



Summary report

Women in Political Leadership: Capacity Building Workshop for Southern Africa Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST), Zimbabwe

Outputs

Location: Pandhari Resort, Harare	Date : 29-31 October, 2013
	Project Code:
Partner(s): Human Sciences Research Council, SAPST	Target group: Southern Africa Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST) Staff
Number of participants: 14 -Men: 7 -Women: 7	
Political parties represented:	

Indicator verification: *yes* *no*

Summary

1. General context – Since gaining independence, Zimbabwe has striven to achieve gender equality and has been signatory to a number of declarations and conventions aimed at eliminating gender disparity. This has resulted in the enactment of several policies aimed at advancing gender equality in the country. Concomitantly, there has been a rise in the number of women in decision-making positions, including parliament. However, the appointment of women parliamentarians has largely been one of affirmative action. Many of the women appointees have come into leadership with little leadership skills and experience. One of SAPST's mandate is to capacitate parliamentarians in playing their role effectively. The workshop, therefore, sought to enhance SAPST Staff's understanding of gender issues in political leadership, with particular regard to women, with the long-term objective of enabling them to create more space for women's participation in political leadership.

2. Objectives – The workshop aimed to: (i) help participants clarify issues of gender bias, discrimination and inequality in political leadership; (ii) identify possible strategies for addressing these imbalances and injustices in their role in building the capacity of political leaders; and, (iii) assist participants to develop knowledge on assisting women successfully navigate leadership.

3. Summary of activity

The workshop comprised the following sessions: Thinking about Gender: The Basics; Women in Society; Understanding the SADC Protocol on Gender & Development; and, Women in Politics (Opportunities, issues and challenges; Thriving as a Leader; Building Capacity and Resilience of women politicians. In addition, participants engaged in developing action plans which entailed the incorporation of what they had learnt in their everyday tasks and responsibilities at SAPST. The workshop adopted a participatory approach and facilitator presentations were interspersed with small and whole group discussions, brainstorming, reflective activity sheets, use of cases and video clips.



Analysis of activity

What was appreciated?

The participants were of the view that the workshop met their expectations as they were able to see how they were going to be able to apply the knowledge they had learned in their roles at SAPST. They also found the materials used during the workshop pertinent and useful and singled out the participatory nature of the workshop as stimulating and facilitative of their learning. They also expressed an appreciation for the practical examples that they were provided during the workshop. In addition, they were appreciative of the facilitator's knowledge of the topic as well as her preparedness and session presentations.

What was controversial?

Some of the participants were of the view that the time allotted to the workshop was insufficient. They felt that there was so much to be learnt and not enough time to do so. Interestingly, while they appreciated the interactive nature of the workshop, one of them was of the view that workshop activities should not be tightly packed, given the high temperatures in the room. This no doubt arose from the fact that the air conditioning in the workshop room broke down, thereby making it very hot and uncomfortable. In the same vein, one participant was of the view that the workshop would have been better if there was more than one facilitator. Some suggested that their spouses be invited to attend such workshops so that they can be fully supported in working in this area. A laudable suggestion was made that in future, a women MP should be invited to share her experiences at such sessions. Most of the participants were dissatisfied with the workshop venue which they found inadequate for their needs. Finally, almost all the participants requested that they be issued with certificates as an indication of having attended some training on gender.

“Outcomes”

The participants identified a number of things they had learnt as a result of having attended the workshop some of which included the following: challenges faced by women in political leadership; the need for including men in resolving gender inequalities; the importance of mentoring, coaching & networks in developing women's capacity to lead; understanding the distinction between gender and feminism; and, a better understanding of the SADC Protocol on Gender & Development and its application.