

**REPORT OF THE
WORKING GROUP TO ENHANCE WOMEN'S
REPRESENTATION AND
PROMOTE THE CONSIDERATION
OF GENDER ISSUES WITHIN
PARLIAMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

Organized by

**THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF MALAWI
AND UNESCO**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Working Group to Enhance Women's Representation and Promote the Consideration of Gender Issues Within Parliaments in Southern Africa brought together 37 women and men parliamentarians from ruling and opposition parties in the 12 Southern African SADC member countries to discuss issues of common concern and to work out a regional programme of action for future work in this area. The Working Group was organized by the National Assembly of Malawi and UNESCO in Mangochi, Malawi from 22 to 25 April 1996. The Speaker of the National Assembly of Malawi issued invitations to other Speakers of the National Assembly in Southern Africa to send representatives to the Working Group.

The opening session of the meeting was chaired by Hon. Kate Kainja, Member of Parliament from Malawi. The conference was officially opened by Hon. R.T.C Munyenembe, Speaker of the National Assembly of Malawi. The UNESCO Sub-Regional Adviser for Social and Human Sciences in Southern Africa, Ms. Carrie Marias and a representative from the Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, Ms Hyacinth Kishindo, also addressed the Working Group on this occasion.

The Working Groups discussed the following topics:

Agenda Item 1 - *Review of recent trends in democratization and how this is affecting the gender balance and women's representation within national legislatures of different countries*

Agenda Item 2 - *How to work towards obtaining a critical mass of women within Parliament and towards facilitating women's possibilities to speak out and to influence policies in all areas*

Agenda Item 3 - *How can women's interests and gender issues best be defined and most appropriately advanced?*

Agenda Item 4 - *Developing further communication and dialogue between women parliamentarians and women's organizations as well as with people within their constituencies, especially in rural areas*

Agenda Item 5 - *Can women's representation make a difference to the quality of debate and policy making?*

Agenda Item 6 - *Striking a gender balance: enhancing cooperation and mutual support between women and men parliamentarians*

Agenda Item 7 - *Creating an enabling environment and socializing for equality and active citizenship*

Agenda Item 8 - *Proposals for future joint programmes and action.*

The participants elected Chairpersons from different countries for the various sessions as follows:

- Opening Session - *Chairperson, Hon. Kate Kainja, Member of Parliament, Malawi*
- Agenda Item 1 - *Chairperson, Hon. Catherine Chipembere, Deputy Minister of Education and Member of Parliament, Malawi*
- Agenda Item 2 - *Chairperson, Hon. Margaret Dongo, Member of Parliament, Zimbabwe*
- Agenda Item 3 - *Chairperson, Senator Dr. Maggie Makhubu, Swaziland*
- Agenda Item 4 - *Chairperson, Hon. Gladness Mziray, Member of Parliament, Tanzania*
- Agenda Item 5 - *Chairperson, Hon. M.D Kabi, Member of Parliament, Lesotho*
- Agenda Item 6 - *Chairperson, Hon. Salome Moeane, Member of Parliament, Mozambique*
- Agenda Item 7 - *Chairperson, Hon. Isaac Mabiletsa and Hon. Gladys Kokorwe, Members of Parliament, Botswana*
- Agenda Item 8 - *Chairperson, Hon. Nozizwe Routledge, Member of Parliament, South Africa*

II. Review of Recent Trends in Democratization and How This Is Affecting the Gender Balance and Women's Representation within National Legislatures of Different Countries

The session for Agenda Item 1 on "Review of recent trends in democratization and how this is affecting the gender balance and women's representation within national legislatures of different countries" was chaired by Hon. Catherine Chipembere, Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology and Member of Parliament from Malawi.

Hon. Nozizwe C. Routledge, Member of Parliament from South Africa, introduced discussions by presenting a paper on this topic. She gave an overview of the situation of women in national parliaments world-wide, and looked specifically at how the winds of democratization blowing across southern Africa were affecting the possibilities for women's participation in the political process and in decision-making. She also situated the discussion in the context of the possibilities available for governments, women's organizations, MP's and Parliaments to use the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for the Advancement of Women as well as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as tools for action to work towards women's empowerment and participation as active citizens. She noted that the discourse and theory

on democracy would still need to incorporate issues of gender equality for democracy to have a chance to function in actual practice.

In some southern African countries, the numbers of women within Parliaments have increased. This was the case of Mozambique, with 26.4 per cent women in the National Assembly; and South Africa with 25 per cent women in the National Assembly, a woman Speaker and Deputy Speaker in the National Assembly, and 17.8 per cent women members in the Senate. In contrast in some countries the percentage of women in the National Assembly was as low as 3.1 per cent.

Hon. Routledge pointed out however that even in her country, women still encounter many obstacles in getting elected and appointed to top positions. The socialization process and lack of economic opportunities worked against women in this respect. Efforts had even been required to change the environment and some of the working conditions of the Parliament to make them more gender-sensitive.

A number of measures have been taken and are underway in South Africa in quest of more gender balance and equality in political, social and economic life beginning with some basic constitutional and legislative provisions. In addition a key focus throughout the Reconstruction and Development Programme is on ensuring a full and equal role for women in every aspect of the South African economy and society. Ensuring gender equity is one of the central components of the overall democratization of the society, with special attention to the empowerment of women and of black, rural women in particular. National machinery for gender equality is being put into place, including a Commission on Gender Equality, an Office on the Status of Women in the President's Office, and gender desks within ministries and at local level. Parliament has established a Women's Caucus and a Committee has been put into place to supervise the implementation of the Beijing Conference commitments.

DISCUSSIONS

Hon. Routledge's presentation triggered off a lively discussion. Several MP's gave further information on the current situation within their countries and some statistics about numbers of women parliamentarians. The representative of Mozambique noted that democratization within southern Africa is having some effect, as seen by the situation in Mozambique where 66 women MP's have been elected in the National Assembly over 250 members, and three women in the Senate. Also two women were in charge of important parliamentary commissions: the Chair of the Planning and Budget Commission and the Commission for Social Affairs, Gender Issues and Environment. This was notably a sign that some of the political parties had begun to involve more women. 50 women MP's were elected by the ruling party, 14 by the major opposition party, and another woman who is Deputy Chair of another political party.

