



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
MAKING THE CONSTITUTION A REALITY FOR THE WOMEN OF ZIMBABWE

The second Zimbabwe SADC Gender Protocol Summit closed at Pandhari Lodge on March 26 2013, with resounding pledges to advance gender equality in line with the new Constitution adopted days earlier.

Zimbabweans went to the polls on 16 March to vote for a new Constitution that guarantees gender equality and enshrines a quota for women in parliament (though not in local government) in the next two elections. The new Constitution also provides for the creation of a Gender Commission with wide ranging powers.

Thirteen women and three men received awards in a variety of themes, local government and media categories (see Annex A). The summit featured fifty-two (52) entries in 8 categories namely Gender, Gender Based Violence and Conflict Resolution; Education and Economic Development; Climate Change; Sexual and Reproductive Health, HIV/Aids and Constitutional, legal rights and governance. Other presentations covered institutional Centres of Excellence (COEs) Local government and media as well as Local government Leadership.



Speaking at the opening ceremony, Minister of Women Affairs Gender & Community Development, Dr. Olivia Muchena, said the new Constitution gives Zimbabwe a "supreme legal basis to say we are committed to meet the targets of the SADC Gender Protocol. These include gender equality in the Constitution; a hybrid electoral system that facilitates women's political participation; socio-economic and political rights including affirmative action to ensure these rights are realised. The task is to make sure that these rights are realised on the ground."

Permanent Secretary in the gender ministry Dr Sylvia Utete Masango noted that with one election to go before the 2015 deadline for gender parity, women need to strategise as "no voice means no choice."

Speaking on behalf of the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, the focal network of the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance in Zimbabwe, Netsai Mushonga said that women

“achieved 75% of what they sought” in the new Constitution; now it was up to women to “come together and make the Constitution work.”

Article 124 of the new Constitution provides that for the life of the first two parliaments “an additional sixty women, six from each of the (ten) provinces of Zimbabwe) shall be elected on a proportional representation basis to the 270 existing National Assembly seats, that are open to both women and men.” This provision does not extend to local government. However, Article 17 b I – “both genders are equally represented in all institutions and agencies of government at every level” – gives scope for this to be taken up in legislation.



Deputy Minister of State Enterprises & Parastatals Walter Chidakwa, speaking on behalf of the Minister of Local Government Urban & Rural Development, Dr Ignatius Chombo at the awards ceremony said that the Ministry is amending its existing legislation to ensure compliance with that all aspects of the Constitution. He added that although the new Constitution does not guarantee the 50/50 ratio in terms of representation in local government, women councillors should be in a position to be re-elected.

The Minister highlighted that, “gender activists within my Ministry have brought the magnitude of the scourge of Gender Based Violence to my attention and this has brought about the realisation that it would be inappropriate for me to not throw my weight behind the drive to eliminate this shameful blight on our society.

In a powerful account of the “I Stories” or first hand accounts of gender violence Musasa Director Netty Musanhu recounted the heart wrenching tales of women who believe that being battered is part of social acceptance. “The idea that this affects only a minority of women is a myth,” she said. “Another common myth is that only physical violence has wounds.” The GBV indicators research being undertaken by Gender Links (GL), the gender ministry and Musasa shows that the highest form of violence in all Southern African countries is emotional violence: “this can be worse than physical violence,” Musanhu said.



Minister Chombo stated that the Ministry had issued guidelines to local authorities on areas they can take action that will prevent or at least curtail GBV. He highlighted that some of the guidelines stemmed from best practices that have emerged from the 23 Centres of Excellence for Gender in local government that GL is working with.

Wonder Jekemu, on behalf of Sida that is funding the COE process said it has been a case of “learning by doing,” with drivers of change now emerging all over the country. He expressed hope that the programme would be extended to all 92 Zimbabwe councils.

For more information visit <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/zimbabwe-gender-summit> or contact: Priscilla Maposa on zimlocalgvt@genderlinks.org.za

Annex A – Winners

| | CATEGORY | Winner | M/F | Organisation |
|----|--|-------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | GBV and conflict Resolution – Alliance | Regis Manjoro | M | Fatherhood Peace Project |
| 2 | GBV and conflict – Local gvt | Unity Jaji | F | Gweru City Council |
| 3 | Education and economic development- Alliance | Rachel Mushonga | F | Wailing Women’s Trust |
| 4 | Education and economic Development- Local Gvt | Annette Breda | F | Masvingo City Council |
| 5 | Climate change- Local Gvt | Lucia Molly Chikwangwadze | F | Ruwa Town Council |
| 6 | Constitutional, Legal Rights & Governance- Alliance | Netsai Mushonga | F | Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe |
| 7 | Constitutional, Legal Rights & Governance- Local Gvt | Helena Mkosana | F | Kwekwe City Council |
| 8 | Sexual and reproductive- Local Gvt | Constance Chinyemba | F | Goromonzi Rural District Council |
| 9 | Sexual and reproductive- Alliance | Edinah Masiyiwa | F | WAG |
| 10 | Media print | Thandeka Moyo | F | The Chronicle |
| 11 | Media Radio | Radio Dialogue | M | Radio Dialogue |
| 12 | Best Local gvt & overall winner | Zvimba Rural District Council | F | |
| 13 | Best Local Gvt (Urban) | Chiredzi Town Council Council | M | |
| | Best Local Gvt (Urban) | Gweru City Council | F | |
| 14 | Local government improved | Masvingo City Council | F | |
| | Local government improved | Bulawayo City Council | F | |
| 15 | Local Government Leadership | Melania Mandeya | F | Chegutu Municipality |