

THE 2018 RURAL WOMEN'S SUMMIT

THEME: HER VOICE. HER STRENGTH. HER SECURITY

14TH TO 16TH OCTOBER 2018



INTRODUCTION

The 2018 Rural Women's Summit took place from 15th to 16th October after the launch held in the evening of 14th October officiated by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender (MoG), Ms Auxilia Pongo. The speeches shared by the Guest of Honour, the Women for Change (WfC) Board Chairperson, Dr Rose Fumpa-Makano and Ms Mirriam Sikaenyi, a Community leader echoed the need to strengthen women's leadership and recognition of the important role women play in the development of the country.

The Summit attracted 30 community leaders (18f and 12m) drawn from the following districts Chongwe, Rufunsa, Petauke, Kapiri-Mposhi, Shibuyunji, Mumbwa, Nkeyema and Kaoma. 34 leaders from government departments, CSOs, the media, academia and international agencies were also in attendance. Government departments included MoG, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Planning and Development and Ministry of Commerce. Others were Citizen Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC) a statutory body established under the Ministry of Commerce to offer loans for economic empowerment projects for every citizen; Pilot Programme on Climate Resilience (PPCR) under National Planning and Development to strengthen community resilience against the effects of climate change; the UNDP, University of Zambia and several local NGOs that partner with WfC in her work.

The Summit programme expressed the theme of providing opportunity for rural community leaders to talk about issues affecting their development. Further, the Summit brought together an array of development actors to celebrate the successes and lesson learnt in implementing development initiatives in rural communities.

The Ghana experience shared through a short documentary done by the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organisational Development (CIKOD): *The Miles We Walked, the Lives we Touched* expanded the delegates' appreciation of challenges women living in rural areas are facing and successes scored by the EMPOWER project in helping to strengthen their economic leadership. The skills sharing on investments and financial management done by Agova, a private business consultancy firm provided the delegates added skills to improve their businesses.

The proceedings of the Summit focused on four Key areas, namely

- Financial Inclusion for Women: Implications
- Gender and Agriculture: Climate Change and Implications for Women
- Personal Testimonies on Strengthening Women's Economic Leadership - ***Herstories***
- No One Left Behind - Government Agenda on Women's Economic Empowerment

Presentations on these topics was led by different speakers from the CEEC, PPCR, Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR), various Government Ministries and community members who showcased their stories through creative performances that included Role Play, Displays and Testimonies.

OBSERVATIONS AND OUTCOMES

The following were the key observations from each session and follow-up recommendations for moving towards the sustenance of successes scored under the EMPOWER project:

- I. Financial Inclusion for Women and Girls: Implications
 - a) Key Observations

- Low levels among women of access to and information about (e.g. application processes and guidelines) government support programmes on economic and financial empowerment initiatives – CEEC, Zambia Development Agency (ZDA), Zambia Bureau of Standards (ZABS) and the Ministries of Gender (MoG), National Development Planning (MNDP) and Community Development (MCD)
- Lack or limited access to information about economic and financial empowerment initiatives provided by Government. This information does not reach most of the local communities
- Lack of knowledge about and working relations with public institutions at the local level (Ward, District) mandated with responsibilities related to women economic and financial empowerment under Government

b) Key recommendations

The following recommendations were given to the government representatives present in the Summit:

- Government supported institutions such as the CEEC should establish closer working relations with local NGOs like WfC for sharing and distribution of information on the various initiatives available as well as information regarding the application processes and guidelines to maximise benefits for hard to reach communities
- The Ministries of Gender and National Development should ensure that information on the various support provided is simplified, made available in the most appropriate language and in a timely manner
- WfC should strengthen its working relations with district level institutions that are targeted by Government institutions in providing economic and financial support to women at the local level. Some of these institutions include the traditional establishment, the District Commissioners (DCs) and the local municipalities
- There is need to enhance capacity building support tailored towards helping local women groupings to improve the branding of their products and services as well as to undertake innovative business endeavours
- There is need to build the capacities of local women on the operations and programmes of initiatives such as the CEEC (Industrial Parks, Value Addition Chains, financial programmes etc) to increase their level of participation in the economic development of the country