She noted that women MP's are faced with a challenge which demands commitment, skill and know-how, as well as the balancing of family responsibilities with pressing political demands. She mentioned the responsibility that women MP's have to represent the needs of women at grass roots level and to be in touch with them. In this

respect women's NGO's and other NGO's have a crucial role to play in reaching out to the population in rural areas.

According to an MP from another country, entry into politics could be a risky business for men as well as for women, and in some political periods might lead to harassment. She drew attention to the fact that women do have many skills developed first at the family and community level, including handling finances, and there was therefore no reason why this knowledge could not be used for work in the government. There is a bind: women in the region are major producers, yet usually do not receive a fair share of the fruits of this labour. It is also the responsibility of women to dare to step forward into the political arena.

Another participant confirmed that women sometimes fear to take risks, they are influenced by the traditional outlook of their culture, they lack support as candidates from not only men but also from women. Furthermore women in high positions do not always understand the importance of supporting other women. Another participant appreciated the role of some NGO's in her country since they had helped to diffuse information in local languages about the results of the Beijing Conference and government activities to draft a plan of action.

The representative of Tanzania shared the experience of her country regarding the quota system for women in Parliament. The quota system had been in effect before the multi-party system had been introduced, whereby 15 seats were allocated and could only be contested by women. Under the one party system, up to 27 women MPs had been elected at one time. Since the introduction of the multi-party system, efforts were being made to set up a women's caucus. 15 per cent of seats are reserved for women, according to the party strengths in the National Assembly. The quota system has encountered criticism by some. However, according to her, it is a means for opening up democracy in a traditional society, at least as an initial measure.

She had worked with women's organizations for over ten years, and considered civic education crucial for rural women. It was certainly not easy to run a political campaign on a shoe-string budget, but this was a challenge that had to be taken up by women running for elected office, who needed to be persistent and courageous in their efforts. In closing she mentioned that a Union for East African Women Parliamentarians had recently been established and she felt that this could be extended to involve southern African countries.

The representative from Zimbabwe noted that signing conventions is not enough. They likewise need to be ratified and then implemented by governments. In order to involve people and women in the political process and make them aware of their voting rights, MP's must get down to the grass roots, help educate the people in their constituencies, in civic education and concrete income generating skills, and explain to them the issues at stake. Politics is the food you eat, the land you till, the rent you pay, and other daily economic and social issues. Women MP's must listen to the needs of women in their constituencies, work with them closely, publicize the laws that are good for them, and bring their needs up to the attention of Parliament.

III. HOW TO WORK TOWARDS OBTAINING A CRITICAL MASS OF WOMEN WITHIN PARLIAMENT AND TOWARDS FACILITATING WOMEN'S POSSIBILITIES TO SPEAK OUT AND INFLUENCE POLICIES IN ALL AREAS

The session for Agenda Item 2 on "How to work towards obtaining a critical mass of women within Parliament and towards facilitating women's possibilities to speak out and influence policies in all areas" was chaired by Hon. Margaret Dongo, Member of Parliament from Zimbabwe. Two presentations were delivered: by Hon. Maria Ruth Neto, Member of Parliament from Angola, and Ms Carrie Marias, UNESCO Sub-Regional Adviser for Social and Human Sciences in Southern Africa.

Hon. Maria Ruth Neto spoke about women's situation in the period in Angola before the multi-party elections organized in September 1992 and drew some comparisons with the period after these elections. Women had in fact lost some ground in the multi-party elections. Firstly the Organization for Angolan Women lost some of its force for mobilization of women, meeting their needs and representing their interests, since other groups appeared attached to new political parties. In addition the political parties were not keen on nominating women as candidates. Thus today some decrease in women's representation can be noted, and they have yet to constitute a critical mass. Out of 220 members of Parliament, women only occupy 21 seats, i.e. 9.8 per cent. This is in contrast to before political pluralism when women had 14.5 per cent of a total number of 292 seats.

In addition the September 1992 elections were followed by a return of the war, which completely disrupted economic, social and political life, and had a particularly adverse effect on women.

However on the brighter side, Hon. Neto noted that the Constitution declared equality between men and women, although practical conditions and measures would be required for effective implementation of these principles. In the present government some women ministers are now responsible for portfolios in non-traditional areas. Thus Angola has a woman Minister of Fisheries, a woman Minister of Petroleum, as well as a woman Minister of Culture. Also women are making their presence felt in the Parliament through participation in parliamentary commissions, including in positions of leadership.

Within the provincial governments it is usually a woman who is responsible for social insertion, which witnesses the fact that women are particularly sensitive to resolving problems related to families and to disruption by the war.

Ms Marias, the UNESCO representative, referred in her presentation to the concept of "a critical mass" of women within legislative bodies. In the 1960's this concept had been mentioned in political science literature as ranging from 20/25 to 30 per cent and up, it having been noted that women remain a visible and criticized minority if their numbers are too small. She observed that it is also more difficult in such a situation to speak out forcibly, as well as to think out alternative views and strategize. The premise is one that is optimistic, which is that women's representation can help make a difference in the quality of

debate. It is thought that women can provide a humanistic dimension to policy debates and formulation. They will also be able to discuss issues together as women parliamentarians and form caucuses as pressure groups to put specific needs and positions across in mainstream parliamentary debates. They will be in a stronger and more clear position to develop alliances with their male colleague parliamentarians.

The quality of representation is however important for the critical mass to function effectively. A critical mass is not just a question of numbers. Women in power must be ready to support other women and gender concerns, and not function as a dis-connected elite. The critical mass will enable them to be less influenced by establishment values and opinions, and to express their own values and points of view. The critical mass furthermore implies establishment of effective communication, cooperation and support with women's organizations, with women at grass roots level in the constituencies, as well as with researchers and lecturers involved in gender studies and human rights at the university and research centres. Such support groups will help enable women within Parliament to bring up gender interests, express themselves vocally, and more effectively serve their electorates and nation.

DISCUSSIONS

Most participants agreed that quantity and quality of women's representation go hand in hand at the present stage, since there was no time to lose, and that other women potential candidates as well as women within society as a whole would be influenced by the visible effect of positive role models of women parliamentarians and seeing women in other decision-making roles as well. One participant noted that one of the barriers to women entering Parliament is the perception that it is an aggressive male sphere which does not welcome women. She nevertheless was convinced that increased numbers "will lead to a common perception that it is normal to have women in politics and women in Parliament".

