



Coalition Reflects Women's Participation in Democratic Processes

The Women, Constitution, Election and Leadership (WCEL) Coalition held a National Convening in Dar-es-Salaam from the 20th to the 21st of May 2024, that brought together more than 200 participants.

The event, whose main theme was: **Ajenda Ya Mwanamke; Turufu Ya Ushindi**, was attended by women from networks/coalitions, media, and other stakeholders from over 20 regions of Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar.

The major objective of the two-day event was to reflect and come up with strategies to promote broader and productive participation of women in pushing on the movement to shape participatory democracy.

Discussions during the convening ranged from championing the need for reviving and strengthening the WCEL coalition, to increasing participation of women in democratic processes especially upcoming elections.

Key Highlights from the event:

Opening the event, the WCEL Chairperson, Prof. Penina Mlama, said the major expectation from the National Convening was to come up with strategies that help strengthen the coalition and women movement in general, specifically in the joint ownership of the agenda; advocacy and influencing of the agenda in the context of whole participatory democracy at various levels throughout the election period and beyond.

She emphasized that statistics of women's participation at all levels of leadership in politics is still low compared to men, for example, there are 26 women out of 264 MPs, when it comes to village chairpersons women constitute 2.1%, in local government they make up only 12.6%, so deliberate efforts are still needed.

"This convening provides a broad platform for discussion, reflection and reminding ourselves about the importance of collective power, identify the gaps and successes that have arisen from the efforts of collective power in ensuring that the voices of all women, especially those from the marginalized areas, emerge and be heard in abundance in the continuation of the struggle of the revolutionary agenda of emancipation of women, especially as we move towards important Local Government elections and the General Election,

She also called upon all coalition members and women in general to continue participating and coming out in large numbers in developing strategies to access national and social resources, participate fully in key national decisions such as the process of sharing their views to be included in the TDV 2050, which is aimed at incorporating the foundations of women's rights into the economic, social and political context, leading to the development and welfare of women in the country.

During the convening, participants had the opportunity to reflect upon various topics including the WCEL coalition journey, that is from its inception up to now. They also discussed on what can be done to strengthen the coalition's common goal, analysis of the context, and narratives of change in the movement and success story sharing sessions from other coalitions such as SRHR Coalition, and Ending Child Marriage Coalition.

The coalition members took the opportunity to present their demands to the government through a press conference, with the aim to strengthen participation of women in democratic processes, especially towards the upcoming elections.

"Participants of this National Convening of the Women, Constitution, Election and Leadership Coalition, believe that the next elections, from local government to national level, will be free and participatory. The Coalition will continue to raise awareness on the importance of a constitution with a gender perspective, women's participation in elections and leadership," reads part of the press statement.



Call for Increased Women Participation in Elections

Low participation of women in elections and possible ways to increase involvement in the poll processes headlined the Women, Constitution, Election and Leadership (WCEL) National Convening held on 20-21 May 2024 in Dar-es-Salaam.

The meeting shared that women's participation in elections for leadership positions is still very low in Tanzania. For example, there are 11,915 villages and only 246 elected women leaders, which is equivalent to 2%. We have 3,643 streets and women leaders in this regard constitute 12.6%, and 6,614 hamlets with female leaders making up only 16.7%. The ward committee has 25 members, including a chairperson, 11 from various organizations, five are hamlet chairpersons, and 1/3 is reserved for women special seats. Female mayors are still very few as compared to male mayors in the country, women councillors consist only 2% of the over 1,000 we have in the country, and female street chairpersons consist only 4%.

During the discussion participants voiced their concerns, calling for the improvement of the situation:

"We need to advocate for an Independent Electoral Commission to manage local government elections, replacing the President's Office - Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), continue raising awareness through traditional and modern media to promote the importance of women's participation in leadership, and analyze the new election laws to identify barriers to women leadership and propose revisions to achieve gender equality." - **William Maduhu, LHRC**

"We need to continue collaborating with PO-RALG, emphasizing the importance of having gender-segregated report data for better analysis and raising awareness among political parties about the importance of including more women candidates and leaders. Gender-Inclusive Electoral Codes: Advocating for electoral codes that specifically address gender equality concerns to create a more level playing field and 50/50 Parity in Ward Leadership: Advocating for a policy that ensures equal representation of women and men in ward leadership positions." - **Dr Victoria Lihiru, Lecturer Open University of Tanzania.**



"There are still low numbers of young people in leadership roles, contributed to by several factors, including community perception against female leaders, sexual harassment, low family support, negative cultural norms and low education about leadership. We should cooperate to educate young people on the significance of getting involved in politics. To start at the local level to reach more young people, particularly those living in rural areas."

