chikomo  
Habakkuk Trust CEO

The issue of access to basic services such as water, electricity, mobile phone networks, health and education is of paramount concern to all Zimbabwean citizens. Most citizens continue to struggle to access the most basic of services due to a multiplicity of factors including economic decline and institutional incapacities of key service delivery institutions. Lack of sound service delivery has alienated and further deepened the marginalization of vulnerable sections of the populace such as rural women, the elderly, children and the poor. In this issue of the Voice of Habakkuk we focus on some of the challenges of women in rural communities and how they are engaging these issues through the Habakkuk Trust Community Action Teams. Importantly, the organization has been engaging communities in Insiza and Umzingwane on issues of access to basic services, distribution and control of resources at household and community level. It is interesting how gender power dynamics affects access to service delivery and control of community resources. A sizeable number of women have indicated that in spite of them being de facto heads of households as most of their spouses are in South Africa they still do not make major economic decisions at household level.

Access to justice is a key issue critical to social cohesion and development but it is tragic to note that a significant number of traditional courts do not have any female assessors thus delaying and at times denying women access to justice. Communities clearly articulated this issue at Habakkuk Trust Women's Desk Forum.

Most communities also complained of poor mobile phone networks which have affected communication with migrant spouses thus fueling gender based violence. The Community Action Teams in Umzingwane (Dobhi) have since engaged mobile phone service providers on the issue and there is light at the end of the tunnel.

We need to remember that access to basic services is not a privilege bestowed.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Voice of Habakkuk as we continue to amplify the voices of ordinary people.



## COMMUNITIES PREPARE GENDER ADVOCACY ACTION PLANS

By Blondie Ndebele

The Umzingwane and Insiza Districts community members, recently trained by Habakkuk Trust on gender advocacy, have prepared advocacy action plans to tackle the issue of representation of women and youths in local development and

tance in our everyday lives," he said. "As the Action Team, we will prepare gender advocacy plans to tackle issues such as women's access to resources, ownership of property and active participation of women in meetings."



Gender training workshop in Umzingwane Ward 5

decision-making structures.

The two-day gender advocacy workshops conducted in Umzingwane Wards 5 and 9 as well as Insiza Wards 2 and 9 were meant to strengthen the community's knowledge and understanding of gender issues and how they can promote gender equality in their Wards.

Pastor Reynold Mugadza, a participant at a workshop conducted in Insiza Ward 15 said the workshop made them realized the gap that exists in their Ward in terms of gender equality.

"The workshop allowed us to look at gender in a different light and to fully understand its impor-

In Insiza Ward 2, women complained that they are denied opportunities to empower themselves once they get married.

"Some women are educated and acquire certain skills before they get married. However, they are not allowed to use those skills once they are married," Sikhululekile Moyo said.

She said this has made most women more dependent on men. The Action Teams are yet to advocate on gender equality in all facets of their society. allow mopani trees to grow so that huge quantities of mopani worms can be harvested. There is need therefore to create a plantation for Mopani



From left- Insiza Ward 2 Councillor Luphia Mtonga, Chief Ndube and Insiza Ward 2 Convener Elloit Mhlanga following proceedings at a gender workshop recently

Trees to protect them from deforestation and allow continual harvesting of Mopani worms." Happiness Ndlovu, another participant at a training workshop in Zamanyoni in Matobo Ward 19 said there was need to protect Mopani trees to allow production of more Mopani worms.

Participants in both meetings proposed to organize people to create protected areas where Mopani trees will be allowed to grow and allow Mopani worms to repopulate. This season, huge quantities of Amacimbi were harvested in most parts of Matobo and Gwanda.



Some of Umzingwane Ward 9 Action Team members at a meeting

## MEN ENCOURAGED TO ACCEPT WOMEN LEADERSHIP

By Ntombiyezansi Tozana

It is ironic that in Umzingwane's Ward 9 community, a ward that is presided over by a female Councillor, participation of women in development and decision-making structures is very poor as the service delivery structures and development committees are mainly male dominated.

According to statistics from Habakkuk Trust's recent gender and advocacy capacity building workshop in the ward, women constitute less than 25% of the membership of Village Development Committees, about 12% of membership of the Neighborhood Watch and 0% in membership of Assessors in Village Courts.

The only structures where women were represented fairly were the School Development Committees and Village Health Workers where representation is 42% and 71% respectively.

The Councillor of the ward, Ms Sikhululwe

Ndlovu encouraged the Action Team to seriously pursue gender advocacy to ensure that in all village and ward service delivery structures where males are dominating, women are also incorporated.

"The Constitution needs to be implemented by everyone including us in the villages. Now that we know and have seen that women are not represented, we need to ensure that we correct it so that we do not violate women's rights. We need development and service delivery issues that responds to the needs and concerns of women," she said.

Councillor Ndlovu further challenged the men in the workshop and the traditional leaders to reform themselves and accept the inclusion of women in community decision and development structures.