One participant noted that quantity was not enough and urged women to go for university qualifications and occupy senior positions in the labour force. Women parliamentarians and women's organizations were urged to join in efforts to provide civic and political education and general training to women in the rural areas. The girl child was also looked at as a future change agent. In the words of one participant, "We should start grooming girls in primary schools so that they are not crippled by traditional cultural values".

The advice of a man parliamentarian participant from Malawi was that women MP's and candidates should go out and politically educate and sensitize the women in their constituencies about the various issues and convince them to vote for women candidates.

In order to increase the quality of debates within Parliaments, it was emphasized that Parliamentarians, women and men alike, would need to forge links and cooperation with specialized NGO's and the research community so as to get necessary information at their finger tips.

Women MP's are nine so far in Malawi out of a total of 177 members, but this was considered an accomplishment in view of the difficulties of struggling for an elected position. Women are working within a women's caucus, and closely with the Law Commission, the Women's Commission in the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and some women academics in order to analyse and help revise legislation to eliminate discriminatory provisions. There is optimism of raising the number of women in the National Assembly in 1999, as well as having a substantial number of women within the Senate if it is decided to establish it.

Women's caucuses in Parliament across party lines were considered important means to create a critical mass. In a number of Parliaments these have been established. Without this in place, there tends to be less interaction among women MP's due to fear of repercussions from their respective parties.

IV. HOW CAN WOMEN'S INTERESTS AND GENDER ISSUES BEST BE DEFINED AND MOST APPROPRIATELY ADVANCED?

The session for Agenda Item 3 on "How can women's interests and gender issues be defined and most appropriately advanced?" was chaired by Senator Maggie Makhubu from Swaziland.

Hon. Kate Kainja, Member of Parliament from Malawi presented a paper on this topic. To begin with she observed that the past 20 years had witnessed a growing recognition of the interests and concerns of women, and that this could largely be attributed to the information revolution, which meant that people could see what women were doing and what their concerns were elsewhere in the world. However, at the same time, she noted that the media was also being used to perpetuate stereotypical images of women.

Hon. Kainja identified a range of topics which could be described as "women's interests", including: poverty (which had been extensively discussed in Beijing); the fact that women are often less well educated than men, and have unequal access to educational opportunities; health (of herself and her family); the impact of structural adjustment programmes on health and education programmes; as well as rape and violence against women in general. She noted that, because of the unequal distribution of positions of power between the sexes, often these "women's interests" do not appear on the agenda, or, if they do, they are the first to go when budgets have to be pared down.

Regarding how these problems can be appropriately addressed, she proposed a number of possible solutions and programmes. Women should be encouraged to actively participate in Parliament, unions, political parties and other political institutions. If women occupy such decision-making positions in significant numbers, then "women's interests" will appear on the political agenda. Parliaments should establish gender committees and women's caucuses to examine laws which mitigate against women. She furthermore urged Parliaments to employ research officers, so that women can have access to good and accurate information. Affirmative action should be considered as a means of initially getting sufficient numbers of women into Parliament.

Social and cultural resolutions to the problem might be brought about by examining how children are socialized in the home and school into stereotypical gender roles. Once facts and figures are available, then steps could be developed to redress this.

Girls should receive as good an education as do boys. Furthermore, women parliamentarians also require appropriate training. Finally, money is necessary to run a successful election campaign. If women were earning some income, they could sponsor such campaigns.

Finally, Hon. Kainja made six recommendations as to how women's interests and gender interests could be most appropriately advanced:

1. Removal of obstacles and creation of equal opportunities to participate in political parties, parliaments, trade unions and professional organizations should be aimed at for both men and women.
2. Legal and practical bases necessary for women's participation in decision-making should be established.
3. Studies and research into acts and practices inconsistent with the principle of equality should be conducted by both men and women.
4. Complaints of discrimination on the basis of gender should be reviewed. Action should be taken to address these, as well as to enforce laws and compensate damages, if any.
5. To address gender imbalances there may be need to introduce a temporary measure of a quota system in educational institutions, employment as well as for parliaments.
6. Draw up a national plan of action to correct the present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life. A detailed implementation plan of these recommendations will require the adoption of a comprehensive programme of action transcending the social, cultural, political and economic institutional setting in each of our countries.

DISCUSSION

Participants agreed on the importance of education in furthering women's interests.

Some delegates observed that women could be their own worst enemies by not supporting each other (the "Queen Bee" syndrome was cited) or by failing to appreciate that different groups of women have different concerns, i.e. the issues of poor women are often not the same as those of their wealthy sisters.

It was noted by some participants that several Parliaments conducted business in English only, rather than including an indigenous language(s). This could mitigate against women who, with poorer educational opportunities, may not have been taught English. Further, many citizens might not understand English, and so were unable to find out first hand what is actually happening in Parliament at any given time.

It was noted that women's problems on the whole were the same throughout the region (though there were some local variations). Women MPs, NGOs, women's leagues of political parties and women's organizations should band together to address these problems as a united front. Women parliamentarians were seen as being particularly important actors in this effort, since they have access to the highest powers in their country, and also to those with the least powerful voices amongst their constituents.

Finally, all delegates agreed about the importance of the lobby as a means of getting women's interests onto the agenda, and subsequently resolved.

V. DEVELOPING FURTHER COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS AS WELL AS WITH PEOPLE WITHIN THEIR CONSTITUENCIES, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS

The session for agenda item 4 on "Developing further communication and dialogue between women parliamentarians and women's organizations as well with people within their constituencies, especially in rural areas" was chaired by Hon. Gladness Mziray, Deputy Minister for Education and Culture and Member of Parliament from Tanzania. Hon. Salome Moeane, Member of Parliament from Mozambique delivered the presentation on this topic.

Hon. Moeane first gave an overview of the situation in her country. The country has been affected by the war, drought, and more recently floods. 60 per cent of the population lives in poverty, especially the population in rural areas. The number of women in Parliament and government has increased since 1994. The Parliament now has 66 women members out of a total 250 MPs, with 51 women from FRELIMO, 14 from RENAMO and one from UD. The social composition of the Parliament is improving. Among women, there are teachers, lawyers, economists, women's organization leaders, social workers. There are six women in Government, one full Minister and five Deputy Ministers. Two of the Deputy Ministers are in Foreign Affairs, and in Finance and Planning, showing that women are now also being recruited from non-traditional areas.

