

# WOMEN IN POLITICS

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## *Newsletter*



is quarterly newsletter

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#### COVER PICTURE:

Ms. Clara Makungwa and  
Ms. Dorothy Chirambo are  
being touted as mentors of  
young upcoming female  
politicians (see story Page 5)

# Editorial

Dear Reader,

Welcome to yet another edition of women in Politics newsletter.

The Center for Multiparty democracy (CMD) Malawi publishes this newsletter quarterly as part of a project called Women's Active Participation in Political leadership and Decision making in political parties in Malawi funded by the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD). The overall objective of this project is to strengthen the participation of women in leadership and decision making within political parties in Malawi.

The uniqueness of this project is the mentoring approach that will contribute to the realisation of more women being empowered. We feel that through this approach, more women will be motivated to take up leadership positions, gain more confidence and capacity to take active roles in decision making, will have increased interest in political issues, willingness to carry out political work as well as increased networks and knowledge sharing among the Mentors and the Mentees.

The Women Movement across the SADC region and Malawi in particular continues to be concerned with gender relations in terms of the numbers of women in local and national legislatures.

Women make up slightly more than 51% of world's population, yet on average they hold only 16% of the world's elected political posts. This trend is similar to that of Malawi in that women represent 52% of the population and yet continues to be under represented in the local and national legislatures. For instance in the just ended tripartite polls, female Members of Parliament amassed 16.5% whilst the Councilors amassed 12%.

Though one would say it's not a mean achievement but perhaps this challenges us as key stakeholders to assess the underlying factors that might have contributed to the undesired outcome and possibly re-strategize on how best the 50% representation (according to the SADC Gender protocol) could be achieved.

You may wish to agree with me that the pursuit of democracy is incomplete without policies, measures and practices that seek to reduce inequalities between men and women in all spheres of life and which anchor democracy and its intersection with gender.

Democracy is supposed to transform power relations between men and women by promoting the equal distribution of power and influence between women and men. In the second edition, we pointed out that the tripartite elections presented to Malawians an opportunity to elect more women but the outcome was far from what we insinuated.

In this regard, CMD-M would like appreciate the active roles played by different electoral players during the previous electoral cycle more especially during the campaign period. We indeed saw key stakeholders doing what they could to level the playing field for all the candidates to free participate during the tripartite elections.

We also feel that perhaps the outcome of the elections has given us feedback on what we did as well as areas of improvement in as far as increasing women representation in political decision making is concerned. CMD-M therefore calls for the key stakeholders such as the Political parties, the Civil society organizations (CSOs), the Government, Developing Partners and the general public for collective actions that would contribute to providing the required capacity building to the Female MPs and Councilors with an overall objective of creating a critical mass of women who will at all cost contribute effectively and efficiently to the national agenda.

CMD-M wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the financial and technical support from the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD) for the publication of the newsletter

We hope you will enjoy reading the newsletter.

**Kizito Tenthani**

**Executive director, CMD-Malawi**

# Word from the Chair

My fellow Malawians,

It is indeed not pleasing to face the reality that only 32 women made it to parliament. As a newly sworn-in Minister, I share the disappointment and I am at pains to put a finger on what it is that we could have done differently to achieve a different and better result.

Ultimately, it is not the women of this country that have lost, the whole nation has. My Ministry together with other like-minded Civil Society organizations (CSOs) such as CMD will continue with our activism in the hope that our goal for more women involvement in politics and increased women in positions of power is achieved.

For this country to develop, it needs full participation of ALL its citizens, men and women, young and old, together. Men and women must, together, meaningfully participate in decision making at all levels, including in elective positions.

The performance of women in the recently held tripartite elections was indeed poor. There could be a number of reasons that in one way or the other contributed to the outcome. Looking at the number of women who contested at higher level positions during the just ended elections, it is a fact that only two of 12 presidential candidates were female. The two female presidential aspirants (Dr. Joyce Banda of the People's Party and Mai Busa Hellen Sigh of United Independent Party) garnered a little over one million votes, or around a sixth of all valid votes which was not enough to usher either of them into power. This to me shows that as women we need to have that courage and capacity to contest at such levels even during the party conventions where touch bearers of political parties are elected. If a lot more women participated during the party conventions, I am sure; the number of women joining the presidential race could have increased.

