

Connecting the dots

Stories of change: Women in Local Government

Breaking through the glass ceiling

Summary

Exildah Anayawa Kabutu, Deputy Council Secretary, Lukulu Town Council, Lukulu, Zambia

Project involvement: Women in Local Government network and mentoring

Despite a difficult background and challenges faced as a woman, Exildah Anayawa Kabutu has risen to a top job at Lukulu Town Council. A leading light in public administration and management, she is advocating for more women to follow in her footsteps. Getting involved in the Connecting the Dots project has enabled her to share her experiences with a network of like-minded women and use her skills to mentor other women trying to break through to higher positions in local administration.

Background

Exildah Anayawa Kabutu, Deputy Council Secretary of Lukulu Town Council, is well qualified for her role having a Grade 12 Certificate, Diploma in Local Government Administration, Diploma in Human Resource Management and Bachelor of Arts Degree in Public Administration with Development Studies.

The first of nine children, Exildah thought that with her background she could not reach this sort of level.

Despite this, her perseverance and the encouragement of others who recognised her skills and efforts led her to rise through the ranks to a top position. She has encouraged other women in the workplace to emulate her, and many have achieved a lot thanks to Exildah's example.

Aims

As the Gender Focal Point for Lukulu Council, Exildah is trying to change people's lives, in particular change the lives of women by encouraging them to participate in the activities that are traditionally seen as those of men, such as in politics and the workplace.

"Most women shun responsibilities that are perceived to be for men. Women's lives are improved when they take on challenging activities and tasks that our men feel can't be performed by women," says Exildah.

How the project has helped

Joining the Women in Local Government Network gave Exildah a chance to meet with like-minded women and use her vast experience to mentor young women involved in the project. This has helped her focus on and set her own goals, as well as helping others.

As the only woman in management at Lukulu Council, Exildah competes with men in most activities, often outperforming them. In dealing with staffing issues, she has made recommendations for more women to be appointed to management positions. This is having some impact as more women are becoming willing to undertake such challenging tasks.

Exildah says her approach is based on respect for one another, and giving help when someone is in need. She says that to get results it is important to engage both men and women and to include young people, physically challenged people and those who are less privileged

Impact

Being part of a large network of women who share a common goal and getting their support and encouragement has helped Exildah focus on her own goals and strive hard to achieve them. At the same time, as a woman experienced in public administration, the project made it possible for her to mentor other women who want to take the next step in pursuing a career in public service.

Exildah now makes a weekly, monthly, quarterly and an annual plan; these are reviewed at the end of each quarter to determine progress, and address any shortfalls. And now women who work at the council are giving each other much more support to help them in their jobs and careers.

“I am happy to say this project has impacted me in a positive way,” says Exildah.

“The project has also made me realise that as women when we stand together we can achieve anything to which we put our minds. Perseverance until you succeed is vital,” she concluded.