She referred to the work of women's organizations in her country including in the rural areas at grass roots level. Among these are the Forum Mulher, the Organization of Mozambican Women, the Association of Rural Women, and the Association of Business Women. She noted that parliamentarians and especially women parliamentarians should work closely with women's organizations especially those in rural areas. Women MP's and women NGO's need to mutually re-enforce each other more, the women NGO's transmitting the needs of women at grass roots level to women MP's who in turn will

have their representativity reinforced and be able to incorporate the interests of women into their position papers and policy making activities.

Women parliamentarians should furthermore help fund-raise for the activities and projects of women's NGO's, including helping to organize income generating activities and facilitating small loans. There should be a series of seminars between MP's and women's organizations to exchange experiences, information and perspectives on gender issues. Women parliamentarians could help make an appeal to UNESCO, the UN system and other organizations to provide material and financial support for basic education, especially for the leaders of women's organizations, as well as to improve their skills so that they could subsequently join in positions in Parliament and in other posts of decision-making.

A great deal of work had been done within the country by women NGO's, Parliamentarians, and academics to prepare for the results of the Beijing Conference. Now it is appropriate to have action seminars of MP's and women's organizations leaders to discuss the decisions from Beijing and to arrange to disseminate information on the Beijing Platform in popularized form. Governments are likewise urged to follow-up on these efforts and implement the recommendations of the Beijing Platform of Action in their respective countries through concrete actions.

DISCUSSION

The value of political parties having branches in all constituencies, and holding weekly meetings in order to effectively reach out to the population in rural areas, was noted. Further, it was observed that in many instances, women leaders of women's NGOs often became MPs, so good links do exist.

The reality of communication in developing countries is that it is usually in person, face to face. In view of this, the presence of land mines and the great distances involved in a single constituency can be a serious problem.

The importance of comprehensive voter education was furthermore noted. Parliamentarians should make use of the media to disseminate information, particularly about the Beijing Platform of Action. Also, it was felt that politicians should read papers and listen to the radio to find out about the concerns of their citizens. They should not be doing the talking all the time.

Finally, it was suggested that women MPs should join women's organizations themselves, and play an active part in them.

VI. CAN WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE QUALITY OF DEBATE AND POLICY MAKING?

The session for Agenda Item 5 on "Can women's representation make a difference to the quality of debate and policy-making?" was chaired by Hon. M.D. Kabi, Member of Parliament from Lesotho. Ms Ellen Musialela, Member of Parliament from Namibia, delivered a presentation on this topic. She first referred to the contribution of women during the national liberation movement and during the pre-independence elections. They were involved side by side with men, but still did not hold the top level positions as far as the political, military and diplomatic fronts were concerned. Yet there was progress in this regard and a SWAPO Women's Council was created to help women become more fully involved in all tasks. Women were furthermore active during the first free and fair national elections in the country.

She highlighted the important role played by women's organizations as a lobby group for pressure and change, including in promoting measures and legislation that rectify past discrimination and protect women's interests. Hon. Musialela described how the SWAPO Women's Council joined with other women's groups to form an umbrella, non-partisan women's organization, called NANAWO, the National Namibian Women's Organization. She gave concrete examples of how women through NANAWO joined with groups like the Law Commission, to lobby for change and action within the Parliament. She mentioned how having a woman Minister in charge of Local Government and Housing coupled with the women's lobby action for change had helped to bring about a provision in the Local Government Act that at least 2 women local counsellors in each council should be women. She spoke in favour of having this be considered next for Parliament.

Hon. Musialela mentioned the collective work of women which led finally to the establishment of the Namibia Family Planning Association, as well as the elaboration of the Married Persons Equality Act. A Social Security Fund has now been voted by Parliament, which gives women the right to three months of paid maternity leave. The women's movement has also been undertaking an educational campaign to convince traditional leaders to change customary law so that a widow can keep her land and property, and has had some success in this regard.

In conclusion she noted that, as additional support to this work, a Research and Training Programme on Gender Issues had been set up at the Multi-Disciplinary Research Centre, University of Namibia.

DISCUSSION

Looking at the experience of Namibia and some other countries, it was agreed that the presence of women in Parliament in significant numbers will help to ensure that policies are developed which encompass women's concerns and perspectives.

One participant shared an incident from her own experience in which a piece of legislation which would significantly benefit women was opposed vehemently by all the

male members. After the significance of the Bill had been explained to men, the Bill was passed. This shows that women in Parliament have a responsibility to educate their male counterparts, so that legislation to improve the quality of women's issues is not seen as a means of doing so at the expense of men.

It was felt that women are natural negotiators, and having more women in Parliament would therefore result in less senseless confrontational debate in the House. Women are natural consensus-seekers.

The quality/quantity equation was explored at some length. Whilst it was generally agreed that no real benefits could accrue if affirmative action placed a high number of incompetent women into positions of power, high quality female MPs, acting as role models, communicating effectively with the citizenry and influencing government policies would inevitably lead to quantity, growing numbers of women being empowered and so able to gain a seat in Parliament on their own merits.

In conclusion, it was observed that women have a vital role to play in Parliament in influencing policy-making so that it includes a gender perspective. It was wryly noted that, had women been involved in law-making from the very beginning, the laws now in the statute book would possibly be very different.

VII. STRIKING A GENDER BALANCE: ENHANCING COOPERATION AND MUTUAL SUPPORT BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

The session for Agenda Item 6 on "Striking a gender balance: enhancing cooperation and mutual support between women and men parliamentarians" was chaired by Hon. Salome Moeane, Member of Parliament from Mozambique. The presentation on this topic was given by Hon. Gladness R Mziray, Deputy Minister for Education and Member of Parliament, who asserted that the sharing of experience in this context was far more valuable than the rehearsing of old theories.

Where affirmative measures do not exist, noted Hon. Mziray, it is very hard to ensure gender balance. The Tanzanian Constitution stipulates that 15% of seats in Parliament must be reserved for women. As a result of this, Tanzania's Parliament of 275 members includes 46 women, 3 of whom are Ministers, a further 3 being Deputy Ministers, and two others being principal secretaries. Whilst two of the three ministerial positions are "typical" women's portfolios, the third is in communications. All three Deputy Ministers are in atypical ministries for women (Agriculture, Industries and Trade, and Telecommunications). This demonstrates the value of affirmative action in bringing about balance.

