

# Statement on Women's Month

*"... the highways were deserted and the travellers took the byways. Life in the villages ceased; it ended in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:6-7)*

- The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) joins the rest of the world in commemorating the International Women's Day (IWD). The IWD is celebrated on the 8th of March each year and it is a day that recognizes the achievements of women around the world and reaffirms the commitment to gender equality. On this day, ZCC and the global community at large reflects on the progress made in uplifting the status of women around the world, but also recognize that there is still much work to be done in all spectrum of life.
- The theme for the 2024 IWD is "Invest in women: Accelerate progress". This theme highlights the importance of investing in women and girls in all the aspects of life and calls for governments to commit in advancing women's rights. The theme emphasises the critical role of investing in women's education, health care, economic empowerment and leadership and development to accelerate progress towards gender equality. It recognizes that when women are empowered and given the resources they need, they can make incredible contributions to their communities and to society as a whole. This entails moving beyond reaffirming commitments and investing boldly in the action needed to make the commitments come to fruition.
- Furthermore, the theme highlights the importance of investing in women and girls in order to advance sustainable development. It recognizes that women and girls have been disproportionately affected by a number of challenges, and that more investment is needed to address gender inequality. The theme also emphasizes the need to accelerate progress towards gender equality by addressing barriers such as discrimination, violence, and unequal access to opportunities and resources. It calls for action to ensure that women and girls are fully and equally included in all areas of society, including economic, social, and political life.
- ZCC recognise the important milestones that the government of Zimbabwe has made in pushing women's agenda forward among them domesticating international and regional statutes on gender equality for instance the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, The African Charter on the Rights of Women among others. Nationally, the country has enacted the 2013 Constitution which is very progressive in terms of promoting gender equality, the new Marriages Act which criminalises child marriages among others.
- ZCC has taken strides in the acceleration of women's education, health care, economic empowerment, leadership and development. This is being done through gender sensitive programming, leadership trainings, schools social work programming, advocacy, support services and economic empowerment initiatives. Capacity and efficiency of church assets like schools and hospitals have also been maximised to cater for the needs of the communities all across the country.

# Statement on Women's Month

*"... the highways were deserted and the travellers took the byways. Life in the villages ceased; it ended in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:6-7)*

- As part of the ZCC mandate, data collection and analysis are regularly on women's progress in the areas stated above to identify gaps and track the effectiveness of implemented programs. Further, partnership building and collaboration with other organizations, government agencies, and NGOs to leverage resources and expertise for a more comprehensive impact is an effective tool that the ZCC uses to promote and amplify gender equality. Additionally, gender mainstreaming: integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of the organization's work, ensuring policies and programs are inclusive and address the specific needs of women is another way that has facilitated the improvement of gender equality in communities where ZCC is implementing its programs.
- However, ZCC is also concerned about the persistent challenges that women and girls continue to face in Zimbabwe. These challenges include, increase in cases of child marriages regardless of the newly enacted law that prohibits this, violence against women and girls, burden of unpaid care work, underrepresentation in decision making structures at both local and national level, effects of climate change among numerous others.
- ZCC is also concerned that the impact of the above challenges is very significant as the issues are deeply interconnected and addressing one issue without addressing the others is not enough. Therefore, it is important to take a holistic approach to women's development.

**In that regard, the ZCC takes this IWD to call upon;**

## **A. The Government of Zimbabwe to:**

- Invest in knowledge on the laws related to gender and Gender Based Violence. The Government should commit to raise awareness on laws especially in rural areas so that communities are aware of laws for instance the New Marriage Act and Statutory Instrument 2 of 2024 which criminalises child marriages. This can also be done through incorporating legal awareness in school curriculums.
- Strive to adhere to the 50/50 in all structures of decision making at both local and national level. This allows for diversity of ideas, strategies and home-grown solutions to issues.
- Provide targeted capacity-building programs for women to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to participate effectively in climate change decision-making

## **B. Churches to:**

- Be safe spaces for women and girls to voice their concerns not to be hubs, perpetrators and gatekeepers of inequality and violence.
- Prioritise collaboration and working together amongst all stakeholders especially with the government, churches, Civil Society Organisations and may others to address these challenges

**HAPPY WOMEN'S MONTH!!!**