

**REPORT OF THE WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES DIALOGUE ON MEANINGFUL  
PARTICIPATION IN THE 2013 ELECTIONS**

**VENUE: BETHEL COURT, EZULWILNI-eSWATINI**

**DATE: 26 JUNE 2018**



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## Executive Summary

### Quick Facts

<b>21</b> Participants <b>1</b> Man and <b>20</b> Women
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The report seeks to provide information about the women with disabilities dialogue on meaningful participation in the elections, held at The Bethel Court at Ezulwini. The one-day event was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2018 and ended on a high note with learning and stronger participation.

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Kingdom of Eswatini are amongst the most marginalised in the country. Socio-cultural norms have led to beliefs, attitudes and practices that stigmatise and cause discrimination against them. Consequently, they are excluded and at the periphery of participation in all spheres of life and the benefits that developments in these areas. There is an obvious absence of PWDs at different levels of decision-making and their participation in governance processes is limited. As a result of the absence of their voices in leadership and positions of influence, their issues receive limited recognition and prioritisation in the national development agenda. Women with disabilities face additional discrimination and subordination due to the existing gender inequalities in Swati society and are hence doubly disadvantaged.

### Background

One of the key targets in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development is 50% women in all areas of decision-making by 2030. Progress towards equal representation of women in political decision making over the past ten years has been slow and uneven. eSwatini has made national, regional and international commitments aimed at promoting greater women representation at this level yet implementation and compliance remain a challenge. The past two national elections, in 2008 and 2013 have seen a reduction in the number of women – both elected and appointed - in Parliament. In 2008, 7 women were elected from constituencies (*tinkhundla*) while the King appointed 2 to the House of Assembly and 7 to Senate. In 2013, only one woman was elected from 55 constituencies and the King appointed 3 and 5 women to the House and Senate respectively. In both elections, the constitutional process of electing 4 additional women to parliament in the event of a result of less than 30% women representation did not take place. There thus remains much to do in ensuring that women's representation is increased and that applicable constitutional and legislative provisions are adhered to.

### Purpose of training

However, the activity was in pursuit of the 50/50 Campaign on the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and seeking to contribute to meaningful participation and inclusiveness of persons, in particular women with disabilities in the 2018 national elections. These elections are scheduled to take place in the last quarter of the year, and three elective offices will be contested within the 59 *Tinkhundlas*, namely *Bucopho* (chiefdom level), *Indvuna Yenkhundla* (*Inkhundla* level) and Member of Parliament (*Inkhundla* level). There will be additional elections for Senate as well as appointments to both the House of Assembly and Senate

by King Mswati III. According to the constitution these appointments are to take into account marginalised groups or interests not already represented in Parliament.

The activity was therefore a dialogue with women with disabilities on the elections and how they can use the election platform for advocacy on their issues. There were 15 women from Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs). The participants were selected by the DPOs from all 4 regions of the country both at leadership and general membership level and also included young women with disabilities.

### **Expectations from participants**

- To learn more on the elections and how a woman with disability be convinced and be bold like men in order for her to stand for elections
- How can the issues of violence against people with disabilities be articulated as in most cases women with disabilities are victims/survivors of abuse.
- By the time we finish this workshop we unite and come with one voice that we will support those who are standing for elections as women with disabilities.
- To know the importance of participation in the development of the community so that when standing for elections the society from your constituency would recognize you.

**Perceptions** – Women with disabilities felt that the society's perceptions affect them. This is what they said:



Fakazile Dlamini from People Living with Albanism Organisation in eSwatini stressing a point on issues affecting people with albinism.

- eSwatini women living with disabilities feel there is lot of written documents on rights of women with disabilities but there is no action
- Samkelisiwe Dlamini a member at the Women with Disabilities of eSwatini, said they wished to be part of the elected candidates that join Parliament but the society's perception on them has drained away all the confidence and hope for them.
- Some community members might suggest you but others will just disagree upon recognizing that you are poor she said.
- She added that the society feels like there is nothing you can do for them once in Parliament because you are disabled.
- Fakazile Dlamini from Albanism eSwatini also said the society discourages them in participating in the development of the country because when they see a person living with albinism they see their ticket and sacrifice for riches, instead of encouraging you they

will ask why you are even exposing yourself to the public because you will not last long let alone see elections as you would be murdered for ritual purposes.

- Fakazile also highlighted that they wished to stand for elections in order to make a difference on issues concerning the disability society in the Kingdom of eSwatini. In addition, she said the society's perception and lack of confidence on them has ruined their dreams
- EBC makes empty promises especially to people living with disabilities why are they not taken seriously on such issues there is a lot of dishonesties on issues of assisting e.g transport.

## Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC)

Elections and Boundaries Board Commission Information Education Officer Ms. Barbara Mthethwa said elections are an opportunity to strengthen the participation of Persons with Disabilities, in particular women. Mthethwa said women with disabilities should take advantage of the fact the Disability Bill has been passed and be action during this year's elections whether they are voting for a candidate or they are voted for in order to make disability issues a priority when elected to Parliament. She advised the women that they should not sit on their challenges but voice them out because they will not be solved if they are not brought forward. EBC highlighted that there are families who deny their relatives who lives with disabilities. This is normally practiced by parents. The DPMs office should make it a point that every person living with disability is taken care of, as EBC's wish is for everyone to be part and parcel of the elections. Some children also do the same with their parents they deny them the opportunity of participating.



Taking instructions, Elections and Boundaries Commission Information and Communications Officer during the 5050 women with disabilities campaign dialogue at Bethel Court

## Media

Media and Communications Trainer and Human Rights Advocate Mr. Comfort Mabuza – In his introduction he advised the participants that a candidate should know her story that would justify people to elect you. Then issues of the community you are contesting for, understand their dynamics, how are you going to ensure what they need. Know the programmes to attend to. You should be aware that media is a quick and powerful tool that you can use as a candidate. It changes people's perceptions, influences behavior, can be used for advocacy to promote views and it could be used for propagandist purposes. Media should be a 'Mirror' reflecting what is happening in any given society and context – it should be '**be factual**' He also touched on the issue of media advocacy as follows:

- **Create Change** – Campaign for a new and better society by respecting People with Disability.
- **Share new innovative ways** of bringing desired change ensuring that different perspectives are brought to bear and,
- **Provide Counsel** through friendly means as you raise issues and involve People's participation where Audiences are empowered to view PWD positively. Let's Stop creating PWDs as hopeless lot deserving cheap pleas and sorry sympathy.



Media Communications Trainer Mr. Comfort Mabuza during the Women with Disabilities 5050 campaign dialogue at Bethel

On the issue of dealing with stigma and discrimination faced by People with Disability he encouraged and advised them that it is not a 'curse' or 'bad omen' to live with a disability – We grew up PWDs called names and hidden from the public. PWDs have proven equally competent when given a chance to take leadership positions so it is important to portray them in positive light. Mabuza said the negative portrayal of PWDs should be aggressively addressed – Stigma and discrimination are Human Rights violations PWDs are not seeking for mere sympathy but want their voices to be heard. Nothing should

be done for PWDs without them so in every decision or discussion concerning their issues they should be involved.

**PROFILE** – Mabuza took them briefly on the importance of profiling themselves through the media: -

- **YOUR PROFILE:** Ensure that your personal profile sells – Who you are can make or break your political ambitions.
- **STRATEGY:** Attempt to list at not more than five things you want to advance and help people with. Do not be over ambitious. Work within your ability on things you will be able to deliver
- **DEAL WITH YOUR SHADOW SIDE & HIDDEN SKELETONS:** We all have the shadow side and hidden skeletons from the past. One must ensure that these are well managed. Stand ready to give an account and answers if they these are raised without hiding things.
- **HANDLING CRITICISM:** How you react and handle criticism is vital. Normally A press/media liaison person should give advice and help handle sensitive issues. Your reactions can generate more interest.

He also advised them that as candidates or aspiring women with disabilities it is important to come out with your own communications strategy. There has to be a communications strategy - Embracing Mass Media – This must be crafted – ‘Who is mandated to speak’. Appoint a Media Liaison Office to attend to media related issues – Also who is the Final Authority on policy related issues, understand that Media has deadlines- Don’t keep it on suspense, waiting for you fencer. Information should be readily available at any given time – Factual information needed. “Never keep Journalist waiting” and be aware that journalists work on ‘**deadlines**’.

## Outcomes

- As moving forward, it is important to capacitate people on the electoral laws to empower them. Also, to assist in building their manifesto and their profiles. After that you need to go back for evaluation.
- As an organisation there is a need to be trained and educated on disabilities. there is also a need to give technical capacity especially on sign language.
- The dialogue went very well and it was participatory and participants were impressed
- Target audience was very good as there were women with different disabilities and that it focused on women from rural areas as that is where most of them are based.
- Language is a challenge especially to facilitators (EBC and GL) as this was the first of its kind to take place in eSwatini.
- In the near future there should be a brainstorming session so that things can be taken care of.
- DIWOSWA was impressed with the workshop especially because people with disabilities are always left behind. Even participants were impressed except that the time was too short. The target was to get people from rural areas because that is where most of them are situated. There are groups and they work with them and they are active.



Sign Language interpreter Ms. Nelsiwe Lushaba interpreting to the participants with deaf and dumb disabilities.

