

WOMEN HAVE A PLACE IN POLITICS...

ZESN Conducts a BRIDGE Training on Gender and Elections in Zimbabwe

From 18-19 of August 2014 women representatives from political parties, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and civil society came together to participate in the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) module on Gender and Elections. The three day training workshop provided a platform for

women to discuss issues pertaining to women's participation in elections. The training workshop provided an opportunity to strengthen relationships between women from political parties, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and civil society organisations working on women's issues. The workshop deepened participants understanding of the standards and principles underpinning good electoral administration.



The workshop examined the following themes; Women and the media; Women in the political world, Primary elections, Women in Parliament, Gender responsive governance, Political Financing; Electoral Violence; Electoral Systems and Quotas



and special measures; Typologies of Election Management Bodies; Challenges and Barriers encountered by Women; Voter Registration and Voter and Civic Education.

Some of the key challenges to women's participation in politics include constraints in the legal framework, patriarchy, stereotyping, negative publicity of women, and violence in all its forms against women, internal party processes including primary elections, lack of financial resources, voter registration and the nomination process. The voter registration process, the

Political Parties Finances Act, Quotas were identified as issues which need further reforming. The discussions within the training reaffirmed that women continue to face barriers in participating meaningfully in the stages of the electoral process.

Participants called on ZESN to conduct more workshops of this nature as they promote cohesion amongst the diverse political parties and electoral stakeholders. One participant commented: *“Bringing ZEC to this workshop has assisted me in understanding its role as an election management body. I feel encouraged that ZEC has been given the constitutional mandate to conduct voter registration, this will enhance transparency and independency of the body in running all election related roles”*.

Participants requested ZESN to invite representatives from relevant Government Ministries to participate in future training workshops, to allow for discussions with key policy makers.

The engagement of the women in the BRIDGE Training continues to demonstrate women’s commitment to rise above organisational interests to ensure that the women of Zimbabwe are able to claim their right to equal participation in democratic processes that impact on their lived realities.

As the country begins the new election cycle under the 2013 Constitution counting down to 2018 women from different areas of life need to continue to collectively craft relevant and implementable strategies together with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to ensure that women are able to fully participate in all aspects of the elections.

The workshop was organised by the Zimbabwe Election Support Network and facilitated by Rindai Chipfunde Vava, Molly Nawe Kamukama and Rejoice Sibanda.
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From left: ZEC Deputy Chairperson Commissioner J Kazembe and Commissioner B. Nhandara



Hon. Anastasia Kavhu of ZANU PF (standing) was also part of the workshop