

DECISIONS FOR LIFE

Forum

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INTRODUCTION TO DECISIONS FOR LIFE (DFL) BY FIONA GANDIWA MAGAYA – DFL PROJECT COORINATOR

Welcome to our magazine, *“Decisions for Life Forum”*, but first let us familiarise you with the campaign.

Decisions for Life (DFL), is a trade union campaign for young women, launched in 2009 by the International Trade Union Confederation in collaboration with Trade Union Federations from 14 different countries including Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions Decisions for Life Campaign focuses on young women aged between 18 and 35 years. Its main objective is to mobilise, educate and empower young women as they make choices at work and at home. The campaign brings young women together to tackle issues or challenges that affect them like: Job-seeking/ career guidance, workplace rights, women's rights, sexual harassment, gender based violence, influencing national policy ,family responsibilities and balancing personal and work lives. Decisions for Life is also about mentoring and promoting the young generation to participate in decision making, at work, in the trade union and even in the community.

Decisions for Life is also about women coming together to fight for:

- Decent Work and decent life;
- A healthy work /life balance;
- Developing their bargaining and leadership skills;
- Elimination of discrimination, sexual harassment or gender based violence;
- Strengthening of their voice and formulation of gender sensitive policies & legislation;

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has so far run the campaign for 3 years since 2009. During the course of the campaign, we reached out to over 9 000 young working women and men who were interested and eager to know more and participate in DFL workshops, seminars, show exhibitions and ZCTU labour forums. Mobilisation was done through mass commemorations of events like Workers Day, International Women's day and World Day for Decent Work.

Over 10 000 people also accessed the ZCTU partner website, www.mywage.org/zimbabwe, during the period 2009 to 2011. You can also reach us on our facebook page, Decisions for Life Zimbabwe which is open to all.

So let continue to network and make a difference.

Happy Reading!!!



Miriam Chipunza
DFL Editor from Engineering Sector

From the Editor's Desk 'A Warm Welcome'

WELCOME to our first edition of the "*Decisions for Life Forum*", what working women want and what working women deserve.

It has been an eventful three years that this project has run. Thanks to the project coordinator Fiona Magaya for her dedication which made this project a success in Zimbabwe. Of course she could not have done it all by herself, special thanks also goes to the ZCTU Technical departments, in particular the Organizing, Education, Capacity, Legal, Health and the Information department.

During the course of the project, we managed to reach out to over 9 000 young working women and men who were interested and eager to know more and participate in DFL activities.

This DFL Forum therefore will ensure that we keep in touch, discuss issues affecting mostly young women. The main objective is to influence them to effectively participate in actions and programs that influence national policy

We hope that this edition of the magazine will take you through the journey we have travelled so far and you will be inspired.

I hope you will enjoy this edition.

Happy reading!!!

Meet the DFL Team



ZCTU TAKES DECISIONS FOR LIFE TO THE BOOKFAIR AND AGRICULTURAL SHOW 2012

Decisions for Life (DFL) ZCTU Team was outstanding at the Harare Book Fair and Agricultural Show 2012. This time the ZCTU team widened its scope of coverage expanding to sexual harassment, socio economic rights and family responsibility and also touched on workers' rights, labour law reform, ILO commission recommendations, HIV & AIDS. It also focused on issues of child labour.

Even men who visited the ZCTU stands received orientation on gender equality and DFL so that they can empower their wives and daughters. Lots of children received orientation on child labour and international laws on children's rights. The ZCTU Information, Women and Gender, Legal, Capacity Building and Health & Social Welfare departments, collaborated in full force to inform, educate and empower the workers and the community. The DFL Book Fair exhibition was held from the 3rd to the 4th, while the Harare show was from 17th to 26th August 2012.



Miriam Chipunza (In red T-shirt) and Serina Kurimi (seated 2nd from left), take time to pose for a photo after conducting a DFL quiz with some of the students who visited the ZCTU Bookfair stand.



Clarifina Mpotegwa (in ZCTU red regalia), the ZCTU Northeastern Regional Secretary and Counsellor at the ZCTU Drop in Centre, also shared information on HIV and AIDS with the students.



