

- Women leaders enhance teamwork.
- Business wide communication will be enhanced.
- Women will achieve better financial outcome.
- Women have unique transformation ideas.
- Women have more diverse problem-solving skills.
- Women are ethical and civic minded and champion the diversity and issues of equality.
- Empowered women will improve outcomes and bring about good results.
- All in all, women leadership within households, including decision making over land and household income improves access to education and healthcare for their families.
- Traditional gender roles, gender-based stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes and norms should be done away with. This will enable female students in institutions of higher learning to take up leadership roles in their universities and colleges and also participate in student unionism.



ABOUT US

The Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) is a Coalition of non-state actors working in the Education and Skills Sector. The organisation is involved in research, advocacy and member capacity enhancement on different aspects of the Education and Skills Sector in Zambia.

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**FEMALE
 PARTICIPATION IN
 LEADERSHIP IS KEY
 TO NATIONAL
 DEVELOPMENT**

Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) working with Zambia National students Union (ZANASU) established the Female Student Network with support from Norwegian Student Academic International Assistance Fund (SAIH). The Network is designed to promote gender parity in student leadership. The key advocacy agenda for the network is to increase the number of female students holding leadership positions and participating in student structures. The project has contributed to a significant increase in the number of female students in leadership positions. The power dynamics in targeted universities are slowly shifting towards accommodating more women. For instance, Copperbelt University (CBU) for the first time had a female elected in 2021/2022 academic year as Union President while University of Zambia (UNZA) and Evelyn Hone College have female Vice Presidents in their student unions.

Female participation in education and leadership positions is essential to achieving the SDGs by 2030. However, evidence shows that women are under-represented at all levels of decision making in our country and the world as a whole. For instance, at national level, the low representation of the women can be seen from the last general elections that Zambia had on 12th August 2021, where only 15% of women Parliamentarians were elected. Similarly, only four females aspired to stand for ZANASU elections held in July 2021, of which two were elected out of 13 positions representing 15%. This should not be the case after 57 years of independence. Zambia is part of the SADC Gender Protocol that indicates that there should be 50/50 representation of men and women in decision making positions.

This calls for more to be done in order to achieve parity in student unionism both at national and institutional level.

Leadership in women should be inculcated from the education system so that it spreads to national level. The country cannot expect to have more women in Parliament when it is low at colleges and universities.

It is important that women are made aware that their participation adds value as well. In particular students' participation in leadership positions is key in institutions of higher learning.

BARRIERS TO FEMALE PARTICIPATION

It is sad to note that there are a number of barriers to women participation in leadership. Some of them include:

- Sexual or gender-based violence: Sexual harassment, hostile work and learning environments.
- Stereotypes: Because more men have been in leadership for so long, the leadership traits are thought of as masculine and not viewed favourably when exhibited by women.
- Lack of sponsorship or mentors to inspire young women and girls to participate in issues that concern them.
- Lack of flexibility: Balancing between work and family can be very challenging and this limits women from seeking leadership roles.
- Cultural beliefs: In most cultures men are considered to be more superior than women and discriminatory attitudes and norms are carried on.
- Lack of education, information and resources.

SOME TIPS TO IMPROVE FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP

- Promote a more gender inclusive culture through provision of mentors to inspire young women.
- Women should upgrade themselves by getting an education.
- Enhance awareness programmes to encourage more females to participate in various leadership positions.
- Men should embrace and support women aspiring for higher positions.
- Women should seek leadership skills capacity building opportunities.
- Deliberate efforts should be made in universities and colleges to encourage female students to take up leadership roles/positions in student unions and programmes.

BENEFITS OF GENDER INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

- Female students will be adequately represented on issues that affect them as they, without fear, would more likely and easily open up to fellow female student leaders.
- More female students will be motivated to participate in student unionism.
- All genders benefit when individuals are free to make their own choices. Additionally, families are more secure when women move into higher paying leadership roles.