As indicated earlier on, the biggest disappointment is the performance of female MPs and counselors candidates. Only 32 female MPs made, representing a reduction by 15 the number of female parliamentarians, Female aspirants recorded an even lower percentage in local government elections.

My advice is that we need to put these disappointing results behind us and start to think beyond the numbers that we currently have. It's time to build capacity of those women who have made it and prepare those who did not make it, to join the race come 2019 through programs such as Mentoring. Let us all work towards achievement of much better results when we go to the polls again in 2019. In the meantime, my thoughts are with those women who have made it. I wish to urge you to realize that you have a massive responsibility on your shoulders to not only be effective representatives of the people who voted for you, but also be role models for women and girls throughout the country. If you do a good job, you will inspire a lot of women and girls to aim to emulate you and by so doing you will have helped in the fight for empowerment of women. If you do a good job as well know you can, you will also show men who have reservations about women leadership credentials that women can. This can be a useful platform from which to build and work to achieve the ultimate goal of increasing to at least 50 percent the number of women in leadership positions.

For the rest of us, let us give support to those few women who have made to parliament and local assemblies. These women deserve praise for achieving success in what was clearly not an easy competition. They were strong focused and determined, overcoming so many obstacles along the way to win in their respective constituencies and wards.

My Fellow Malawians, in a special way let me recommend CMD for the Mentoring program they have started implementing with an aim of empowering more women to take up active positions in political and decision making. This indeed will encourage those women both the Mentors and the mentees to consolidate our efforts so that women can be empowered to meaningfully participate in political and decision making levels. I for one attended the mentoring orientation workshop which was held in Mangochi by CMD. It is a very good programme which I hope can be replicated right through to grassroots women.

Finally, I wish to again extend my support to CMD and the Board that as a ministry, we are together in this fight and let's work together in consolidating our democracy.

Wishing you a pleasant reading.

**Hon Patricia Kaliati**  
**Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and social warfare**



# Law neutrality hinders women participant in local governance

Stakeholders from government, civil society and cooperating partners have said the neutrality of the Local Government Act is contributing to low participation of women in local governance.

The stakeholders made the observation during a National Consultative Conference of Government-Civil Society Organization Task force on Local Governance at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe.

During deliberations on the 2010 amendments to the Local Government Act it was observed that the Act is gender neutral and presupposes that both men and women are capable of being equally elected as councillors, MPs, or appointed as members of councils to represent special interest groups in terms of section 5 of the Local Government Act.

But most of the members of the Task Force that organized the conference, who included the Ministry of Local Government, Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD), GIZ, Tilitonse Fund, UN Women, the Dan Church Aid (DCA), Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA), Public Affairs Committee (PAC), Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) and National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE)

were of the view that the gender neutrality of the Local Government Act was resulting in minimal participation of women at the Council level.

In the recently held Tripartite elections, women have performed poorly, especially in local government elections.

The conference theme was strengthening local governance in Malawi. It also aimed at establishing a common understanding of the current status of decentralization and local governance in the country, in terms of its legal policy and institutional framework, as well as ongoing programmes and capacities in readiness for the coming of the ward councillors, predicted the poor performance, in part due to the legal framework that failed to recognize women's special needs.

A diversity of stakeholders to the Conference was drawn from the Government Ministries, developing partners, Retired District Commissioners, Former Councilors, the CSO fraternity, the Traditional Chiefs, Religious leaders and the Media.

Women representation in elected political offices since 1994 has not been impressive despite the majority of voters being women themselves.

This means that women participation and involvement at the local level has been very minimal

Minimal women participation in elected political office has been attributed to number of social, political and economic reasons.