Sharing family responsibilities was one of the thematic areas discussed at the bookfair & the DFL team enjoyed it when a practical example of a gender sensitive man visited the stand with his baby strapped on his back.



The ever-smiling DFL campaign team members Irene Phiri and Clarifina Mpotegwa stand beside the DFL campaign banner to welcome visitors



Fellow exhibitors from the banking sector also visited the DFL stand at the Harare Show. ZCTU Women and Gender Coordinator, Fiona Gandiwa Magaya (In pink), orienting women who visited the stand on Domestic and International legislation on women's rights.



Catch them young: ZCTU Librarian, Patience Jongwe (left in pink) takes time to educate children at Harare show ground on how to protect themselves from abuse.

Educate and Empower them - that's the name of the game



Linking up with the community for positive change in women, children and workers' lives. Decisions for Life Team above, Miriam Chipunza (left in red) and Mildred Mudzudzu (right in white cap), making a difference at the Harare Show.



The DFL team reaching out to High school and College Students in order to interact & share experiences on challenges affecting young women today. In the picture Tecla Masamba ZCTU Paralegal Officer.

DECISIONS FOR LIFE AND ME

A personal Rendition by Immaculate Chingwere



“WHEN I first heard about Decisions for life I thought it was one of those workshops one attends, learn one or two things and move on. What I did not realize was that Decisions For Life was to become a very important part of my life. Being part of this campaign team changed the

way I approach my work as a trade union activist. I realized my relevance in this movement and the future of Trade Unions. Decisions for Life has helped me strengthen my resolve and armed me with confidence to fight for my rights. It has also helped me to pass on this confidence to others who were sceptical to the programme.

I have achieved some goals that I thought would be impossible at this stage of my life. I was elected to be the Vice Secretary of the highest decision making body of the working women in Zimbabwe. Though this is a very demanding post, with a lot expected from me, I am confident that with the empowerment and experience that I have gained from DFL I will stand up to the challenge.

At my place of work I have gained respect of my fellow workers owing to the changes that I have undergone with DFL. ZCTU gave me the privilege of partaking a paralegal course through my participation in DFL. I am now in a position to offer legal advice to fellow working women. My family has also realised my potential and now consult me on major decisions and now view my trade union work differently.

Being part of the campaign team, gave me the opportunity to speak to young women in the

different industries that the program covers. I have also come to realize that young women generally face the same problems be it at work or in the community with sexual harassment being a major challenge.

Most working women have faced discrimination at one point especially with regards to maternity benefits, participation in trade union activities and working conditions.

We must accelerate our efforts in reaching out to young people in schools and tertiary institutions, because they are the future working class trade union members who need the DFL background into world of work. If more women are empowered, they would be able to influence policies that are human-centred and gender sensitive and will be able to strategise and make better choices in life.

If women are empowered they will stand up against abuse, instead of enduring domestic violence for “the sake of children” as has been the trend. The future of organizations such as trade unions would be guaranteed as the mentoring in Decisions for life is sure to produce capable leaders for tomorrow”.

.....AWID FORUM 2012

The 12th Association for Women's Rights In Development (AWID) Forum took place in the beautiful city of Istanbul, Turkey from the 19th to the 22nd of April 2012 at the Haliç Congress Centre running under the theme “Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Justice”.

The forum hosted over 2200 participants from all over the world. These included feminists, development professionals, activists and students.

Personally the forum was an eye opener for me as a young activist. I was able to meet and interact with activists from all over the world. I realized that no matter where you are in the world, the challenges that women are faced with are similar.

However, at the forum, there was not much space for young women to discuss their issues in a plenary setup and there was no meaningful interaction between the older women and their youthful counterparts. There was a clear generation division which left young activists interacting on their own. The attitude exhibited by the older women reinforced why young people find it difficult to fully fit in with the older generations. Efforts should be made to integrate young people in the plenary speeches and sessions to get to understand their ideas and work. However there was a lot to be learnt from the plenary.