If a gender balance does not exist in parliament, then the few women MPs there are expected to assume all the responsibility for promoting women's issues. Failure to do so effectively, which occurs purely as a result of the 'numbers game', can result in accusations of any high ranking female parliamentarians having the "Queen Bee" syndrome.

Balance is a prerequisite. Women's contribution to the development process in all spheres is unique. If women are excluded, a country is not operating at maximum efficiency.

One of the values of mutual support between men and women parliamentarians is seen as giving an opportunity for men to share their political knowledge with women (having been in the system longer, they have good networking and fund raising skills to share), whilst women can sensitize men to gender issues.

It is necessary for women MPs to identify and work with their male allies (of whom there are many). Cooperation, not conflict should be the goal. Male and female parliamentarians share a common goal - effective representation of their constituents.

Women in parliament, irrespective of party affiliations, should work together on gender issues. Political parties should have quotas for female parliamentary candidates.

It was agreed that whatever women MPs wish to achieve can be done, in cooperation with male and female colleagues.

Gender balance will be reached when women have access to formal and non-formal education and acquire economic independence. Also required is a change in attitude. Women must put themselves forward. Women already in power must work to help their sisters, and should cooperate with male colleagues.

DISCUSSION

It was noted that Ministers could influence policy far more effectively than the humble backbencher. Therefore women are needed at the higher levels.

Some delegates felt that women should vote for women regardless of party affiliation, but other delegates vehemently disagreed.

Much of the responsibility for getting more women into parliament devolved on the political parties. Party constitutions should be examined and party executives should include women. More female candidates should be selected.

Social and civic education initiatives should be double-pronged, aimed at women, encouraging and empowering them to become parliamentarians, and educating men so that they accept that it is every bit as much a woman's role to enter politics as it is a man's.

In conclusion, all participants agreed on the desirability of achieving gender balance, but it was noted that local considerations required programmes to be adapted accordingly.

VIII. CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIALIZING FOR EQUALITY AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The session for Agenda item 7 on "Creating an enabling environment and socializing for equality and active citizenship", was jointly chaired by Hon. Issac Mabiletsa and Hon. Gladys Kokorwe, Members of Parliament from Botswana. In her presentation on this topic, Ms Grace Kanjo, Lecturer, Department of Communication, University of Malawi, underscored a number of issues. She noted that women are not equal participants in the public policy area, either in the political sector or in the economic arena and private sector. She noted too that they do not control productive resources. As a result of their absence in decision making positions, women always get a raw deal, their work is not valued or remunerated. Women's concerns are also not taken into consideration when decisions are being made, and are not even viewed as national concerns.

It was Ms. Kanjo's view that women are not in decision making positions because of:

- a) decades of socialization for subordination. She noted that this takes place at all levels of society and therefore women are not in decision making positions at:
 - family level where they remain subordinate to their husbands, fathers or brothers,
 - community level,
 - local government level,
 - national level,
 - institutional level.

Ms Kanjo noted that the media plays a major role in the socialization process. Its portrayal of women leaves a lot to be desired and very often the media portrays women in a stereotyped manner. Women are most often depicted in their reproductive roles such as cooking, washing dishes, and child care. Women are often reputed as dependent, helpless, irrational. If they are doing something and are reported, it is because they are seen in relation to important men, e.g. as a president's wife.

The presenter underscored the fact that this portrayal acts negatively on women psychologically, women are kept away from realising their potentials, and this kind of portrayal legitimises male oppression. She noted that decades of socialization cannot be changed in a day.

In order to influence change, there was a need to:

- change the images in the media.
- alert media personnel to respond to women's issues appropriately.

- lobby for male journalists to support women issues.
- learn to develop media packages concerning gender issues.
- learn how and when to use the media.

She encouraged politicians to learn to be media-friendly and to provide media with objective and easily understood information.

On the socialization process, Ms Kanjo urged Parliamentarians to give equal opportunities to girls and boys at the household level, discuss gender issues with their constituencies as well as promote education for girls and women, especially in non-traditional areas.

DISCUSSIONS

Participants brought up the following points:

- a) Women as mothers have the challenge to re-socialize the society differently and therefore they need to take up this challenge.
- b) There is a need to mentally liberate the men so that children also learn positive things from them. If men take up household chores, the children will grow up knowing that these chores are for both women and men.
- c) Parents should look at school text books to see what their children are learning in school.
- d) All types of media should be used to sensitize the people. This media may include drama, village groups, puppets, newspapers, radio, etc.
- e) Women parliamentarians need to create allies with the media, with both women and gender sensitive men, to promote an understanding of gender issues.
- f) Gender issues need to be taken up at the highest levels. An example of President Mandela was given where he told a gathering that he does share same household tasks, and this was placed in an article in the press.
- g) Media personnel need to be trained, including policy makers, managers editors, reporters, to ensure that they are gender-sensitive.

IX RESULTS OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Participants met in five groups for more in-depth discussions and to consider priority areas for future joint action.

DISCUSSION GROUP A

Agenda Item 2: HOW TO WORK TOWARDS OBTAINING A CRITICAL MASS OF WOMEN WITHIN PARLIAMENT AND TOWARDS FACILITATING WOMEN'S POSSIBILITIES TO SPEAK OUT TO INFLUENCE POLICIES IN ALL AREAS.

Agenda Item 5: CAN WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE QUALITY OF DEBATE AND POLICY MAKING?.

With regard to Agenda Item 2, the group identified a range of problems and critical issues, viz:

Poverty

The need to alleviate it and enable economic mobility.

Education

The need for civic, human rights, political education and more general skills training.

Information

MPs need to be well informed. Information and parliamentary research officers are required.

Quality/Quantity Equation

It was felt that the number and calibre of women MPs were interlinked. Once the imbalance in parliaments had been redressed (in part by encouraging rural women to enter the political arena), the quality question would naturally be resolved.

Language

The use of English in Parliaments, rather than local languages, is a barrier, particularly to women.

Critical Mass

This would be achieved by civic education and consolidation of resources (women, youth, NGOs).

Women's Character

Women could be unmotivated and lack confidence to enter the political arena. They should have more faith in their capacities, knowledge and skills, which in fact do qualify them for political decision-making roles.

Traditional cultural and religious values

A significant barrier.

Lack of Knowledge of Parliamentary Procedures

This lack of knowledge, especially among women MPs, makes them far less effective in Parliament.