Out of 1,967 candidates who contested for Local Government Elections in November 2000, only 187 were women. 132 out of 859 elected councillors were women. In 2014, out of 2398 candidates 417 are women

It is arguable that pertinent issues that directly affected women might not have been brought to the attention of the electorate.

Some Council do not have any women councillors.

Some of the strategies that should be strengthened to increase women representation at council levels are advocacy and lobbying, Community mobilization and awareness, capacity building for women political aspirants/women councilors and also ensuring that where there are more women councilors.

There has to be a deliberate effort that among the five non-voting elected positions there must be a representation of women to cater for special interests groups.

# Women representation in cabinet down by 15 percent

Efforts to create a Malawi society where men and women work together by equitably sharing leadership positions in public life suffered another setback when President Peter Mutharika appointed only three women in his 20-member cabinet.

Mutharika, winner of last May's Presidential election, named only Grace Obama Chiumia, Jean Kalirani and Patricia Kaliati into cabinet where there are 17 men.

Obama Chiume was appointed Minister of Youth and Sports, while Kalirani and Kaliati were appointed to Health and Gender ministries, respectively.

The immediate past cabinet of former president Joyce

Banda had 10 of its 32 members as women.

The new cabinet means women's representation in cabinet has fallen from around 30 percent in the previous cabinet to a measly 15 percent in the newly appointed one.

Women also saw a drastic reduction in the number of parliamentary representatives when only 32 women won seats in Malawi's 193 member Parliament.

The previous parliament 45 women.

In local government elections women's success rate was even lower with just 56 women being elected as counselors against more than 400 men.

# SGs agree to support women mentorship programme

Party Secretary Generals have agreed that it is important to encourage women who have contributed positively to advancement of Malawi's politics since independence to be mentors of young and upcoming lady politicians.

Party Secretary Generals reached the agreement at a workshop they jointly held with Directors of Women in political parties in Manochi.

The workshop aimed to orient party leaders on a women mentorship project being championed by the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD) – Malawi and to explore practical measures that can help enhancing women participation in politics in general and political parties in particular.

The project is supported by Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy that focuses on women inclusion in decision making positions.

Delegates of the meeting had a national reflection on women participation and the exercise was mainly depicting women that have contributed positively in Malawi's politics since Malawi got independence from 1964 to date.

There was a long list of names drawn which the delegates said can form a club of mentors in Malawi to groom upcoming women politicians.

Some of the names on the list - Hon Patricia Kaliati, Ms Clara Makangwa and Ms Dorothy Chirambo - were in fact participants to the workshop, identified to have braved the challenges that Malawian women face in



READY TO SERVE: (L to R) Ms. Clara Makungwa, Hon. Patricia Kaliati and Ms. Dorothy Chirambo say they are committed to help mentor young and upcoming female politicians

politics by showing great resilience.

The three narrated their political stories where they outlined the challenges they faced and what they did to overcome them.

The challenges that were cited as common for all female aspirants ranged from cultural, religious and economic problems.

Culturally, most women from the patrilineal society are suppressed in many aspects if they want to come out and take part in politics because cultural expectations do not give leverage to women to be active in decision making issues, the women said.

On the religious front the meeting observed that either the Christian and Moslem doctrines do not allow the female figure to be part of leadership models. People do go to churches or mosques and see only male figures in front of the service and that indoctrinates many children when they grow up that leaders are male figures only.

It was also further observed that financially, men have the comparative advantage compared to women.

Some of the qualities that were echoed by the three women role models that were in the meeting were accessibility, availability, resilience, determination, foresightedness, honesty and generosity.

"When you want to be a leader, do not shy away from the people and be a woman of all people irrespective of religion, colour, language and tribe," the women mentors said.

The meeting agreed to draw a list of women that have done well in society and in politics in particular to be mentors of upcoming women politicians.

This will be one way for recruitment of new members in parties and building a culture that politics is of service to people not promotion of immoral behaviour as other people believe it to be.