I had the rare opportunity to interact and discuss issues with young women and activists from Sex Worker organizations, LGBTIs, Human rights groups, Feminist organizations, Trade unions and many other groupings that were there to share and learn. I also had the opportunity to meet and talk to women who were coming from the volatile Arab World and heard their experiences including the Egyptian military's fear of the strength and power of women which staging a smear campaign. They label women arrested in public protests as prostitutes in a bid to discredit them. The military has also gone to extent of conducting virginity tests on these women and those found not to be virgin are publicly humiliated. All this is perpetrated on Arab women because they have proved to be very powerful revolutionaries. This was very inspiring for me to see women vowing to fight on under such difficult circumstances and it strengthened my resolve as an activist.

Sex work and LGBTI rights were also a major topic of discussion. This was a new area for me as these topics are taboo in the community I come from. I learnt that sex work is also a profession just like any other profession and women who engage in it need to have their rights upheld like any other individual. The approach by most organizations that look into sex work issues has been to find the ladies an alternative form of employment yet sex

workers themselves are saying, “Don't talk to us about sewing machines, talk to us about workers rights”. They demanded protection in their chosen profession and not rehabilitation. For me this was yet another eye opener, my attitude towards these ladies changed because I saw that they have a legitimate claim. Their profession is the oldest in the world perhaps it is about time people changed their perceptions.

I also got the opportunity to meet with LGBTI activists from Africa. This is yet another taboo topic especially in my country where homosexuality is criminalized. I realized that lack of understanding of certain issues must not be an excuse to shun others who are affected by them. There is need to sensitize people on issues that affect LGBTI people and thereby lead to better co-existence without discrimination and fear.

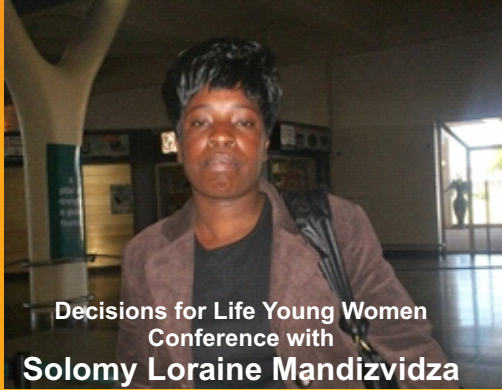
More touching to me were the experiences of domestic workers in Malaysia especially migrant workers, are badly treated with little or no protection at all. The Malaysian government has chosen to turn a blind eye to the plight of these workers who are semi slaves working long hours with no time off, little or no pay and with their travel documents withheld by their employers. They also often face physical and sexual abuse and more so their government has already given indications it will not be ratifying the Domestic Workers Convention. Trade union organizations are however working hard to improve conditions of these girls but they are still facing an uphill task without government support.

The AWID experience contributed to my growth as an individual and as young woman activist. My task had been to popularize Decisions for Life (DFL) as an organizational tool to empower young women. This was not easy as most of the participants were from largely feminist groupings that in my opinion either feel trade unionism is not a big enough platform to push gender issues or are not well informed on the work and scope of trade unionism. I had discussions with a number of women whom I introduced to the DFL campaign about the work we are doing to empower young women. However, the impact I sought was neutralised because I was not given the platform to address them in a plenary session. I also managed to record an interview on video which will serve to keep the DFL message alive at AWID.

To the ITUC I say, thank you for the opportunity you gave me to interact with activists at such an international scale. I assure you this experience will not only benefit me but all those that are in this struggle with me.

Amsterdam DFL Young Women Conference

by Solomy Loraine Mandizvidza



Decisions for Life Young Women Conference with Solomy Loraine Mandizvidza

The Conference was dedicated to Thabisa Sigaba of the South African Decisions for Life team, a young woman from Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), who passed away in a tragic accident on her way from a DFL regional Workshop held in Mozambique in 2010, where she had proposed that the ITUC should organise a Decisions for Life International Young Women's Conference. The conference was to evaluate the project as well as establish a network of young women and Gender coordinators around the world.