Lack of gender analysis

Lack of gender sensitivity and skills to analyse gender issues amongst parliamentarians was also seen as problematic.

Conflict between party and gender issues

Acceptance of a non-partisan women's caucus was one way to deal in part with this.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Training and education for rural women
- Training on parliamentary procedures for men and women, delivered separately (The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has recently set up an Expert Group on this).
- Public speaking training
- The need to train trainers
- Recognition of local languages in Parliament
- Coordination efforts by women's and youth's organizations, and NGOs
- Exploiting NGO funding and programmes to deliver what is necessary
- Provision of translators in Parliament
- Provision of research offices and information centres from where women MPs could obtain accurate data
- Training for MPs to sensitize them to gender issues
- Provide MPs with gender analysis skills
- Women MPs, when confronted with competing party and gender loyalties, should consider becoming independent
- Local women's groups, particularly those addressing specific religious communities, should link up with other similar groups in the region
- Formation of women's caucus in Parliament

With regard to Agenda Item 5, it was noted that women are natural negotiators (in part as a result of the socialization process undergone in childhood).

Because wars and natural disasters are felt more keenly by women, it was considered that more women in Parliament would lead to fewer wars being declared and more appropriate action being taken to address natural disasters.

It was noted that at times some women MPs are forced to act as honorary men in order to be effective in Parliament.

Finally the group noted that Agenda Items 2 and 5 are intimately linked. Even with high numbers of women in some parliaments, most women are not free. The critical issue is education for women. Without it, there can be no real change

DISCUSSION GROUP B ON:

Agenda Item 2: “HOW CAN WOMEN’S INTERESTS AND GENDER ISSUES BEST BE DEFINED AND MOST APPROPRIATELY ADVANCED?”

A. CRITICAL ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES:

1. Issues of communication, societal attitudes and practices:
 - a) misunderstanding of what the concepts mean and this leads to conflict;

Women’s interests, practical needs, issues specific to women need to be defined and explained.

Gender issues, unequal power relationships, socially defined roles distinctions are not always clearly understood leading to alienation.
 - b) lack of understanding of why the focus should be on women. Tendency to view this as being for personal benefit, something that will displace them from the seat of power and not for the society as a whole.
 - c) the stereotyped views of what roles of women and men are as if these are fixed - but also how these roles are perceived, women generally in inferior roles and men in powerful roles coupled with the misconceptions and fears that something will be lost.
2. The question of who are the people that are the best placed to define what the issues are (those who are the most affected are the best).
3. Linking gender rights to human rights. Challenge of how this can be done more effectively - specialisation or mainstreaming.
4. Making men realize how they will benefit from gender equality e.g.
 - ability to express and show their vulnerability/emotions, bound with children;
 - move away from the particular definition of what a man’s role is. Conceptions and expectations of masculinity brings pressures on men.
5. What can be done to make political parties, the leadership and Parliament more accountable to women? Lobbying and challenging of structures, scrutinizing their manifestos and constitutions, their policies and programmes.

B. STRATEGIES, SOLUTIONS AND MEASURES

1. Agents of Change

- a) Partnership from the top to bottom:
 - Utilizing the power of women and men in organizing and mobilizing for gender equality;
 - Need to make those in power and authority gender aware; the executive, the legislature, the judiciary, the civil service and private sector should formulate and implement appropriate policies;
- b) The need for the Head of State to use his/her role to push for an understanding of gender issues to facilitate non-discrimination;
- c) Grassroot groups:- NGOs and organized formations of women, i.e. mass based women's groups

2. Instruments of Change - Tools and Mechanisms

- a) The Constitution and enabling laws must be passed to facilitate the realization of gender equality
- b) Taking corrective measures by removing hindrance/disabilities, emphasising abilities and creating new spaces and opportunities for women's needs and for conscious action
- c) Creating awareness at the level of the masses so as to push for the right things
- d) Identify and use individuals who have been empowered in some way (role models) to mobilise the masses for empowerment.
- e) Education in all forms: academic, functional, civic, skills.

REGIONAL LEVEL

- a) Reinforce and encourage one another by looking at what others are doing;
- b) Regional networking and solidarity; challenge our individual Parliaments to equal or better those countries that already have greater representation of women in the Parliaments.
- c) Incorporate gender considerations by promoting/advancing women in existing regional groupings: e.g. SADC and COMESA.
- d) Research, document and use data to advance specific gender aware programmes. Also share information.

DISCUSSION GROUP C ON:

Agenda Item No. 4: DEVELOPING FURTHER COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS AND WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS AS WELL AS WITH PEOPLE WITHIN THEIR CONSTITUENCIES, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS

1. PARLIAMENTS

- A. *Own* Parliaments
- B. *Other* Parliaments

PRACTICAL IDEAS

A. Own Parliament

1. Inter-party women's groups/caucuses
2. Lists of names with addresses and telephone numbers
3. Steering committee
4. Meetings with provincial women parliamentarians where applicable
5. Identify and sensitize men parliamentarians
6. Utilize women's parliamentarians effectively to communicate with NGO groups, women's organizations, churches, etc.

B. Other Parliaments

1. Compiling lists of names:
 - Sub-region
 - Region
 - Continent
 - Global
2. Use existing structures e.g. UNESCO, CPAWG, SADAC, EU, UNDP NORAD, NDI.
3. Exchange visits between countries. Obtain financial support from foundations plus above-mentioned structures.
4. Seminars and meetings with emphasis on practical issues and evaluation of our actions.
5. Training seminars for MPs on different issues to improve our performance, as well as communication and dialogue skills.

2. WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

1. Build up a network of women's organizations, churches and other NGOs.
2. Network maintenance by Parliamentary commissions/committees. Do not create extra costly structures.
3. Communicate with organizations:
 - Inform them
 - Get their inputs about issues to be addressed in Parliament
 - Get suggestions of amendments to laws and proposed resolutions, motions
 - Proposals for new legislation.
4. Arrange Public Hearings
5. Give information of possible legislation for their comments and proposals.
 - Disseminate information about decisions at International Conferences e.g.
 - Cairo Plan of Action
 - Beijing Plan of Action
 - Beijing Resolutions on Women's Parliamentarians.

7. Use media and women parliamentarians to convey information on electronic media (television and radio) and printed media (papers, magazines).
8. Use dramas, plays and puppet shows, songs, theatres, shows etc. Audio-visual programmes for countryside.