-**Loveness Athmani**

A young leader from Nzega



"People with disabilities still do not get equal chances to compete in leadership positions, due to negative norms and perceptions and unfriendly environment to contest elections, for instance, most of the campaigns are conducted between 12 pm to 6 pm when the sun is too hot and this limits the full participation of people with albinism. We need to provide education to the public on the need to be inclusive in all our development agendas."

-**Maria Chale**

Representative of People with Disabilities (PWD's)

"To increase the number of women in leadership positions the following should be adopted: Media to advocate for more women representation in leadership with facts, figures and testimonials; set the budget for media engagement; set a goal to provide awareness to her/his area on the importance of women participation in leadership and to support those who will context, commit and create programmes for women empowerment and leadership."

-**Dr. Ananilea Nkya**



Coalition Demands Inclusive Democratic Processes

National Women Convening Key Demands for Inclusive Democratic Processes

The Coalition on Women, Constitution, Election and Leadership (WCLE) recently convened to reflect and plan strategies for broad and productive participation of women in polls, with the aim to continue pushing the movement to shape participatory democracy.

The convening held on 20–21st May 2024, in Dar es Salaam, brought together more than 200 participants, and saw coalition members pointing out that the current context is marred by many obstacles and distortions in demanding women's rights, especially as the period of local government and presidential elections nears.

Some of the major challenges highlighted include the failure to create a conducive environment to provide equal opportunities for women participation in the entire election process as candidates, voters and participants in all political parties. This eliminates the hope of women participation in elections at all levels.

Major shortcomings in election procedures and rules include lack of transparency and delays in availing rules and procedures. For example, until now, the local government elections procedures have not been disclosed to people, a situation that retrogresses efforts to educate and encourage people to prepare and at the same time encourage women participation in the electoral process.



Conflicting statements from leaders either on purpose or due to lack of understanding on the Revolutionary Women's Liberation agenda.



Due to these challenges, coalition members came up with demands aimed at helping improve women participation in the democratic processes:

- All bodies responsible for elections and security during polls should provide an enabling environment, so that all women can participate.
- Rules and procedures to guide local government elections, be open, inclusive and include gender issues such as groups of people with disabilities
- Political parties should ensure that nomination of candidates and supporters is based on the principles of gender equality and provide protection and remove all obstacles such as violence.
- Political parties should ensure and be held accountable for the allocation and use of election resources that create equality between female and male candidates.
- All candidates, including men, will carry an agenda that defends inclusive rights, including those of women and children.
- We want the media and society to fully participate in sustainable and gender equality discussions, as well as continue to criticize statements and misleading information that set back the agenda of women and leadership.





Reflecting Intersectionality of Climate Change Justice and Feminism

Women Fund Tanzania, in collaboration with the Gender and Climate Change Tanzania Coalition, recently conducted a two-day training aimed at promoting feminist awareness of climate justice.

The training, held at Nendiwe Wellness Centre, sought to deepen participants' knowledge of climate justice agenda, feminism and wellness, and strengthen movement-building strategies for advocacy, and collective action within the broader climate justice movement.

The training brought together participants from the diverse consortium of selected organizations, each represented from various regions of mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar.

The training kickstarted with a session led by Mary Rusimbi that saw participants reflecting on key concepts including, gender, gender analysis, gender justice, feminism and how gender interlinks with environmental justice, and why it is important to relate gender equality and climate justice.

She highlighted the non-gender-neutral impacts of climate crises and how women are disproportionately affected, the care burden on women during climate crises, and the significant responsibilities women bear in ensuring family safety and wellbeing. Rusimbi went on to stress the importance of integrating gender analysis into climate justice strategies to address these disparities.

During discussion, it was noted that women play an important role in climate justice initiatives as they are most affected during disasters, hence they are better positioned to help bring transformation.

Healing justice was also highlighted as a vital component of comprehensive climate justice, recognizing the mental and physical tolls on women. The participants proposed the integration of wellness practices into climate justice strategies, to support women's overall well-being.