I felt honoured to be part of the delegation that attended the Decision for Life Young Women Conference. It was really an amazing experience, where we shared ideas and experiences particularly of the two years that we had participated in the campaign since its launch.

The conference included pre-conference workshops and plenary sessions focusing on six main thematic areas i.e. Sexual Harassment, maternity protection, sharing responsibilities/ combining family and work,

breaking the gender pay gap and HIV and AIDS. The active involvement of young women from all over the world brought the realization that young women have common issues and challenges, hence it is critical to participate in all issues that affect our day to day lives. The conference was kept alive by informative debates in the area of challenges at the work place, at home, in the union and at national government level on the different thematic issues. Delegates adopted a declaration which contained resolutions that will see a strong and vibrant young women's network the world over through Decisions for Life. I was really impressed that we managed to share experiences and spoke with one voice although we came from different countries with different languages.



T-SHIRT WITH THABISA SIGABAS FACE



SOUTH AFRICAN AND ZIMBABWE DELEGATION LED A SONG WITH ITUC STAFF JOINING IN.

Testimony by Kudzai Matete



Kudzai Matete 29 years is a member of the Zimbabwe Banks & Allied Workers Union affiliated to ZCTU.

She had this to say” I was once very well paid working for the Trust Bank in 2005 and I did not see any reason to join the union. Now I have learnt that the union protects us and am proudly an Executive member of the Banks Union and part of Decisions for Life Team Zimbabwe.

I used to think the union was there to show me around the world and to update me on my wage increase only. I refused to join as a full time member until one day my bank was placed under curatorship and was closed by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. When we were re-engaged under the judicial management, I immediately made sure I had security and joined the union. Now my participation is with a passion to defend workers' rights and not to benefit financially. My General Secretary also inspired me to aspire to make a difference in people's lives. I want to make a difference in other young women's lives”.

Meet the DFL Ambassador
Immaculate Chingwere.



WHAT WORKING WOMEN WANT

ZCTU Decisions for Life Coordinator, Fiona G. Magaya (F.G.M.) Interviews Immaculate T. Chingwere (I.T.C.) from Railway Artisan Union (RAU), a ZCTU Affiliate on her experiences with Decisions For Life. She is the RAU women's chairperson & ZCTU DFL Campaign Ambassador to ITUC

F.G.M. You have been with the DFL for some time, can you share with us on your role and contribution in the campaign?

I.T. C. I have been a member of the campaign team and the women's committee of ZCTU and have participated in the workplace meetings mobilising other young women. This was very successful and we reached out to young women who opened up on their issues and 731 were recruited as union members. We also mobilised more than 1900 during the period 2009 to 2011 on International Women's Day and World Day For Decent Work.

F.G.M. What has the campaign changed for you?

I.T. C. I have been taught about my rights as a worker and I learnt how to organise and recruit new members and have been equipped with skills to lobby for women's rights.

F.G.M. How has the campaign changed your perception of the union?

I.T. C. I now have a better appreciation of the role of the union. The union is there to protect our rights and to give us information and knowledge to participate in trade union activities and in the community where we live.

F.G.M. What support do you need from your union?

I.T. C. More capacitating on leadership skills

F.G.M. What did the union do which was different and innovative through the Decisions for Life campaign?

I.T. C. The union allowed us as the young to participate in our own special way and new slogans that interest us as young women were invented. We enjoyed the programme.

F.G.M. How did the campaign make a difference for the women in the ZCTU?

I.T. C. The campaign taught women that we need to have solidarity and unity of purpose between old and young so that we can achieve our objectives.

F.G.M. How do you see your future in the trade union movement?

I.T. C. I want to take top leadership position in the trade union, even in politics. Look, I have already managed to be elected women's chairperson in my own affiliate and I am also now the Women's Vice Secretary in ZCTU at national level.

F.G.M. What would you want to see happening in the trade union concerning DFL?

I.T. C. I would want the trade unions in Zimbabwe to mainstream DFL into their day to day activities and continue to empower young women and even young men as well.

