

Third Annual Reports: Web Updates

GTF238 Zimbabwe Women Resource Centre and Network

The aim of the 'Local Government Gender Budgeting' project is to ensure that six local governments in Zimbabwe are more capable, accountable and responsive to the needs of women and other vulnerable groups, enabling them to exercise their social and economic rights as Zimbabwean citizens. On the one hand, the programme will strengthen awareness and capacity of local authorities to effectively mainstream gender in policies and budgets. On the other hand, it aims to increase the participation of women and other vulnerable groups in council processes, and to build the capabilities of CSOs, CBOs, media and citizens to hold the governments to account. The programme is being piloted in Mutoko, Masvingo, Bulawayo, Gweru, Kwekwe and Kadoma districts.

In the three years of activity, ZWRCN has trained sixty percent of the councillors, managers, gender focal persons and key finance officials at the six local governments in gender and gender budgeting. The workshops helped the key stakeholders in the budgeting process to identify critical gender concerns to be addressed in their districts. As a result, resource allocation for social services and poverty alleviation programmes was increased in 2011 budgets. For example, Kadoma City Council increased the social welfare budget and set aside \$300,000 for income generating projects for the youth.

ZWRCN has also built the capacity of local authorities to address the gaps identified in the analyses of gender sensitivity of the 2010 budgets, local government guidelines, by-laws and departmental policies. To date, all six local authorities have put in place gender sensitive measures to tackle some of the gaps, such as Bulawayo City Council which adopted a preferential method for allocation of market stalls that is heavily skewed towards women, the disabled and people living with HIV/AIDS. ZWRCN is working towards providing local authorities with technical support in developing a policy framework that documents the gender sensitive practices being implemented, as well as developing an overarching gender policy in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA) and Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, which will guide mainstreaming of gender in all local authorities.

ZWRCN has raised awareness among citizens, especially among women, on how to monitor resource allocation and ensure that it is gender sensitive, and how to demand increasing accountability from the councils. ZWRCN has also facilitated budget consultations in four districts (Kwekwe, Kadoma, Mutoko and Bulawayo) for women and other marginalised and socially excluded groups to participate in their local authority budgeting process. Their participation forums provided a platform for citizens to voice their priorities in the budget. The media which has been a main target group in the budget process has been instrumental in reporting issues of corruption and accountability in the six local authorities.

In the upcoming year, ZWRCN will complement the gains made so far on the supply side of governance by strengthening capacities of citizens in demanding accountability and advocating for their budget priorities. A deliberate effort will be made to encourage participation and inclusion of other vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and the elderly, in council processes, as participation of these is still minimal.

For further information on ZWRCN, please visit <http://www.zwrcn.org.zw> and to download the third annual report for this programme, please see <http://www.zwrcn.org.zw/downloads/GTF%20238%203rd%20Annual%20Report%202010-2011.pdf>