

Women's Mobilization In Political Participation Before and After Election

**A Presentation to Common Wealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)
Regional Sensitization Workshop**

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Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- Back ground to Women Participation in Elections ;International and National perspectives.
- Mobilizing Women for Political Participation ; Possible Strategies

Introduction

- Why is it important
- Owing to Gender and Socialization ,this involves the practicalities of pulling Women into the public sphere an arena that has been controlled by Patriarchy, misinterpreted religious beliefs and negative culture which for time immemorial have locked out Women from the Public.
- Access to formal education has been the biggest tool against these entrenched negativities. Girls education must be the one thing all Women leaders will apply their energies to

Importance cont'd

- A matter of human rights for inclusive participation and sustainable development because political involvement is a precursor to equality .
- Enhances the legitimacy of political processes making them more democratic and representative of society, and
- Participation leads to inclusion in decision making processes.

The Back ground to Women in Political Participation

- The UN Declaration on Human Rights whose adoption in 1948 provided the acknowledgement of women's rights as human rights.
- The 1975 International Conference on Women was the first and was held in Mexico City.
- 1975-1985 was declared the Decade for Women, whose three objectives were Equality, Development and Peace.
- The major aim of the Declaration, was to work towards the eradication of all kinds of discrimination against women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

- Adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and came into force in 1981.
- It re-echoed the 1948 declaration on human rights, guaranteeing women equal rights with men in many spheres of life including political participation, However, unlike the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW has the force of law.
- In addition, the 1999 Optional Protocol to CEDAW was adopted to provide better enforcement for human rights issues. It enables individuals to raise complaints with the UN Committee for CEDAW

The 4th World Conference on Women- Beijing in 1995

- Built on issues raised by previous meetings/conferences, and emphasized the need for gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women in all aspects of development.
- The 2000 Beijing + 5 conferences and its political declaration and outcome document served to build further on the need to pursue gender equality issues.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

- This came out of the UN conference on Social Development that was held in Copenhagen in 1995 and complements CEDAW.
- Twelve critical areas of action for women's development were outlined in this document which include power and decision making

MDGS and SDGs

- The Millennium Development goals : The global Agenda for the decade.
- Promote Gender equality and empower women, improve maternal health among others
- **The Sustainable Development Goals:**
- Sustainable Development Goal No 5 on Gender. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls .
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

The Declaration of Gender Equality in Africa.

- In July 2004, Heads of States in Africa adopted a Declaration of Gender Equality in Africa.
- They affirmed their commitment to the various international instruments.

African Charter on Human and People's Rights

- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights was adopted in 1981 and entered into full force in 1986.
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the first protocol to be developed by Africans for African women, applies CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action in the African context

National Gender Responses

- National Constitutions-Ought to have taken cognizance the need for Affirmative action and the need to remove all forms of discrimination
- National Institutions and Ministries for Gender mainstreaming
- National policies on Gender *

WOMENS MOBILISATION FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.

- All these conferences, Protocols and actions, to which most African Countries were party, helped to put gender equality issues at the fore
- Through them Strategies for increased Women Participation in all spheres have been advanced leading to the formulation and strengthening of National level strategies for advancing gender equality.

Engendering Working environments

- Women Participation as of necessity calls for engendering Work environment including Parliament buildings, schedules, and rules of procedures
- Confidence building and legislative skills
- Work place sexual harassment regulations
- Strong Women Parliamentary associations.
- The effectiveness and impact of Women based on affirmative quotas is a debate that can only be done when access has become possible

The Role of Political Parties

- Political Parties are the mandated vehicles for political participation for democratic governance Worldwide .It is therefore critical that;
- Women join and be active in political parties.
- That Parties propel Women to electoral politics.

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- Training
- Financial support with special allocation to Women candidate
- Drawing up of Party list in proportional representation bearing in mind the need special quotas or gender balanced lists
- Provide an environment for active Women engagement in the party ideology and
- Party regulations that foster participation and specifically in the electoral guidelines and Sexual harassment regulation.*
- Women leadership in political parties foster Women participation greatly

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- Deliberately recruit, support and promote Women candidates.
- Party schedules and programmes must not be rigid and gender insensitive
- The Women's Leagues must be developed as a special and strong organs of the Party.

The importance of lower level participation in Politics

- Lower level perception ;Municipal, divisions, Villages sub-counties depending on the unit of organization.
- These levels provide for grooming and training grounds and increased visibility.
- Such Women are likely to attain increased confidence and move to the next levels

Financing of Women Participation in Politics

- Herein lies the biggest challenge to Women participation. It is often said that Women are the face of poverty.
- That Women participation tends to be more costly in adult suffrage situations.
- Gender sensitive allocation of Party campaign resources,
- Women related NGO funding and training,
- and where Parties receive Government Subvention, the regulations to Parties ought to direct a specific percentage to Women candidate funding

Dealing with the General election environment.

- Some countries have very toxic campaign and political environments characterized by fear, threats, intimidation, beatings, arrests and harassment of mainly the Opposition. Most Women will be reluctant to take such a risk
- Pushing for Legal reforms across Party lines will help will help
- Bad electoral laws that expose Women to violence. Such include laws that require lining behind candidates in lower level meetings

Tapping into Community organisation

- These leverage intending candidates through social, political and economic activities
- Provide a training ground

Campaigns and gender based challenges

- These include dealing gender based hate speech and stigma. Women get asked whether they are married, why did you divorce, why haven't you ever produced a child....questions that male politicians never get asked.
- Authorization to or not to by the husband
- Specialized campaign training and gender awareness could boost the candidates ability to fight

WOMEN POST ELECTION ENGAGEMENT.

- Mobilizing Winners is easy.
- We shall focus more on actions that are intended to keep those Women who were unsuccessful on board.
- It must be recalled that losing elections causes financial and emotional stress and sometimes apathy sets in
- A series of Post-Election mechanisms have been found to be helpful.

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- Opening and maintaining Communication channel with those who did not go through so as to provide assurance and updates
- Organize and facilitate debriefing sessions .These are important for opening up, sharing experiences and even chatting the way forward. A lot of lessons will be learnt.
- Involvement and deployment in Party assignments. This boost esteem and creates a platform for visibility. It maintains an attachment to the Party.

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- Continuous training to address personal gaps like communication, message articulation etc
- Engagement in Community organization programmes. Women group meetings, school talks etc within the constituency
- Entrepreneurship skills and making personal money between electoral cycle, given that most of the money candidates used are personal /family assets or individually mobilized

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- Court and or political redress for some unsuccessful candidates. Cheated elections and unresolved Party primaries issues
- Networks with Women organisations for nurture, counsel and opportunities
- For the Winners; there must be mechanisms in place to ensure full integration to Party activities at all levels, providing visibility for the party , associating and guiding those who lost
- financial contribution to the Party.

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- Working with all stakeholders to deal with Patriarchy
- Lastly grooming and Mentoring of upcoming Women leadership between electoral cycles and tapping into the Party Youth League

Conclusion

- Until Women take their rightful place in leadership, the human race will not realize full potential. One Woman must pull up another.
- Involving and creating supportive men in Parties laws, institutions are all vital for empowering Women Participation in elections and after

- Thank you