AN INTERVIEW WITH SERINA



Serina Kurimi, young working woman from the textile industry and a member of the ZCTU Northeastern Regional choir was interviewed at the International Women's Day Celebrations in Mufakose, Harare 2011 by Tecla Masamba (T.M.).

T.M. Are you a member of a union?

S.K. Yes I am a member of the Zimbabwe Textile Workers Union.

T.M. What do you know about Decisions for life?

S.K. I know that it is a programme for young women, to encourage them to participate and to empower them.

T.M. What are the challenges faced by women, in particular, young women?

S.K. Women are looked down upon; employers give priority to male workers while women are ignored. Young women are mostly targets of sexual harassment and manipulation.

T.M. What do you want your union to do for young women?

S.K. Capacity building for young women, training on collective bargaining and reserve a percentage for young women in all decision making structures.

T.M. How do you think Decisions for life helps you as a young woman?

S.K. It helps empower me with knowledge on my rights and enhance my capacity or skills to negotiate issues which will benefit my fellow young women at the workplace and in the trade union itself.

T.M. What other comments do you want to make?

S.K. That it is important for our unions to give us trade union education once a person joins the union because we need to know the basics from the start and to help one understand their rights. I think Decisions for Life is helping to close that gap.



“This is not about allowing those men who are not gender sensitive to manipulate you, but be an equal partner, participate actively and you will not go wrong. I am a living testimony of that”.

The DFL Team celebrates the election of one of its pioneer women leaders Sithokozile Siwela into the top leadership of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions at its 7th National Congress in August 2011.

The election of Sithokozile Siwela, the Secretary General of the Railway Artisan Union (RAU) as the 1st Vice President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) at the August 2011 Congress, was a resounding victory for young women in the Decisions for Life Campaign team, who had looked up to her as their mentor and strength.

Siwela joins the likes of Florence Chitauro, Enna Chitsa, Lucia Matibenga and Thabitha Khumalo who at one time were elected into the Presidium of the national labour centre. What is outstanding about Siwela is that she participated in the pioneer project of the Decisions for Life Campaign since its launch by ZCTU in 2009. From the launch of the campaign up to 2011 at the time of her election, Siwela was part of the team of Women's Advisory Council (WAC) Executive Members whose major role in the team was to supervise the campaign, to inform and to mentor the young women towards active participation, confidence building and team work.

She however, did not just sail through smoothly but also met some challenges like resistance of her leadership by male colleagues, patriarchy even in the workplace, lack of information, 'pull her down syndrome' from fellow women etc. These she faced boldly and succeeded.

“When I joined the National Railways of Zimbabwe as an Artisan, there were very few women because the job was perceived to be a man's job. There was some form of discrimination against women even in the recruitment processes as most companies including the NRZ were not keen to employ women. But I am glad to say that today it is now a must to recruit a certain percentage of women as apprentices, said Siwela in an interview with the ZCTU Gender Coordinator Fiona Magaya.

Siwela however pointed out that there were still some men who expected women to be submissive to them even at the workplace. She said that it has now been proven in Institutions like the ZCTU that women are equal competitors and can be capable leaders.

Siwela joined the union in 1999 and soon after qualifying in her course, participated in the negotiations which saw management of NRZ changing their policy on recruitment of women. She became RAU Women's Desk Chairperson and Secretary of the Western Regional Women's Advisory Council of ZCTU from 2000 up to 2006, when she was elected ZCTU WAC Secretary.

In 2008, Siwela was also appointed Acting Secretary General of RAU and confirmed in the union's 2009 Congress Elections. Siwela was also elected Secretary of the Southern African Coordinating Council (SATUCC) Women's Committee in 2010, a position she still holds. Soon after her election to the position of 1st Vice President of ZCTU in August 2011, Siwela was voted into the international Labour Organisation (ILO) Governing Body, in November 2011.

