ONE WORLD ACTION
FOR A JUST AND EQUAL WORLD

Making a Difference

Citizen's and their organisations and networks contributing to change
OWA PPA 2008-9: Case study 4

Title of Case Study:	**International Women's Day Debate - *Do Women Need a Leg Up in Politics?***

1. PPA partner name	**One World Action**
2. Countries highlighted in case study	**UK**

1. PPA partner(s) names(s): One World Action More, Women More Power Campaign

2. Country/ies highlighted in the case study: UK, Zambia, Honduras

3. What does this case study demonstrate

The commitment of One World Action to ensuring our partner's in the South have a strong voice in the North;

- A creative way to open up new spaces for citizen participation and engagement with political representatives;
- One World Action's continued commitment raising awareness of both CEDAW and the importance of women's political participation;
- The vital role that One World Action plays in highlighting the centrality of women's political participation to achieving just and equitable development

4. Which PPA strategic objective(s) does this case study cover?

Covers all four of our PPA strategic objectives;

- Accountability and participation – by opening up a new space for citizen participation and engagement;
- Women's political participation – by highlighting examples of positive practice in gender representation, such as quotas and women-only shortlists;
- Building Citizen's Voices – by bringing together citizen's networks and coalitions of gender-based NGOs;

- Learning, communication and advocacy – by encouraging South-South and South-North learning and exchange.

5. Summary of achievements

The creation of a new, innovative space for citizen participation and advocacy, encouraging interaction between NGOs in the women's sector, community groups and leaders, representatives from political parties, students and individual citizens. Importantly, elected representatives also participated in the debate, giving citizens the opportunity to question and to hold their representatives to account on this vital issue.

Held during the working week, the event was nonetheless well-attended, with over 70 participants and attracted a range of high-profile and influential speakers, including prominent newsreader and women's activist Anna Ford, TV personality Nicholas Parsons, Emily Thornberry MP, Jennette Arnold AM and editor of the Guardian Weekly, Natalie Bennett.

6. What could be the long term benefits?

- learning from the experience of the South – the use of gender quotas in Africa, for example – will help to disseminate information on positive practice and help to inform future debate on the issue in the UK;
- debate amongst individuals may lead to the beginnings of a truly gender-sensitive political culture and the challenging of prevailing masculinised norms;
- listening to the experience of other women and building solidarity between participants may encourage individuals to become active in politics in the long-term.

7. What were the key successes?

The space successfully gave a voice to women in the South and provided a unique and valuable opportunity for South-South and North-South learning exchange;

- Zambian Minister Lucy Changwe sat on the panel and shared her experiences of participating in politics in Zambia;
- Maria Amalia Reyes Cartagena and Elizabeth Avilez Tome (guests of One World Action partners CAWN) shared their struggles against political violence in Honduras with the audience;
- Panellist, the Hon. Lucy Changwe MP, also gave an interview about her own political experiences in the Guardian Weekly; http://www.guardianweekly.co.uk/?page=editorial&id=978&catID=1

The event also received some media coverage, including an article in the Guardian Weekly, increasing One World Action's opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of women's political participation and opening up new online space for debate:
http://www.guardianweekly.co.uk/?page=editorial&id=979&catID=21

8. If you were to do this again, what would you change and why?
Consideration of holding the event at a different time in the day – perhaps in the early evening - to enable more of the working population to be able to attend and to further widen the scope for active citizen participation. Alternatively, the afternoon event could have been supported by an extended, informal evening space, to allow more citizens to participate, to share more widely their stories and ideas and to build their networks and coalitions.

9. What, if any, innovative aspects are demonstrated by this case study?
The event linked the domestic women's agenda with the international situation, tackling head-on a subject often neglected in development debates – women's *political* participation. The edgy title encouraged radical debate on positive action measures, without advocating any single solution, removing barriers and constraints from discussion.

10. Is there a human interest story which we could use?

Panellist the Hon. Lucy Changwe MP, Zambian Deputy Minister for Gender and Development, was supported in her election by One World Action partners Zambia National Women's Lobby. The following quotes are taken from her compelling interview with Natalie Bennett in the Guardian Weekly:

"*There were really two main reasons why I went into politics. The first was that I was struck by the expression "politics is a dirty game". If it really is, then that is something that has to be addressed, because development will have to come through politics*."

"…*when you have a will, something keeps telling you to move, move, move. And I knew that people were looking for a change. "*

"*It seems that men want to show that the women are not capable, not chosen on merit*."

"*You ask me when there will be a woman president of Zambia: well the time is ripe, anything is possible. There will never be bells ringing saying 'this is the time'. It is up to women to take up the fight.*"

"*It is not an easy road for women, but then nothing is impossible for a woman, and they are in a better position than men to address many of the vices and problems that we see.*"

Hon. Lucy Changwe MP

Panellists Isma Almas, Jennette Arnold AM, Emily Thornberry MP, Anna Ford and Nicholas Parsons

Participants

Maria Amalia Reyes Cartagena of Honduras addresses the panel

Marie Birchall
April 2009