"Climate justice requires gender justice. There can be no climate justice without gender Justice."

–Mary Rusimbi

Founder & Director– Nendiwe Feminist Wellness Centre

The participants also raised concern over the loss of indigenous knowledge systems, which are important in addressing climate change effects.

The second session of the training focused on understanding climate change and its concepts including, the definition of concepts, causes, impacts and environmental laws.

The facilitator shared available opportunities in global and regional convenings that help push the women empowerment agenda, such as the Conference of Parties (COPs), UNGA (United Nations General Assembly), and AUS (African Union Summit).

The participants reflected upon the role of CSOs in promoting climate change initiatives. On the other hand, the facilitator insisted on the need for unity within the coalition and advised participants to come up with strategies that can help it work effectively, such as conducting expert mapping within the coalition, mapping resource people, and collaborating with others.

Throughout the workshop, participants shared their insights on issues around programmes related to climate change and women's intervention, carbon credit business, and challenges around lobbying and advocacy for change.

Participatory group discussions were also held, focusing on the transitioning process to clean cooking energies, healing wellness in climate change, road map towards implementation.

At the end of the training, participants agreed to form a small task force and appoint a coalition coordinator. The main responsibility of the task force is to quickly develop an action plan, which will guide the coalition to move forward in implementing agreed issues.



SRHR Coalition Commends Government for Extending Maternity Leave

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) coalition led by Doris Mollel Foundation has hailed the Tanzanian government for accepting a request to extend maternity leave for women who give birth to premature babies. The government's decision was announced by President Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, in a speech read on her behalf by the Vice President, Dr. Philip Isdor Mpango, during the International Workers' Day (May Day) celebrations in Arusha.

Addressing a press conference in Dar-es-Salaam recently, DMF Executive Director Doris Mollel hailed the government's position, before sharing with journalists how the idea/journey began, and how they collaborated with various stakeholders in the public and private sectors to ensure that the government receives the idea. This event was participated by representatives from SRHR coalition members.

Doris highlighted that the government's position is that if an employee gives birth to a premature child, the period of special care will not be counted as part of her maternity leave, instead the leave will start after the end of the care period, as confirmed by doctors.

Also, the worker concerned will be allowed to leave her workstation at 1:30 pm every day for six months, after the end of maternity leave, to allow her to breastfeed.

Speaking to the journalists during the same gathering, coalition members said that they are ready to cooperate with the government in the implementation of the new measures, by ensuring that the issue is included in labour laws, in collaboration with various stakeholders such as the Tanzania Confederation of Trade Unions (TUCTA).

A coalition member, Dr. Dinnah Mbaga, said that the coalition wishes to see the issues discussed by the government on Workers' Day about the extension of maternity leave to female workers when they give birth to premature babies, coming to fruition.

"Iwapo mfanyakazi atajifungua mtoto njiti, kipindi cha uangalizi maalumu hakitahesabiwa kama likizo ya uzazi. Likizo ya uzazi itaanza baada tu ya kumalizika kwa kipindi hicho cha uangalizi, kadri madaktari watakavyohibitisha, Vile vile mfanyakazi husika ataruhusiwa kutoka kazini saa 7.30 mchana kila siku kwa muda wa miezi sita baada yakumalizika kwa likizo ya uzazi ili kumpa fursa ya Kwenda kunyonyesha,"

– Mh. Dr. Philip Isdory Mpango

Makamu wa Rais wa Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania

"We want what was said to be included in the law because, without the law, we will not know whether it is being implemented or not. With our unity and voices, we will work with the government so that the law can work," Dr Mbaga added.

The coalition members also congratulated DMF for leading the advocacy initiatives that help to save the lives of young children, a movement that has largely contributed to the achievement of this success.

From The Media



Wanamtandao zaidi ya 200 wanawake watoa tamko juu ya ushiriki mpana na wenye tija kwenye uchaguzi 2025



Pictorial



Different pictures showing The National Convening on Women, Constitution, Election and Leadership(WCEL) Coalition that was held in Dar-es-Salaam from 20-21st May, 2024



Training on feminist awareness and climate justice, at Nendiwe Welness Centre



WFT-T Board of Trustees Chair Dr Penina Mlama addressing participants during the WCEL National Convening

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