

Making a Difference
Citizen's and their organisations and networks contributing to change
OWA PPA 2008-9: Case study 16

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| Title of Case Study: | The participation of women in politics in Zambia. The work of the Zambia National Women's Lobby |
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| 1. PPA partner name | One World Action |
| 2. Countries highlighted in case study | Zambia |

The Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL) is a non-partisan, non-profit making and membership driven non-governmental organization "that seeks to promote equal participation and representation of women and men at all levels of decision making through advocacy, lobbying and capacity building in Zambia for national development." Its vision is a country where everyone participates equally.

Established in 1991, with a new era of multiparty democracy in Zambia, the ZNWL operates through structures at district and provincial levels to promote "gender sensitive political, ethical, socio-cultural conscience of the citizens in order to create an active and organised citizenry."

Politics in Zambia have been the domain of men. Women have not been involved very much in decision-making, and there are continuing questions regarding the quality of the country's democracy in particular the fairness of its electoral process as it affects the representation of women.

Patriarchal attitudes, traditions and customs, institutional barrier, the legal frameworks, also individual impediments, are major factors that adversely affect the participation of women in leadership positions, says the ZNWL.

It is working to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in the political arena and move towards the African Union benchmark of 50% participation of women in decision-making.



“It is important to remember that the establishment of a modern and democratic society demands that all citizens should participate in the running of their affairs in making decisions, periodically choosing their representatives and also standing for elective office without fear of intimidation. The basis of democracy is the need for respect for human rights. Women are an

integral part of society and should participate in decision making in equal numbers to men. Therefore, a government that does not include women is undemocratic”, stresses **Tamala Kambikambi, ZNWL’s National Chairperson.**

The ZNWL has worked hard to increase the number of women candidates who stand in elections. Transport is the major problem faced by women candidates. In September 2006 they hoped that the ZNWL would provide them with some fuel but this was not possible. The ZNWL did however provide support in form of posters, fliers, T-shirts and bicycles.

The ZNWL makes good use of the media to promote its work, with regular press releases that newspapers have come to expect. “If the papers don't hear from us, they ring us to ask our views”, said Tamala Kambikambi.

Achievements

The ZNWL has seized the opportunity of multiparty democracy to promote women’s participation in decision making. There was a steady, albeit small, rise in the number of women elected to parliament from 1991 – 2006. Zambia’s election in September 2006 resulted in an increase of women elected to parliament from 10.6% in 1996 (16 women elected) to 12.7% in 2001 (19 women elected) and to 14.7% in 2006 (22 women elected).

The discernible increase since 1996 - the first election after the formation of the ZNWL - “had to do with the work of this organization, of course together with the efforts of others”, says Tamala Kambikambi.

To increase the number of women in parliament, the ZNWL lobbied Zambia’s president to use his prerogative to nominate more women. As a result the

president nominated 2 of the 8 nominated Members of Parliament he is entitled to make.

“This is a start since this is the first time he has ever nominated women amongst those 8 positions”, points out Tamala Kambikambi.

Zambia now also has the first women deputy speaker of parliament and at least one mayor - for the capital city, Lusaka.

Challenges

Despite the pledges that almost all the political parties made to promote women’s participation at all levels of decision making, the number of women candidates standing for election in 2006 dropped by 54% compared with 2001. At local government level, however, the proportion of women as candidates remained almost the same between 2001 and 2006.

“The political party adoptions in all the parties left much to be desired”, says Tamala Kambikambi; “they are still paying lip service to their commitments and are struggling to find the political will that would make them translate their rhetoric into meaningful party policies that would enhance the situation of women within their parties”.

Zambia’s performance compared to the other countries in the Southern Africa Development Conference (SADC) region, such as South Africa and Mozambique, who have achieved 32.8% and 36% respectively women in parliament, is low at 14.7%. The ZNWL is pressing for Zambia to learn and replicate positive lessons from neighbouring countries which have increased women’s participation in decision-making.

It is continuing to press for greater political will from the top, for policies, instruments and declarations to be translated into action, for effective intervention to be scaled up, and for the media to play an even bigger role in the area of advancement of women.

And it wants existing interventions to be reviewed and challenged to identify ways of increasing the number of women in positions of power.