Siwela said she is proud to have been a member of the ZCTU Women's Advisory Council and is particularly proud to have been a member of the pioneer team of the Decisions for Life Campaign. Siwela had these words to say to young workers out there, ***“This is not about allowing those men who are not gender sensitive to manipulate you, but be an equal partner, participate actively and you will not go wrong. I am a living testimony of that”.***

Profile for Cde. Barbara Gwangwara-Tanyanyiwa



Cde Barbara Gwangwara - Tanyanyiwa, the ZCTU Women' Advisory Council Secretary says that Decision for Life (DFL) project has benefited her, being a team leader of the program she has become more responsible than before. She said that DFL has helped her to make correct decisions confidently without fear or regretting and is now in a position to facilitate workshops confidently. In her community she can now interact at any level in her church, trade union and even in politics where she is also actively involved as a Provincial Member and Portfolio Secretary of Economic Empowerment for her political party. In 2008 Cde Tanyanyiwa became a member of the Women Advisory Council (WAC) of ZCTU as a Councilor for her union the Commercial Workers Union of Zimbabwe. In 2009 she was elected member of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) General Council.

She was co-opted as Vice Secretary for the ZCTU Women Advisory Council 2010 after the post fell vacant. In July 2011 when the WAC elections were due she was elected as the Vice Secretary and elevated to Secretary in September 2011 replacing Sithokozile Siwela. All these events clearly show that the team that she worked with had confidence in her and she feels all the credit is due to Decisions for Life and its coordinator Cde Fiona Magaya who does a great job to build and equip the DFL team with all the necessary skills. Cde Tanyanyiwa said she looks forward to being one of the greatest women leaders both in the Trade Union and in politics.

SAD NEWS FROM THE DFL NEWS DESK:

Youth suicide underlines ILO call for action on jobs in the occupied Palestinian territory

The recent suicide of a young jobseeker in Gaza City has been a cause for concern for most people even the ILO. The young man killed himself because of suffering caused by unemployment and had been searching for a job with no results. It's barely been two years since Mohamed Bouazizi set himself ablaze in Tunisia for the same reason. We have the same situation in Zimbabwe, where young people finish their university education but no jobs come their way. We need to participate in the processes where the trade union champions the process of influencing the employment policies in our country. We also need to look for alternatives that are decent and beneficial to us in the interim. We can achieve this by sharing experiences and ideas as young people. We are all in the same situation so there is no need to isolate yourself, talk to someone. **"Decisions for life campaign"** also offers you career guidance and planning. Let's put our heads together and meet the challenges facing young people today. Go to www.ilo.org for the full story titled, **"Youth suicide underlines ILO call for action on jobs in the occupied Palestinian territory"**.

DFL ACTIVITIES **4TH QUARTER 2012**

The DFL team will be conducting the following activities in between October and December 2012:

- Workplace meetings with young women in all the six regional centres;
- Training of Trainers 2nd phase
- Shopstewards and skills development training
- Road show in western region
- 16 Days of activism against gender based violence commemoration in Central Region;

NB: Don't forget the World Day for Decent Work in all six regions from 7th October 2012: Contact Organising department, Women and Gender department and ZCTU regional offices for more details.

From the Editor's Desk:

Continue to send in those exciting stories and experiences for the next magazine. We go to the printers again end of October 2012. Keep the ball rolling, don't stop.

"Decisions for Life: What working women want".

By Miriam Chipunza.

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The fight for human rights women rights has been for many *years*. Women have marched demonstrated, sang, fought and joined the rest of the world to speak with one loud voice for the demand for gender equality. This fight has been won in some African countries, and in some it is an on-going struggle.

It is sad to say that in Zimbabwe, even though we have to some extent succeeded in our struggle for women's rights, a new beast called '**the small house**' has emerged and is causing stigmatisation within the women folks. This is a class of single women who engage in relationships with married men or married women who engage in relationships with younger men. The writer is biased towards single working women who are educated and are financially stable.

The fight between single women and married women is now openly being fought in public places, through the internet, private meetings, churches, workplaces and some other women Fora. Single mothers have been labeled named and are often suspected of being 'men-snatchers' by the married women either in the workplace, communities and sadly even in churches.

