

A space for women



Buumba Malambo Councilor Magoba ward and electorate



I came to Magoba as a student because in social work at the University of Zambia (UNZA), they take you for rural placement. The people loved me and told me to stand as their councillor.



Buumba Malambo is the councillor for Magoba Ward in Kafue West, the third largest ward in the country. She is 24 years old, the youngest female candidate in the 2016 elections.

Although Zambia has a female Vice President, the number of women in government and politics in general is still very low, excluding them from key decision-making positions.

The Zambia National Women's Lobby Group (ZNWL), in partnership with Women for Change (WfC) and the Zambia Women Parliamentary Caucus (ZWPC), began a project to increase female representation in political processes by 10% in proportion to parliamentary and local government seats. This was done by identifying women with potential to be adopted by political parties and helping them with their electoral campaigns.



ZNWL visited different districts to identify what obstacles women in politics are facing. One of the obstacles was negative attitudes towards women and failure to see them as leaders.

“They came here (Magoba Ward) and spread the message to women and traditional leaders that it is okay to have a female leader as long as they can deliver. The headmen then went and spread the message and that was effective. ZNWL came at a critical point when I was almost breaking down from the campaign stress. They set me back on track mentally. 95% of women in my ward voted for me and I won with a huge margin,” Malambo explained.

In the six months she has been in office, Malambo has brought electricity to her ward for the first time, is drilling more water boreholes and has introduced a night school.

Identifying leaders

Like Malambo, Susan Mwelwa had no plan to run for councillor.

“Initially I had no intention of running, but the ZNWL approached me based on my work in local government for 30 years. So I accepted and applied quite late.”

Mwelwa contested and was voted ward Councillor for Musakamba in Mkushi, Central Province.

“ZNWL had a one-day workshop in Kapiri Mposhi for the aspiring female candidates. We were were taught how an electorate can vote for you and they gave helpful tips. They also helped with logistical support and radio programmes for female candidates to campaign.”

Outreach to citizens was done through ZNWL social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. Approximately 185,320 Zambian citizens were reached urging them to vote for women in the elections. A further 887,400 people were reached through gender sensitisation programmes through face to face meetings and radio programmes.

640 adverts were aired on radio and 180 on TV.

Barriers to entry for women

The new constitutional requirement of a grade 12 certificate as the minimum qualification was a hindrance for many women and at least 85 - 90 % of aspiring female candidates at local government level were disqualified for this reason. This meant that political parties had to replace those women with other candidates and that in turn further necessitated the need for support from ZNWL to introduce the new candidates to the electorate.

Another obstacle was the nomination fees, which were significantly increased from the 2011 election.

“You had to have money. Usually women are in a weaker standing financially so it made a lot of them shun politics. Personally, I did not receive much support from my political party (Patriotic Front) so I had to use my own resources,” said Mwelwa.

The results

The five provinces targeted also represented the areas in Zambia with the highest female representation in the 2016 elections. At parliamentary level, 65.38 % of elected female candidates were from one of the five provinces. The support of ZNWL, ZWPC and ZAP has led to increased awareness about the benefits, changed perceptions and stronger willingness on behalf of women to participate in political processes.