"When you want to be a leader, do not shy away from the people and be a woman of all people irrespective of religion, colour, language and tribe,"

# Malawi is a nation of women leaders – Helen Singh

**A**busa Hellen Singh was one just two women out of 12 people who contested the Presidential election. Things did not exactly go according to plan for her. But in this exclusive interview with Women in Politics newsletter Ms Singh shares some thoughts on how things went. Here are excerpts:

**You are known as Mai Abusa Hellen Singh, but there could be many Malawians who do not know you beyond just your name and the fact you contested the last presidential election. Who exactly is Helen Singh?**

I am Abusa Helen Singh. I am a widow and a mother of three and a grandmother of four. I come from Ntcheu, Bilira, chief Mawerana and Traditional authority Makwangwala. I am from a family of Mfumu Kawere. I was born in early 50's and educated by the British colonialists until 1964 when Malawi took over. I am a pastor ordained by Word Out-reach Ministries from Texas.

**Can you explain why the prefix Abusa on your name, does it have to do with church ministry that you have men-mentioned already?**

Yes this is because I am a pastor and not a wife of a pastor, my husband passed away in 2001.

**What motivated you to go into politics?**

The thing that motivated me is that during the process as working as a minister, teaching the word of God, we discovered great problems that this country is grappling with especially in the rural areas. The poverty levels are very deep in this country. There is hunger everywhere. The poverty levels in this country really hurt and it pains me to see it and that is from Nsanje to Chitipa. There are few areas that are a little better off but we can say Malawi is predominantly poverty stricken. This is what has motivated me to join politics. (I know that) anyone who is willing to change things in Malawi has to be the highest top of the management of this country and the Chief Executive is the president and that's what motivated me to run for presidency.

**When did your interest to join front line politics start?**

It started in about 1997-98 but it progressed gradually. (But I noticed that) we continue to recycle politicians and aiming to have different results and that's not the way to go. If you just look around in the streets you see hopelessness in the faces of the people. You will see that the people have no hope, no vision and you hear people saying that's how it is. We seem not to see real progress in many areas even after 50 years of independence. I don't call Malawi a democracy I call it multiparty, that's all, because if we were a democracy then we would have more voices on issues that are affecting this country, the people in this country do not have a voice so we are not a democratic country. We are a multiparty government but certainly not democratic for democracy means a government of the people for the people and by the people and looking at

how things are done in Malawi, then we are far from that. The only time that people speak here is when you go and steal their votes in the villages and even then there are no mechanisms for people to voice out their concerns. People in my constituency do phone me and say we will never vote again. I do not know what to say to them for if they don't vote is bad news and if they vote is also bad news so we are stuck between the rock and the hard place. We need people in the government that can stand up for the good of the people and this is where I am at and this is what I wish for my country.

**You contested in the last Presidential elections and got less than 1 percent of the votes, do you regret your decision to contest?**

First of all I must say I do not believe that I got less than 1 percent of the total votes cast. I should also mention that I do not regret contesting in the past general elections because I believe I have changed the political scene of this country. I know that Malawi shall never remain the same again. I opened people's eyes, I opened their mind-set and I changed their way of thinking and I said the things that people talk only privately and I talked about them publicly, I declared it to the nation and that's why am happy.

**What do you think are the reasons you did not do so well in this election?**

I do not believe I did not do so well. You know, my honest answer to this question is yes we have a president, we have a government and everything is in place. Let us not change that, let us leave it as it is but as a democratic country, let us go back and recount the votes so that we know where this country went wrong in the 2014 elections because it was a very controversial elections. Only a recount in this case will settle matters, I am not saying if anyone emerges a winner then that one becomes a president, no. I am saying let us recount the votes so that we know exactly the level of our integrity as a nation so that every contestant can proudly say yes I got 9 thousand votes, yes I got 1. 8 million votes but votes that are genuine. There were some areas where I was second to Joyce Banda and these others were trailing down by wider margins but when the final figures came out I was shocked to have different results. You know that, I know that and so are the majority of Malawians but why is it that nobody is speaking? I am not saying give me the presidency, that's is water and the bridge and things have been done but we have to move forward as a nation with critical thinking, we have to ask ourselves how should we move on from this controversial elections? If tomorrow they say I did not get 9 thousand and I got 1 thousand then I will know what to do in 2019.