## Lessons learned

- As an organisation we did not give them enough time to give them space to articulate on their issues or concerns. Getting their concerns also assist in doing a presentation more informative and participative.
- Important to be accommodated in the language issue in order to understand each other (visually impaired).

- On the issue of coordination and communication for the organisers (People with Disability) are very important this is an issue to be taken care of on the first day of the meeting.
- Time frame of workshops, one day is not practical to address critical issues – participants must have an opportunity to interrogate the facilitators

### **Recommendations**

- There should be an element of capacitating the CSO on such issues also involve PWD in our workshops
- As candidates it is important to declare to EBC if you want to have an event after the closedown or registration. This is to avoid people campaigning before the start of the campaign period.

### **Way forward**

- Is there an opportunity to engage HQ after this success can they assist?
- Put in a proposal to EU for continuity deadline (13 July 2018)
- Also put one to US Embassy
- Capacity building for CSOs

## Annex A: Programme



**Women with Disabilities Dialogue on Meaningful Participation in the 2013 Elections  
Proposed Programme  
Venue: Bethel Court  
Date: 26 June 2018**

Time	Item	Facilitation
8:30 -	Arrival and registration	GL staff
9:00 -	Welcoming remarks and objectives of the workshop	Gender Links
9:15 – 9:30	Introductions	All
9:30 – 10:00	Challenges facing persons, in particular women, with disabilities	Facilitated discussion plenary
10:00 – 11:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of women in elections</li> <li>• Importance of participation in the elections – making your vote count</li> </ul>	EBC
11:00 – 11:30	<b>TEA BREAK</b>	
11:30 – 13:00	Linking challenges to responsible structures	Group work
13:00	<b>LUNCH</b>	
14:00 – 15:00	The 50/50 Campaign: Advocacy on gender and disability issues as part of electoral engagement	Facilitator
15:00 – 15:30	Using the media for effective advocacy and promoting accountability	Facilitator

## Annex B

### PARTICIPANTS REGISTER



**Women with Disabilities Dialogue on Meaningful Participation in the 2013 Elections**  
**Venue: Bethel Court**  
**Date: 26 June 2018**

Name and Surname	Sex			Age						Organisation	Position	Email Address	Cell / Land Line
	M	F	Other	-18	18-25	26-40	41-50	51-60	60+				
Nomcebo Dlamini		✓					✓			Network of Business Women with Disability	Chairperson	nomcebodlamini@gmail.com	76047801
Buyie Masuku		✓					✓			Disabled Women in Swaziland	Director	diwoswa@gmail.com	76089663
Annah Dlamini		✓				✓				Deaf			78723765
Samu Dlamini		✓			✓					Disabled Women in Swaziland	Member		76338810
Fakazile Dlamini		✓			✓					Albanism	Member		76466113
Sonia Ntimane		✓			✓					SAPA	Member		

Name and Surname	Sex			Age						Organisation	Position	Email Address	Cell / Land Line
	M	F	Other	-18	18-25	26-40	41-50	51-60	60+				
Nomcebo Mbhamali		✓			✓					NAVIDS	Secretary		76687655
Samkelisiwe Khoza		✓			✓					Swazi Observer	Reporter	samkelisiwekhoza@gmail.com	76575125
Sihle Mkhonta		✓				✓				Disabled Women with Disability	Member		76872139
Swane Mdluli							✓			Women with Physically disability	Member		
Celiwe Mchobokazi		✓					✓			Women with Disability	Member	celiwisele@gmail.com	76353931
Comfort Mabuza	✓							✓		HURISWA	Facilitator	mcmabuza@webmail.com	76051142
Maureen Mavuso		✓					✓			SAPA	Member		76427620
Ntombikayise Dlamini		✓						✓		SAPA	Member		76545814
Barbara Mthethwa		✓					✓			EBC	Information Officer	barbara@elections.org.sz	76538826
Mawane Sithebe		✓						✓		EBC	Facilitator		
Thulisile Mkhabela		✓							✓	Women Network with Disabilities	Member		76253201
Nelsiwe Lushaba		✓				✓				Swazi TV	Interpreter (Sign Language)	Lushaba1975@gmail.com	
Zethu Shongwe Thring		✓					✓			Gender Links	Intern	swazilandintern@genderlinks.org.za	76761898
Gugu Mkhulisi		✓			✓					Gender Links	Intern	mkhulil@stolga.edu	78222510

Name and Surname	Sex			Age						Organisation	Position	Email Address	Cell / Land Line
	M	F	Other	-18	18-25	26-40	41-50	51-60	60+				
Thembe Matsenjwa		✓			✓					Gender Links	Intern	candymatrust@gmail.com	76964378
Ncane Maziya		✓						✓		Gender Links	Facilitator	swdlocalgvt@genderlinks.org.za	76240486

