

BRIEF REPORT ON THE 7:30 BREAKFAST DEBATE – FEBRUARY 26TH 2010

50%-50%: Equal Re-representation of Women in Parliament?

For many years now Tanzania have been struggling for women emancipation on economic, Social and political spheres. The struggle begun ever since before independency and it had been passed through different stages. The straggle have come to spark especially when the government of Tanzania had a political will and become a signatory of international and regional gender parity declarations and protocols – Beijing, SADC, Maputo.

Policy Forum on this month's Debate dedicated to the issue of Equal Re-representation of Women in Parliament. The presentations debate was done by dada Ussu Mallya, from TGNP and Dr. Benson Bana from University of Dar es Salaam.

The first presentation was done by dada Ussu Mallya, she started by giving out an overview of women/feminists struggles for gender parity in Tanzanian politics and other decision making organs and further she examine critically some of the opportunities and challenges of realizing the 50/50 commitment by 2010.

The widening gap between rich and poor 2007- poverty estimates indicate that, the economy's significant growth since 2000/01 has not translated into income poverty reduction - rising inequality has offset the gains (PHDR 2009). In such a way it leads to increased gender disparity, diminishing citizen and gender accountability

Tanzania's Women are above 50% of population so they deserve a right to leadership at all levels since Tanzania has very capable and able women leaders. Current data of Women in key decision making positions according to MKUKUTA Implementation Report 2008/9, National Assembly total number is 324, Constituency Parliamentarians are 232 out of it 75 proportional special seats, 10 Presidential appoint and 5 from Zanzibar Representatives but 100 (31%), only 18 (7.8%) elected from constituencies

She further commented on how to realize 50/50 in 2010 Elections by identifying Opportunities and Challenges on it, the Opportunities on it are like Government commitment and promise during 2005 election and soon after the government initiated a process under the leadership of MCDGC organized a number of consultative discussions, reflections and proposals and some public awareness raising were undertaken, however there seem to be a **fade away of POLITICAL WILL**, up to now there is no national guidance /framework on how to fulfill this commitment in 2010. Is this part of systemic discrimination against women embedded in patriarchy? The advocacy for 50/50 parity and gender equality still remains an issue for few women rights organizations and groups.

Based on her presentation, she concluded by posing a question to the participants, where are we to challenge discriminatory legal, policy frameworks and customary patriarchal practices?

The second presentation was done by Dr. Benson Bana, he started by giving overview of his presentation. Rationale of gender balance in decision making organs, the state of gender representation in URT Parliament, Comparative women representation in Legislatures and Lessons from the findings and experiences

He said that historically Women in Tanzania are one of the disadvantaged groups, exclusion/discriminated in national politics, low level political/civic competency and demonstrable little interest in national politics. The justifications for increased number of women in legislatures are based on the facts of Equality- all human beings are equal, Gender has no veto power over performance and Development in its entirety is a shared responsibility, Historical reasons- marginalization, inadequate access to development. Opportunities, Demographic reasons and

Protocols and conventions ratified. Current Gender Representation in URT Parliament 30.14% is women and 69.59%, while in other East African Countries Rwanda 56.3%, Uganda 31.5%, Burundi 31.4% and Kenya 9.8%. Further more Women Representation in Parliaments of Developed Countries like USA 16.8%, UK 19.5%, Russia 14% and Germany 32.8% and in some Arabic Countries like Iran 2.8%, Saudi Arabia 0.0%, and Jordan is 6.4%.

Some lessons from findings and experiences shows that, developed countries haven't attained 50/50 representation, there are countries with zero women representation, only Rwanda has attained more 50% and most African countries/even "models" haven't attained 50%. Neither empirical nor anecdotal evidences have shown a positive correlation between gender parity and quality of parliaments on decisions/legislations debates, efficacy in oversight role, private motions and articulation and aggregation of public interests.

Some questions to ask ourselves are; what are the push factors? What are the motives- what do we intend to achieve (poverty reduction? quality education, enhanced service delivery? quantity versus quality representation? Why now- any justification for fast tracking?

He further provide suggestion and recommendation on what are the appropriate ways to 50:50 ratios, to attain that we need to avoid one-party dominance, consider women elites vs the rural poor women as well as urbanites vs rural women. Also we need to introduce gender paired party candidates, two candidates in each constituency that is male and female and reduce constituency from 232 to 172. This model will raise number of elected women to 47.7%.

On his conclusion remark he commented that there is a need for restructuring the political system like reorganizing constituencies into district-based constituencies, each district to have two MPs – one woman and one man and this automatically will increase districts from 137-150. Also 300 MPs direct elected from constituencies, this can be done through a pure proportional representation (PR) electoral system whereby there is a party list of candidates is created, voters vote for a party not candidates and winning candidates are taken from a party list in relation to party's overall share.

Comments and Questions from Plenary Discussion:

1. Why 50/50% now?
2. If we define development this is not just achievement in GDP but also realisation of the value of women and not just industries, roads, ect.
3. if we see why are we poor you will need 50%-50% now
4. This country is poor because of the voiceless of women
5. Are we real patriotic in what were preaching? Because we had a woman contesting for presidency why women did not supported her?
6. Why women are keeping away on contesting? Even the activist are not contesting
7. Gender disparity is also a reality at the grassroots level and not only women even the disabled people are discriminated
8. Who are women in decision making? Elites or poor? I think we need also to focus on youth
9. Freedom of rights of being voted and vote does not need background study
10. The struggle have been driven from wrong footage
11. Why when we think about 50/50 we first consider expenses but the number of MP's in parliament has been gradually increased and we were not asking about the expenses
12. We have the system which does not favour the democracy even if we have super activist in parliament
13. We need mechanism to ensure equal representation of all groups in the society.

Respond to the Comments:

1. Our country is a signatory of many declaration the 50/50 included, so if we are signatory we need to attain
2. Women has constitutional rights to participate in decision making, we want to see this happening
3. We need to have a moral justification for the question
4. Revolution does not end for a long term than evolution so we need to consider the fast tracking of 50/50
5. The analysis of class and contextual factors is more important
6. We don't need revolution in the way we understand rather a transformed society
7. We can't compare the situation with other countries especially developed countries but lets look the situation in our own context
8. We are not talking of a fast tracking rather we are rising a debate for people to think about
9. To what extent is the election bills ensure equal representation in parliament

Mr. Alex Ruchyahinduru from policy forum closed the discussion and welcomed the participants to the other next month breakfast debate.