**Despite all the challenges that you have mentioned, there might be some lessons learnt, what can you say are the main lessons you have learnt from the experience? Is there anything you perhaps should have done differently?**

You know, I don't believe there is anything I could have

done differently, the only thing that could have changed is truth, fairness, justice morality and integrity. These are the things that are missing in Malawi.

**How do we bring about these ideal principles that you have just mentioned?**

Let us start by recounting the votes so that we can prove if these principles were there or not there, if they were there then to what degree were they adhered to. In an election you and I as voters have the freedom and the right to choose the one that we want to lead us but if it comes down to a point of swapping down ballot boxes and changing figures and all these things then it's not a democratic dispensation anymore.

**Overall, women performed poorly in the last election, what do you put that down to?**

Women performed really poorly and I put that down to the performance of Madam Joyce Banda. Totally non-receptive to the advice of the ordinary people on the ground. She was out of touch with the nation, she was like an Ostrich burying its head in the sand and in that case you don't see the world and this is what she did. She was given a chance in the presidential debate to explain what she has in store for the nation and she turned that down. Because of her performance as a president let down the women of Malawi, the women of SADC and the women of Africa.

**It is thought that is generally harder for women to be accepted as leaders in Malawi, yet as presidential candidate, you picked fellow women as a running mate. Was that not a totally disregard for the feelings of the majority of Malawians voters who generally are against women leadership?**

I do not think this that's the genuine mind-set of Malawians. You see I am from the Maseko Ngoni clan and there women are allowed to be leaders. I come from the matriarchal society and for me that is not a problem. I picked my fellow woman as a running mate because I wanted to have a person next to me who knows how I function and this lady has been with me for close to 14 years. You can totally pick up a stranger and end up in a situation where the two of you are fighting. We have had three presidents fighting with their vice presidents. Another question I keep asking this country is why should I be judged by my gender? I have a hard time understanding this because if you go out tonight to all the bars here in Blantyre for example, it will be full of men. They spend every night in a bar and not caring about the families so who is a leader of that household? It is a wife who is suffering at home crying with hungry children. So I believe Malawi is a nation of women leaders because our men spend the majority of their time in the bars with prostitutes.

**Malawi will have Tripartite Elections again in 2019, do you plan to contest again?**

Yes I will contest again but my hope is that we shall have a lot of Malawian election observers. I want people that can



**WOMEN CAN:** Ms. Helen Singh believes women are just as capable of leading as men

speaking Chichewa to observe our elections. We can bring on board Chewa speaking people from Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia and those can be better than European observers. I was totally disappointed with the African Union observers, they were pro Joyce Banda. I was lectured at Mount Soche on how important it was that I should support Joyce Banda and Sam Nujoma was there and that to me was not the role of the election observer but someone who has come to this country to campaign for someone.

**Finally, how can we support women to take up leadership positions either in politics or in any organisation?**

First of all women need to be trained and education is vital. Secondly, NGOs should not be cosmetic. The women NGOs especially do nothing for women on the ground. I am saying this from experience. When I had ten years in courts battling for deceased estates from my late husband, there was not even a single women NGO helping me. There is NGO-GCN, for example, they never gave me money until 5th of June and that's when they credited my account. This is when I battled for that money and it was on principle because I said you have received that money on my account. As I have said my account was credited on 5th June when the elections were on 20th May 2014 and are you telling me that these women NGOs are looking after the welfare of women? No they are not. If these women NGOs want to raise the profile of women they need to start working today for 2019. Otherwise, forget it and don't come here 3 months, 2 months before elections and saying you are raising women profile, you are not, people have been campaigning for 12 months and you come 3 months before elections and you claim to be supporting that woman? My last words on Malawi's politics is that we have to get rid of old politicians, I have said it before and I repeat that we cannot change Malawi with the old politicians that are recycled from one political party to the next.