II. Gender and Agriculture: Implications of Climate Change for Women and Empowerment

a) Key Observations

- Low levels of knowledge about the topic of climate change and how it affects the economic activities and livelihoods of rural communities
- Lack of knowledge about the Climate Change Pilot Programme under the Ministry of National Planning and Development
- Lack or limited access to information as well as sources of information on the subject on climate change and its impact on rural livelihoods

- Huge interest to engage in behavioural change by adopting environmentally smart livelihood activities e.g. in agricultural and energy practices
- Most farmers in the rural areas were practising methods that were climate change insensitive because those were the most available methods
- There is need to provide adequate information in the most appropriate languages and in a timely fashion
- Need to use the most appropriate modes and means of communication in disseminating information on climate change in the rural areas – through institutions such as the Zambia National Information Services, the National Agriculture Information System, education, health, religious and traditional establishments and community radio stations

b) Key recommendations

- There is need to provide alternatives to the current climate change insensitive agricultural and livelihood activities for rural communities since the most available methods and information does not take climate change concerns into consideration e.g. cotton growing methods
- There is need to provide the necessary information and training for the processes of transiting from the current methods of farming to climate change sensitive methods
- There is need to build the capacities and provide resources for institutions such as the Camp Extension Officers and the District Agriculture Officers (DACOs) in disseminating information on climate change and in providing training in the rural communities.

III. Personal Testimonies on Strengthening Women's Economic Leadership – *Herstories*

a) Key Observations

- There is little national recognition and publicity about the development work of rural women associations, including limited coverage and access to media
- The absence, limited and poor quality economic and social infrastructure in the rural areas, has inhibited the extent and opportunities to which women, individually and collectively, are able to excel in both business and public life
- Women in the rural areas have limited links or connections to the relevant institutions that provide economic and financial empowerment support
- Women associations in the rural areas have limited access to capacity building and trainings on leadership and development
- Women associations in the rural areas have limited networking opportunities with relevant institutions and like minded organisations particularly at provincial and national level

b) Key recommendations

- There is need for Government to recognise the role that women in the rural areas are playing in improving themselves as individuals, their households and communities – recognise the IRWD

- There is need to publicise the work, experiences, challenges and achievements of women clubs and cooperatives in the rural areas - ensure media coverage (local and national)
- There is need for Government to support civil society organisations that are working with women in rural areas in the areas of economic and leadership
- There is need to encourage leadership careers among women and the youth, especially the female youth, in the rural areas

IV. No One Left Behind – Government Agenda on Women’s Economic Empowerment

a) Key Observations

- Women in the rural areas are not aware of Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP), National Vision 2030
- Women in the rural areas have not been participating in the public consultative process on the 7NDP and budgeting processes
- Women in the rural areas do not know where to obtain information on the 7NDP and budgeting offices
- Women in the rural areas have not been participating in the District Council meetings
- Women in the rural areas do not have close working relations with local Government institutions, such as the DCs’ offices or municipality, that have a strong focus on public service delivery

b) Key recommendations

- There is need to provide information, in the most appropriate language and a timely manner, on national development processes such as the National Development Plans, the Vision 2030, including the public consultation processes and timelines
- There is need to develop monitoring and tracking mechanisms that women in the rural areas can use to monitor the implementation and outcomes of national development programmes
- There is need to develop communication strategies that women in the rural areas can use to provide their feedback to the appropriate authorities on the performance and outcomes of national development programmes
- There is need to mobilise women in rural areas to participate and make submissions to the national budgeting and development processes
- There is need to link women associations in the rural areas to institutions mandated with the responsibility of implementing development programmes and providing public services and goods
- There is need to embark upon nationwide advocacy campaign aimed at ensuring the prioritisation of development sectors, in both the national plans and budgets, that are highly beneficial to the rural communities e.g. renewable energy, agriculture, infrastructure, sanitation, health and education

- There is need to lobby for the introduction of a Gender Responsive Budget mechanism

CONCLUSION

This Summit was concluded with the key point for the need to ensure that the International Rural Women's Day (IRWD) that falls on 15 October every year was given national recognition. The commemoration by WfC brought attention to the day and need was emphasised on the need for Government to spearhead its observation. This would be the most significant way of drawing national and international attention to the situation of the women in the rural areas of the country. Most importantly, decentralising and giving national prominence to this Day would provide an opportunity to publicise the great works, achievements, hardships and challenges that women in the rural areas of Zambia encounter on a day to day basis.