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BROWN BAG EVENT: PROMOTING RURAL BASED WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



Emthonjeni Women's Forum (EWF) hosted a Brown Bag event on the 25th of June in Bulawayo under the theme "*Empowering Women Entrepreneurs: Bridging Gender Gaps for Sustainable Livelihoods.*" The event brought together rural based women from Insiza District, EWF's partner organisations, funding partners, officials from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprise Development and the Ministry of Local Government Public works to showcase women-led income generating projects and discuss strategies for advancing gender equality and sustainable livelihoods.

The one-day event provided a platform for women to present their income-generating initiatives, ranging from small-scale agriculture to savings groups. During a panel discussion, Insiza District Development Officer linked gender-based violence (GBV) to economic instability, noting its impact on women's participation, food security, and productivity, and called for stronger stakeholder engagement in legal and policy reforms. The panelists emphasized on how GBV erodes women's confidence and agency, especially when financial dependence silences them.

Participants agreed that equipping rural women with economic tools boosts livelihoods and strengthens community resilience. Providing women with platforms to showcase their work, share lived experiences, and engage directly with policymakers and donors, plays an important role in bridging gender gaps. This elevates women's contributions to economic development and amplifies women's voices in shaping policies and decisions that affect their lives and communities.

STRENGTHENING GENDER MAINSTREAMING, ADVOCACY AND ETHICAL USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Emthonjeni Women's Forum (EWF) joined other Diakonia partners for a two day capacity building workshop held in Harare. The workshop, focused on gender mainstreaming, ethical artificial intelligence (AI) use, and policy advocacy, to equip participants with strategies to leverage digital tools responsibly in advancing gender equality and fighting violence against women and girls (VAWG).

The training provided in-depth discussions on the opportunities and risks of AI in gender justice work, emphasizing the critical need to safeguard digital spaces and protect sensitive data particularly when working with survivors of violence. Participants examined gender-sensitive approaches in using AI such as:

- Ethical Data Practices: Ensuring survivor confidentiality through secure, anonymised data.
- Bias Mitigation: Addressing algorithmic biases that may perpetuate gender stereotypes or exclude marginalized women.

The workshop's insights will directly inform its ongoing efforts to end VAWG through prevention and response initiatives. Strengthening its capacity in advocacy, digital literacy, and ethical technology use, EWF aims to enhance outreach and ensure the safe, effective amplification of marginalized women's voices.

Key Takeaways:-

- EWF to apply learnings in VAWG prevention, survivor support, and tech-driven advocacy.
- Review of organizational advocacy and communication strategy.



SASA! FAITH TRAINING EMPOWERS WOMEN TO LEAD AND SPEAK OUT AGAINST GBV



Women in church and community leadership positions are finding their voices and stepping confidently into decision-making spaces, due to continued capacity-building under Emthonjeni Women's Forum's (EWF) Empower Her Faith! initiative, supported by Trocaire. The most recent workshop trained 40 women and adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) on gender-based violence (GBV), advocacy, and leadership.

Following a series of women in leadership training, women reported a shift in confidence and visibility. "I have started voicing my opinions during community meetings, and people are now listening. Before, I was too afraid to speak, but now I feel confident," one participant shared. Others said they had taken on informal leadership roles in savings groups and family decision-making, which they had previously avoided due to societal pressures. Despite this progress, participants highlighted ongoing cultural barriers and male resistance, calling for continued community-level interventions.

The training is part of the broader SASA! Faith programme, and is central to EWF's strategy to eliminate violence against women and girls (VAWG). Equipping women with advocacy skills and leadership confidence, enhances GBV prevention programming and promotes inclusive decision-making. As the programme expands, EWF plans to deepen collaboration with partners such as ZimPro, ZWLA, and Musasa to strengthen GBV referral systems and ensure women leaders can operate in safe and supportive environments.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH - BROWN BAG EVENT



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH -BI ANNUAL REVIEW