# Beyond numbers: The relevance of critical mass in gender & politics

The Women Movement and like-minded institutions across the SADC region and Malawi in particular continue to be deeply concerned with gender imbalance relations in terms of numbers of women in local and national legislatures.

Women make up slightly more than 52% of the Malawi's population, yet only 16% and 12% are occupied by female Members of Parliament and Councilors respectively. Globally, as of 1st July, 2013, only 21.8% of national parliaments were occupied by women and in the Sub Saharan African counties, women only occupy 18.5%.

This has led to calls for action that would increase the number of women in legislatures based both on arguments of justice and on claims that an increase will substantively change decision-making processes and outcomes.

The equal participation of women and men in public life is a cornerstone of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and enforced since 1981 and Malawi is a signatory to this instrument.

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action further emphasized that women's equal participation is not only a demand for justice or democracy but a necessary condition to achieve the goals of equality, development and peace.

Additionally, the Beijing Platform for Action called upon governments to "take positive action to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives and managers in strategic decision-making positions. Further to the above instruments, one of the UN millennium goals is to "promote gender equality and empower women" and one of the primary indicators for the success of this goal is the "proportion of seats held by women in national parliament".

However, it is important to move 'beyond numbers' to adopt women's perspectives, make positive and constructive changes in women's issues and reform the inherent 'institutional masculinity', which characterises most legislatures....It is one thing to put a woman in power. It is quite another to transform the way politicians behave.

However, moving beyond numbers may be regarded as highlighting the danger of reducing the result of the gender equation to equal participation in parliament and council only, instead of projecting it as a means of leading to the mainstreaming of gender issues within council and parliamentary work.

Political parties play an essential role in women's advancement in politics and their presence in public offices ....political practice as well as scientific research show that women's pathways into politics differ from those of men's: women need more encouragement and support than men to run for office but most often they do receive less.

In this era where the numbers of women represented in Parliament is too minimal, there is an urgent and important need for key stakeholders to comprehensively build the capacity of the female MPs and of those of the councilors. This will enable the few who have made it to effectively and efficiently contribute to the gender agenda.

Perhaps this is now a high time we put our efforts together so as to prove that women can ably represent the interests of the population despite the numbers. It is time to think beyond the numbers....it is time to yield maximum productivity from the few women that have made it.

The debate about substantive changes in political decision making should be centered on whether women in a legislature must reach a "critical mass" in order to bring about change in the political arena.

The term critical mass is frequently used by politicians, the media, and academics, but can it offer insights into the influence of gender on political processes and outcomes?

I strongly feel that critical mass is only useful if we discard the belief that a single proportion holds the key to all representation needs of women and if we discard notions that numbers alone bring about substantive changes in policy processes and outcomes.

Women's increasing impact can be achieved through explicitly advancing an agenda for gender equality and mainstreaming gender perspectives into various policies. By effectively increasing the substantive representation of women and their impact on public life at all levels, there is potential for change in social practices, and therefore in outcomes towards empowerment of women can be better realised and in turn by promoting a more democratic and just society.

The idea of a 'critical mass' has not only served as a theoretical argument in other countries like Rwanda where women occupy 63.8% seats in the lower house, but has been translated into recommended policy for working to increase the presence of women in Parliament.

Let's start to think beyond the numbers!!!!!!

# Women should be liberated from their homes - party monitor

A woman who worked as a party monitor during last may's Tripartite Elections has said women must take advantage of various legislation that aims to empower them and seek to be liberated.

Cecilia Chiwaya, who was United Democratic Front (UDF) monitor in Chiradzulu said women can now occupy meaningful roles in different organisations and show that they too can perform to required standards.

"Nowadays we have various laws that aim at empowering women and there is no need to shy away. As women we have to start fighting inequality from our families to defend our rights so as to participate in active in politics" said Chiwaya.