Umzingwane Ward 9 public meeting where additional assessors and neighborhood watch committee members were selected to create gender balance

## GENDER INEQUALITY AND MIGRATION AFFECTING DEVELOPMENT

By Rodwin Sibanda

The high rates of migration of people, especially men in Matabeleland region, to the neighboring countries in search of greener pastures has negatively impacted on development, communities have said.

Matabeleland South, which is believed to have more people leaving their families to the neighboring countries such as Botswana and South Africa has remained under developed.

As a result of migration, most households are now headed by women, who have little control over resources.

Some cultural practices that inhibit women from effectively participating in major development and decision-making processes still exists in the region thus leaving the decision-making powers to a



Insiza Ward 2 gender training participants discussing gender advocacy issues in their Ward

handful of men.

Women in most rural parts of Matabeleland are still not given equal opportunities to participate in decision making as there are areas where women are not allowed to address a gathering where there are traditional leaders.

In most instances, women are usually the majority in community meetings but they do not elect each other on leadership positions even on committees or issues that directly affect them largely because of the discriminatory practices that still exists in societies.

The discrimination goes down to household level where women lack control over resources in their household such as cattle and the fields. Women are denied certain rights enjoyed by their male counterparts even though Section 17 of the Constitution states that women must have access to resources, including land, on basis of equality with men. Women are not allowed to sell cattle without

permission from a male figure yet most men are outside the country making it difficult for them to cover some of the expenses which include paying school fees for their children.

Some of the families live in abject poverty not because they don't have resources but because they have to wait for a man to make a final decision on how these resources should be disposed.

Gender imbalances and migration of men in Matabeleland region has significantly contributed to underdevelopment.

To ensure Zimbabwe is free from gender oppression and inequality, local leaders should come up with gender sensitive initiatives which include refreshing development structures to include women, awareness campaigns on the rights of both women, deliberate quota systems to put women in leadership and working with other stakeholders towards overall gender mainstreaming of development projects.

## ACTION TEAM ENGAGES MOBILE OPERATORS TO IMPROVE MOBILE NETWORKS

Umzingwane Ward 9 Habakkuk Trust Community Advocacy Action Teams recently engaged the leading mobile network operators, Econet Zimbabwe, Telecel Zimbabwe and Netone over inaccessibility of mobile networks in the bulk of the Ward.

The Ward is less than 60km from Bulawayo but most people are forced to walk distances, climb mountains or trees to merely make a phone call. The bulk of the Ward has absolutely no mobile network access and where it's available, the reception is very poor.

Speaking on behalf of the Action Team Mrs Sithabile Sibanda explained that the Ward is left behind technologically as they have difficulties in accessing mobile networks, radio and television signals.

"We are in serious need for network base stations," she said. "When one wants to make a call, they have to climb a mountain or walk distances to where there is network. It get really hard for older people and at night. We cannot receive important information and our children are technologically illiterate because of that."

Responding to questions at a policy dialogue meeting, Telecel Regional Manager-Southern Mrs Priscilla Chivasa said they were aware of the problems and they are working fulltime to make sure that at the earliest



Umzingwane Ward 9 Action Team Convener Mr. Charles Sibanda giving feedback to the community recently

possible time the issue is addressed.

Netone Public Relations manager, John Nyashanu assured the Action Team that he will engage the mobile operator's technical team to find out if there are any plans put in place to ensure improve access to network in Umzingwane.

"We really appreciate communities which are so serious especially regarding communication because it doesn't make sense that at this day and age there are communities who still can't access mobile networks. This is the people's network and it is our wish to avail network in every corner of Zimbabwe. We might not have done so because of resources but however there should be plans in place," Nyashanu said.

The Action Team will make a follow up to the issue until network access in the Ward is improved.



Umzingwane Ward 9 vice Convener Mrs Sithabile Sibanda interacting with Netone Public Relations Manager Mr John Nyashanu while Councillor Sikhululwe Ndlovu listens

## Know your Constitution

### Chapter 12

#### Independent Commissions Supporting Democracy

#### Zimbabwe Gender Commission

Zimbabwe Gender Commission is an institution established under section 245 of the Constitution to ensure gender equity and advocate on laws, policies and practices that seek to promote gender equality.

#### 246 Functions of Zimbabwe Gender Commission

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission has the following functions-

- a) to monitor issues concerning gender equality to ensure gender equality as provided in this Constitution.
- b) to investigate possible violations of rights relating to gender;
- c) to receive and consider complaints from the public and to take such action in regard to the complaints as it considers appropriate;
- d) to conduct research into issues relating to gender and social justice, and to recommend changes to laws and practices which lead to discrimination based on gender;
- e) to advise public and private institutions on steps to be taken to ensure gender equality;
- f) to recommend affirmative action programmes to achieve gender equality;
- g) to recommend prosecution redress for criminal violations of rights relating to gender;
- h) to secure appropriate redress where rights relating to gender have been violated; and
- i) to do everything necessary to promote gender equality.

#### 247 Reports by Zimbabwe Gender Commission

In addition to the report it is required to submit in terms of section 323, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission may, through the appropriate Minister, submit reports to Parliament on particular matters relating to gender issues which, in the Commission's opinion, should be brought to the attention of Parliament.