Single mothers and mature single women mostly above the age of 30years, have been discriminated against because they are always suspected of being involved with married men. This in most workplaces heavily affects work performance, reduces confidence and self-esteem of these women and in some cases results in backbiting and even confrontations.

This has also put pressure on some young women to get married and have children with fear of becoming outcasts in the society; some even go the extent of giving the men money so that they can pay lobola (*bride price*) for them. Some are forced into marriages by their parents to also avoid being outcasts in the churches they attend and communities they live in.

However, men in Zimbabwe cheat for one reason or another with either married or single women. Most of these men have resolved to having long-term "**small-houses**" or girlfriends. It is because of the society that judges every single successful woman, suspecting them of having affairs with married men, that has resulted in these open relationships. A woman without any known relationship or man in her life is easily labeled and judged and discriminated against because she will be suspected of having secret affairs with married men. However some women are not ashamed to have relationships with married men openly, thereby causing a stir in the society.

The writer attended a church service in Harare where a pastor preached that *they did not recognise single mothers in their church, those children born and raised by single parents are weaklings and weaken the society*. This statement

in itself is not only discriminatory, but it is far from the truth and proves that women have a bigger fight against society than fighting against themselves.

Most mature single women and single mothers have been through different difficult situations in their lives and have had chances to start over new lives in order to support their lives in the most decent manner. Managing a family as a single parent is hard enough and having to defend their innocence in their communities, churches, workplaces and even social Fora is an extra burden that seriously impacts on their lives. According to some working single women in Harare, they did not enjoy these fights and accusations against them. However, some even admitted to having affairs with married men even in the workplace, and did not care about what their co-workers or what society said about them, as long as they had a male figure in their lives to either fulfill their sexual needs or just for companionship.

Interestingly, African men and particularly Zimbabwean men were known for polygamy during the 80s going backwards and some even practice it this day in

some parts of the country such as Binga and Mutoko. A man would inform his wife of his intentions to marry a second or even third wife, and would proceed to marry and they would then live in one homestead.

So do we really have to fight about it? After having succeeded in fighting for equal opportunities and gender equality, is the fight amongst women themselves necessary at all? Will it benefit anyone in the end, or just divide them?

According to some men who were interviewed in Harare, most of them were strongly against the idea of women coming together and agree to share the same man and of course the minority welcomed the idea. Most feared that if one man's wife and girlfriend get to know each other, then the man will lose control over these women and will not be able to manipulate and lie to them anymore. But of course this is the whole idea of the fight, to empower women against exploitation by the men folk and not fight each other.

In conclusion second wives and even third wives will always be married, but it doesn't make you less of a woman; another woman will choose to remain unmarried, but it doesn't make her less of a woman in the workplace because society thinks that way; there will always be the other woman who will be prettier, younger and brighter but it doesn't make you less of a woman.

The writer proposes that it is high time Zimbabwean working women stop the fight against themselves but rather support, motivate and encourage each other into positions of power, respect one another and fight against the real enemy: the men who exploit, rape and abuse their children, men who take advantage and abuse them and use them for their money and husbands who beat them up!!!

**"A new beast called
'the small house'
has emerged and is causing
stigmatisation within the
women folks**

I KNOW YOU CAN!!!

By Maureen Sigauke



"I consider myself a properly raised girl: by two very stern but loving parents. I would be doing injustice to their legacy if I fail to introduce myself to you as they taught me.

I am a young woman in my mid 20s who sees herself as a POWERWOMAN in the very near future. Like every other girl of my age I have recently gone through my tertiary education and am a proud holder of a BSc honours degree in applied Chemistry.

In my childhood, I thought life was a fairy-tale but have learnt the hard way that it is not so.

It is my hope that through this column, we will be able to share obstacles and triumphs that I have gone through and those I am facing in the present day.

It is also my hope, that you will relate to my experiences and that hopefully we get to talk about certain issues that we would not normally and freely talk about!!

In my 20 something years of life, it has dawned on me, that it is often these little yet big issues often ignored that have a major influence on the decisions that we make. Decisions which when

unwisely taken, can prove to be detrimental to a young woman's life forever!!