3. CONSTITUENCIES ESPECIALLY RURAL AREAS

1. Responsibility of Parliamentarians to be accountable to their constituencies.
2. Report-back meetings by parliamentarians on Party-political lines.
3. Address the real needs of the people in their communities particularly on
 - water supply
 - health care
 - education
 - shelter
 - security
4. Training workshops and courses for constituency members to promote skills for income generating activities, self-help, self-reliance and responsibilities.
5. Solicit international financial material support e.g. UNDP, UNICEF, USAID, EU, Foundations, CPA, etc.

DISCUSSION GROUP D ON:

Agenda Item No. 6: STRIKING A GENDER BALANCE: ENHANCING COOPERATION AND MUTUAL SUPPORT BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

CRITICAL ISSUES

1. Women constitute a majority in the community
2. Women's under-representation in parliaments
3. Culture, tradition, attitudes
4. Existing laws in society
5. Role and contribution of women not recognised and remunerated.

PROBLEMS

1. Attitudes
2. Lack of economic empowerment
3. Lack of basic services and poverty
4. Education (Illiteracy)
5. Lack of confidence and support both from fellow female and male counterparts (PhD. syndrome).
6. Legislation by male dominated parliaments.

CHALLENGES

1. Emancipation of women from oppressive traditional norms.
2. Knowledge of women's rights, as well of meaning and practice of democracy.
3. Changing attitudes of the society.
4. Empowerment of women through formal and non-formal education.
5. Women MPs to encourage and prepare young women for a political career, i.e. as MPs, Councillors and Party Leaders.

STRATEGIES

1. Introduce affirmative action in education, labour and health to redress ills of the past.
2. Special quotas for women candidates in political parties and parliamentary committees.
3. Sensitize community on gender issues.
4. Influence socialization process in gender issues.
5. Discard stereotyped attitudes which reserve certain positions to women.

6. Lobby male and all MPs.
7. Establish women's caucuses in Parliament to be permanent parliamentary committees.
8. Make effective and positive use of the media in promotion of gender issues.
9. Mobilize social groups, churches, NGOs and workers' groups to support women candidates.
10. Establish funds for supporting women candidates in general, and for local and by-elections.
11. Start preparing for General Elections now, work for and with voters very closely in solving their problems, organize income generating activities.

ACTION AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

1. Organize seminars through workshops for purposes of achieving the following:
 - i. Sharing experiences
 - ii. Empowering each other
 - iii. Building on the successes of others
 - iv. Learning from previous mistakes
 - v. Adopting strategies which succeeded in other areas if applicable
 - vi. Exchange visits between countries and regions
 - vii. Drawing up educational programmes for MPs to give them knowledge and skills for performing effectively in Parliament

DISCUSSION GROUP E ON:

Agenda Item No. 7: CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIALIZING FOR EQUALITY AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

A. CRITICAL AREAS

1. Culture and taboos
2. Favouritism and nepotism
3. Government policies -
 - a. do not favour women
 - b. not many women in decision-making positions
4. Illiteracy
 - a. No decision-making
 - b. One cannot read, therefore lack of information
 - c. You are left out in decision-making positions

B. PROBLEMS

1. Early marriages
 - causes of school drop-out
2. Initiations
 - interfere with school
3. Local authorities
4. Poverty
 - mental poverty
 - lack of basic needs
 - water, poor roads, no health facilities close by, no food, etc.
 - lack of support from some women parliamentarians
 - male domination
 - (men MPs tend to favour their fellow men: lets say if there is a job opening, it will be offered to their fellow man not a woman)
 - family support
 - (there is need for family support - one needs comfort from family after heavy duties)

CHALLENGES

1. Change of attitudes towards gender issues
 - i. start from home and in school
 - ii. Females - must not be marginalized
2. Enhance careers of women in the media
3. Build up awareness of gender issues (from grassroots to higher levels)

STRATEGIES

1. Education
2. Exchange programmes

SOLUTIONS

1. Education

- a. Free education
- b. Education for all
- c. GABLE - project in Malawi to help girls stay in school
- d. Federation of African Women Educators. Provide support at regional level (Sub-Saharan Africa) for girls' and womens' education drawing on membership of Ministers of Education to push such ideas and policies.

2. The Media

- a. Be friends with them
- b. Have a say if there is something provocative to women's issues.
3. NGOs - Create more women NGOs to support gender issues and women in community and political life.
4. Build up cooperation with governments, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the media for promoting value of women's leadership and a favourable climate for gender equality.
5. Government policies must change and be forward-looking concerning gender issues

X. REGIONAL COOPERATION AND NETWORKING

The topic of regional cooperation and networking was introduced by the UNESCO Sub-Regional Adviser for Social and Human Sciences in Southern Africa, Ms C. Marias, who mentioned that the activities of this meeting and follow-up action comprise part of UNESCO's programme on democratization, the advancement of women and gender issues and its special programme for cooperation with Parliaments and parliamentarians in different regions of the world. Activities of regional cooperation and networking could interface with other international groups, in particular the different parliamentary unions.

Hon. Gladness Mziray then made a presentation concerning the recently established East African Women's Parliamentarian Union. This idea was implemented after the experience of the Beijing Conference. The Union avoids ideological differences, the aim being for women MPs from different countries to support one another. The members will tackle issues of common interest, including influencing economic matters in the sub-region. It would furthermore be good to develop cooperation with southern Africa. She felt it is also very important for women MPs to organize themselves together in southern Africa, which will help develop a common position and ideas to be presented from the region to various international fora and associations.

In closing Hon. Gladness mentioned the need to revive the Pan African Women's Organisation and give it back its strength.

Dr. Wanjiku Kabira, Department of Literature, University of Nairobi, shared information on the research she has been undertaking and the paper she presented to the conference concerning histories and profiles of women parliamentarians in Kenya. She mentioned the interest that such a project might have for other countries, since the material would help encourage other women candidates and could also be used as teaching material in the schools. The meeting agreed that this would be a good joint activity to undertake, and that these life histories could include some men MPs as well.

Ms Diane Reynolds gave a presentation about the work of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Group which was formed in 1989 to help increase the number of women in the CPA and to make sure that women's and gender issues get onto its agenda. An annual meeting is held to increase awareness and develop strategies on how to remove barriers faced by women in entering into Parliaments and the political sphere.