Chiwaya is one of the party monitors that were trained by Centre for Multiparty Democracy on election monitoring and she took her role as a monitor very seriously.

Speaking in an interview with this newsletter, she said issues to do with election monitoring are very important and that women should be involved since they form the larger part of the electorate.

"Gone are the days when women used to shy away from politics. The time has come for women to take active roles at all levels of politics,including within political parties," she said.

Chiwaya mentioned lack of economic financial base as the major obstacle that makes women in failing to venture into politics as politics can be demanding at times.

She also said that one of the challenges that affect women in taking up leadership positions is lack of self esteem.

Chiwaya said women tend to look down upon themselves and are not ready for challenging tasks. She challenged her fellow women to be aggressive and assertive in life and not to be afraid when it comes to vying for or accepting positions of power.

The UDF Member also said if more women had public speaking skills it would help them to excel in politics.

There were however, some words of advice that Chiwaya had for all women that there is no need to fear politics and in fact there is need to join it for it is politicians that forms policies.

"Policies that favour women can only be pushed by women themselves and this can happen if more women participate at the council level or in parliament," she said.

"If we are to move this country forward, young ladies should start politics at tender age and and must pursue their political career with passion," she said



**USE THE LAW: CMD-M trained party monitor, Cecilia Chiwaya says women should take advantage of positive legislation to empower themselves**

Women in Politics newsletter would like to hear from you!  
Send us your views on how we can move our country beyond the numbers and actualise increased participation of women in decision-making roles in public life. We will be happy to hear and publish your views in this newsletter. Email us at [kizito@sdpn.org.mw](mailto:kizito@sdpn.org.mw)

# Analysis of women and electoral results in Malawi's tripartite polls

## Introduction

Results of Malawi's tripartite general elections are not very encouraging if we consider numbers in terms of women representation. The elections themselves were marred with a lot of irregularities but the numbers that came out representing women were more depressing.

All those who advocated for more women representation in the National assembly and at the council level are devastated after learning that women amassed only 16.5% and 12% respectively. Glaring gaps in cultural, policy, legal frameworks and investment opportunities made it difficult for women to perform to their full potential in the elections.

## The 50-50 Campaign

There have been a lot of players who advocated for 50-50 campaign in the run up to Malawi's general elections. The 50:50 Campaign aimed at increasing the representation of women (MPs and Councillors). The campaign was in line with provisions of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which sets the target of 50%. The elections in Malawi, therefore, provided a platform to enable the implementation of SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which will expire next year, 2015.

Number of the activities that were conducted in trying to drum up support for women include; development of a Communication Strategy, community awareness and mobilization meetings, media orientation and establishment of a media task-force to help in positive coverage, training of women candidates in leadership, popularizing engendered manifesto and party constitutions, monitoring primary elections and campaigns among others.

## Statistical results

As stated above, the official results that were released by the Electoral Commission as regards women representation were not encouraging.

As a background information, 261 female candidates out of 1,285 contested in the parliamentary elections representing 20% of all the candidates. So from the beginning the number of women that showed willingness was not quite encouraging compared to their male counterparts. 421 female candidates out of 2,411 contested for local council positions representing 17% and again from the onset, men out-numbered women. In Malawi at the moment there are 193 constituencies and 462 local government wards.

After the voting had taken place, out of 261 women who contested in 2014, only 32 made it to parliament representing only 12% of those who participated. As per the 193 seats in Parliament, this translates into 16.5% representation of women, opposed to 22% in 2009.

There could be reasons for this regression that need to be worked on.

The numbers in terms of percentages are not even encouraging for female councillors because only 52 women have made it, out of 419 women who contested representing 12% of those who participated. The percentage in comparison with that of men is even on the lower side compared to the already small percentage at parliamentary level.

## Probable reasons for decimal performance

Election is a process not just one time event. In order to have credible elections that inspires women then all processes before, during and after polling have to be put in place. There were a number of factors before elections that might have contributed to decimal performance of women. The first reason is that legal framework more especially party constitutions are not adequately gendered.

