

Connecting the dots

Stories of change: Young women local government network

Fighting for women's rights

Summary

Joanias Chanda, student, Luanshya, Zambia

Project participation: Young Women in Local Government Network, mentoring from WLGN.

Joanias Chanda is a student with a passion for advocating women's rights and promoting change to encourage women's greater participation in society and politics and taking action to combat issues such as gender-based violence, early marriage and sexual harassment. Participating in the Connecting the Dots project has enabled her to better focus and target her work with community groups and use the right channels to get her message across.

Background

Joanias Chanda lives in Luanshya, Zambia's Copperbelt district where she is studying for a Bachelor of Accounting and Finance from Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies (ZCAS) University.

A passionate advocate for women, Joanias believes in trying to change society's cultural norms that hinder women from fully expressing themselves or taking a greater role in society and politics.

Aims

Joanias joined the Connecting the Dots project to help her understand more about women's rights, how to get her voice heard, and how to tackle some of the difficulties women face: gender-based violence, early marriages, sexual harassment and political violence against women.

How the CtD project has helped

As well as gaining knowledge about women's rights, Joanias has learned about some of the action that can be taken and the channels she can use to get women's voices heard. She has also found it very useful to meet other like-minded young women in the young women's networks

"The knowledge I have acquired from the Connecting the Dots Project has really influenced me greatly and I know that my fight for women's rights will be easy if I follow the right channels. I have the support from my fellow young women from the networks created, friends and family. Also my mentors from the Women in Local Government network have been of great help throughout my journey."

Impact

Joanias is using some of the tools she has learned to work to change norms by sensitising the general public, educating local community leaders (village head men), and giving women an opportunity to express themselves freely, aiming to make everyone fully aware of the issues. She is using the media, pressure groups and churches to create awareness and has now started using social media platforms to sensitise people on matters such as political participation, gender-based violence and early marriages.

“I am doing this so that I can pave a way for the coming generation so that they don’t go through the things that their mothers have gone through as a result of these cultural norms,” explains Joanias.

“This has been talked about for many years. Even though there has been some change, there are still some individuals who take advantage of women and a lot of women still live in fear.”

Joanias has met challenges, including stereotyping from the public and being told that she is too young to understand the norms, but points to some of the successes that have been made for women in politics thanks to the advocacy of young women and other people like herself..

“I can proudly say I see some change, looking at the number of women who have joined politics. The fact that our current government has a female vice president and our speaker is a woman gives me so much joy to continue fighting for women’s rights. I have come to learn that patience and commitment pays off,” she concluded.