Hon. Routledge, Member of Parliament from South Africa, and also in her capacity as a member of the IPU, then gave a brief presentation about the activities of the Inter Parliamentarian Union (IPU). The IPU undertook a world-wide survey giving statistics on the number of women in Parliaments, and has adopted a comprehensive Plan of Action to correct imbalances between women and men in political life.

Participants then began brainstorming and discussing ideas about future activities of the Working Group. The institutionalisation of the Working Group in the form of a Network was considered one possibility. The idea of the Working Group was for networking, solidarity and undertaking some common joint activities.

The participants endorsed the many ideas for future action proposed in the five working groups (See IX). They also called for Parliaments in the different countries to undertake joint cooperation together through the Working Group and eventually later through a more formal structure. However the emphasis would be on developing some joint activities as soon as possible.

Among the proposals for future action figure:

1. Establishing a networking system, including through a newsletter and possibly an electronic network.
2. In order to encourage potential parliamentarians to multiply their numbers and provide positive role models, preparation of profiles and life histories of parliamentarians with particular focus on women.
3. Elaboration of a brochure for use in Parliaments and in the constituencies on what is meant by women's and gender interests.
4. Training for parliamentarians, especially for women, in skills such as:
 - a. preparation and presentation of speeches
 - b. collection of information, research material and analysis of information sources
 - c. assertiveness training
 - d. parliamentary business and procedures for new women members
 - e. planning and the budget
 - f. gender analysis skills for women and men
 - g. further understanding and use of the media
5. Cooperation and alliance building of women MPs with rural women and women's organizations
 - a. organize around their interests
 - b. help develop projects for economic self-reliance and independence
 - c. training of trainers in gender analysis at grass roots level.

The participants then proceeded to examine a draft declaration prepared, which was unanimously adopted by the Working Group as the Mangochi Declaration on Enhancing Women's Representation and the Consideration of Gender Issues within Parliaments in Southern Africa. This Declaration is set out in Part XI below.

After adoption of the Mangochi Declaration, the Working Group was officially closed by Hon. R. T. C. Munyenyembe, Speaker of the National Assembly of Malawi, who gave a presentation entitled "A Time for Action". He summarized some of the major debates, urging Parliamentarians to take the ideas and results of Mangochi back to their countries and constituencies.

XI. ADOPTION OF THE MANGOCHI DECLARATION AND REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

THE MANGOCHI DECLARATION ON ENHANCING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND CONSIDERATION OF GENDER ISSUES WITHIN PARLIAMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Adopted in Mangochi, Malawi on 25th April 1996 by Parliamentarians from Southern African attending the Conference of the Working Group to Enhance Women's Representation and to Promote the Consideration of Gender Issues within Parliaments in Southern Africa Organized by the Malawi Parliament in Cooperation with other National Assemblies in the Region and jointly with UNESCO.

We, women and men Parliamentarians from both the ruling and opposition parties of Parliaments in the Southern African Region, who have met at this Conference of the Working Group to Enhance Women's Representation and to Promote the Consideration of Gender Issues within Parliaments in Southern Africa organized by the National Assembly of Malawi in cooperation with other National Assemblies in the region and jointly with UNESCO at Mangochi in Malawi from 22 to 25th April, 1996.

Recognize:

- That the status of women has advanced in some respects in the past decade but that progress has been uneven and inequalities between women and men have continued;
- That there are problems which prevent women from full participation in decision-making;
- That these problems are rooted in the socialization processes and are furthermore reflected in the daily socio-economic and political realities of peoples' lives;
- That our sub-region is going through a democratization process with more opportunities for representation of women's perspectives in all development processes;
- The interdependence of men and women and the need for partnership and co-operation between men and women, and:
-
- That governments, national parliaments, regional and international organizations and the media have a role to play.

Reaffirm:

- the commitment made by our governments through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- the commitment our governments made in Beijing through the Beijing Declaration and World Platform of Action for the Advancement of Women.

Convinced:

- that equitable sharing of responsibilities and opportunities can result in harmonious partnerships between women and men;
- that equal participation of women and men in decision-making is a prerequisite to sustainable development and economic growth.

HEREBY DECLARE OUR COMMITMENT TO:

1. Intensify efforts to revamp our socio-cultural structures to accommodate women's leadership and decision-making;
2. Work on gender-sensitization for both men and women;
3. Advocate for the economic, political and social empowerment of women;
4. Address the gender imbalances in political life and improve women's representation in numerical and qualitative terms through united action at local, national, regional and international levels by both men and women;
5. Strive to create a more gender sensitive environment within political parties, parliaments and other political institutions;
6. Request governments, national parliaments, regional and international organisations and the media to help in these efforts;
7. Work for the establishment of support mechanisms for women's decision-making roles at household, party and institutional levels.

Key Issues and Plan of Activities for Joint Action as follow-up to the Mangochi meeting:

- The need for women to take advantage of the democratization process and space that have opened up in many countries of the region.
- Women parliamentarians tend to be close to the people at grassroots level and to be concerned with specific needs of their constituencies. Furthermore communication could appropriately be strengthened with these constituencies by women and men parliamentarians alike.
- There is need for women and men parliamentarians to work closely with women's organizations and other NGO's in order to help impulse greater participation of women in parliaments and public life.
- Men and women parliamentarians need to know how to use the media to promote their interests and to get their messages across to their constituencies and to the nation at large.
- The media needs to be encouraged to report in a realistic and positive manner about activities of women parliamentarians and to appreciate the contribution they can make to policy making.
- The Working Group emphasized the need to actively lobby for change from the household level up to the national level and particularly through education to ensure the bridging of gender gaps.
- The Working Group emphasised the need to continue networking and to share ideas and experiences in order to encourage greater representation of women and to promote more consideration of gender issues within parliaments, political parties and other public institutions in Southern Africa.

Areas of immediate interest for implementation as part of the Southern Africa Plan of Action are:

- the creation of a data base and networking system about developments concerning the gender balance and women's representation within parliaments in Southern Africa;
- training workshops and exchange programmes to learn more about parliamentary procedures, research and analysis, public speaking, confidence building, gender analysis, and other priority topics;
- preparation of profiles on perspectives and visions of parliamentarians, with a focus on women parliamentarians;
- elaboration of a brochure for use by parliamentarians explaining more about what is meant by "gender issues" and by women-specific interests.

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