A gender analysis study that Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD) commissioned through Danish Institute Parties in Democracy (DIPD) revealed gender inequality and unequal participation in the four main parties (DPP, MCP, PP and UDF) in Malawi.

The other reason that affected women votes was the non performance of the Joyce Banda when she was the president, many male aspirants de-campaigned women at the pretext of non performance of a woman president. The other main factor that deterred CSOs and government in reaching out to many aspiring candidates was the fact there were very limited resources to implement many activities that were lined up.

There were challenges too during the polling that affected women. Some of the challenges include; violence in some polling centres especially in Blantyre, disappearance of ballot boxes, late night voting, insufficient of voting materials rampant rumours of rigging and presence of riot police using teargas to disperse angry crowds. This resulted in voter apathy and many people that were affected by these occurrences were women.

One major challenge at post-election was the failure by the electoral commission to do recount after noticing many irregularities. In the end it was a decision of one judge who determined that elections be released amidst many irregularities encountered.

## Conclusion

The empowerment of women has long been a goal of development work in Malawi. The performance of women in the just ended tripartite election is not good not only for proponents of 50-50 campaign but the entire nation for Malawi to develop it needs inclusive approach. Women participation in politics is important for it is in politics that policies are made and it is only logical if women take part in active politics through elected positions.

Thus action is required in political, economic, social and cultural spheres to ensure that women are not discriminated in any way. There is need for government and CSOs to continue working together in promoting women aspirations in politics.

# Losing parliamentary aspirant says she'll be back in 2019

She is 23. Was keen to be a parliamentary representative of people of her constituency.

Unfortunately for Rogean Connex Gondwe, her dream to become one Malawi's youngest legislators failed to come true after she lost in the parliamentary elections.

She is, understandably, deeply disappointed.

Yet she refuses to give up hope of one day being a member of the august house.

In March, just two months before the elections, Rogean attended a training orientation session which the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare in collaboration with the NGO GCN and other civil Society organization organised for all the female aspiring MPs and councillors across the country.

Prior to the trainings, a Training of Trainers workshop was also conducted with an aim of reminding the trainers of what was expected of them during the training of the women aspirants.

Rogean was one of the youngest aspirants who attended the training workshop held at the Bingu International Conference in Lilongwe.

*Women in Politics* newsletter caught up with the enthusiastic aspirant to learn more about her political journey.

Rogean, (full name Rogean Connex Gondwe) told this newsletter she is a first born daughter in a family of 5 and started aspiring for the position of MP in 2013.

She said she was inspired by Her excellence Dr Joyce Banda.

"If Joyce Banda is able to govern the Nation then I can also represent my constituency as a Member of Parliament," she said.

The charming young politician said that she joined politics because she wants to bring meaningful development to her constituency, and most importantly to motivate young people particularly the young girls to take up political leadership positions such as being a Member of Parliament and



**STILL DETERMINED: Rogean Gondwe lost parliamentary elections but says she will be back in 2019**

Councillor.

She explained that her journey has not been without hurdles.

She managed to overcome her first hurdle when she won the right to represent the People's Party (PP) in the parliamentary elections during party primaries.

"I had to convince men, women and the youth to vote for me during the primaries....although some men were underrating me with some of them actually laughing at me when I was campaigning," Rogean said.

"Financial problems were also another challenge but my father, mother and relatives were so supportive that they could escort me to campaigns and sometimes I could use *Kabaza* (Bicycle taxi) whilst my competitors were using big vehicles. This made me stronger and more determined," she said.

Sadly, Rogean did not make it to parliament.

"It is not the end of the road for me. I think age is on my side. I will be back, stronger in 2019," she said.



1 LET'S HELP THE YOUNG ONES: People's Party's Clara Makunga making a contribution during a workshop on women mentorship programme in Mangochi  
2. TALKING THINGS OVER: A UNDP supported meeting in session????????  
3. GOOD TO GO: Monitors from different political parties pause for a photograph after attending a party monitors training session in Mponela, Dowa.