DECISIONS FOR LIFE

WHAT WORKING WOMEN WANT

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EXUAL HARASSMENT & DISCRIMINATION AT THE WORKPLACE ARE EVILS WHICH SHOULD BE ELIMINATED:

Discrimination:

The ILO's newest global report on discrimination - prepared under the ILO Declaration on **Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work** - is appropriately entitled "**Time for Equality at Work**" and it shows decisively that unless action is taken, that time is still a long way off. It is my conviction that the patriarchal system that has existed for a long time in our cultures has created stereotypes and biased institutions that have resisted decades of legal efforts and policy measures undertaken by governments, workers and employers against unequal treatment at work.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is defined under **ILO Convention No. 111** as any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin (among other characteristics), "which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity and treatment in employment or occupation" ("**Time for Equality at work**" - **ILO follow up report on the Declaration of fundamental principles and rights at work 2003**).

Discrimination can perpetuate poverty; stifle development, productivity and competitiveness. It can also ignite political instability. It is time trade unions and employers organisations took decisive action to ensure that laws banning discrimination at the workplace and even the community are respected and observed.

While significant progress has been made by trade unions, employers, governments and in some cases the Judiciary, to combat inequalities at the workplace, there are other new, indirect forms of discrimination emerging, which are a cause for growing concern. Many who suffer from discrimination, especially on the basis of their sex or colour, face a persistent "**equality gap**" that divides them from dominant groups who enjoy a better life.

Sexual Harassment

In most cases where there is discrimination, sexual harassment is sure to thrive and the two have the same effect of degrading and humiliating a person. Ask any woman about sexual harassment, and she is likely to have experienced sexual harassment or to know of cases of it at work.

In industrialised countries, 42-50% of female workers have been sexually harassed (www.ituc-csi.org). However sexual harassment does not affect women only but some men too have been tormented because of this evil.

What is sexual Harassment?

The key to what constitutes 'sexual harassment' is that it is, unwanted, unwelcome and unasked-for behaviour of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment is a display of power which is intended to intimidate, coerce or degrade another person. It usually takes the form of suggestive remarks and requests for sexual favours and compromising invitations. The most vulnerable and least protected persons are most likely to be under threat especially at the workplace;

Forms of sexual harassment:

Physical

- Touching, pinching, stroking, squeezing, or brushing against someone
- Unnecessary physical contact and touching
- Physical assault
- Making sexually suggestive signals, winking.

Verbal or written:

- Making sexual comments, innuendos / insinuations,
- Sending unwanted e-mails, text messages, posting sexually-explicit jokes on an office intranet
- Telling sexual jokes, or asking about sexual fantasies
- Making insults based on a person's sex or rating their sexuality
- Turning work discussions to sexual topics
- Requests for sexual favours, often related to promotion

Non Verbal:

- Displaying pictures, calendars, PC desktop wallpaper or other sexually explicit material;
- Sending anonymous letters
- Whistling

Other forms of tactful and discriminatory sexual harassment:

- Forcing women to work unsociable hours, which could make travel to and from work dangerous or expose them to sexual harassment or even rape;
- Creating a situation at work where the victim, man or woman, unsuspecting and innocently complies with working on a task or errand, which may end up exposing them to harassment and violation.

Conclusion:

The issue of sexual harassment is often difficult to raise and difficult to prove. The perpetrators of gender based violence / sexual harassment have invented a fantasy that their victims whether male or female, adult or child, have no right to say "**NO**" to their selfish demands. In the work environment women have been viewed as objects to beautify the environment and offer entertainment rather than equal partners or competitors. Instead women must be treated with respect that they deserve and on the same note, no person, whether man or woman deserves to be sexually harassed.

NB: Watch out for the next issue where we will discuss suggestions and possible ways of handling sexual harassment. Till next time, let us share this information and protect ourselves from the two evils, "*Discrimination and Sexual Harassment*".



DECISIONS FOR LIFE CAMPAIGN TEAM

