Inspiring Change

• Speech by Netsai Mushonga

• Director of Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe
I am going to speak to you

• As a Zimbabwean
• As a proud woman
• Woman rights activist
• Peace activist
• Optimist
• Change agent in my country
Structure of my presentation tonight

• Case study of political and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe
• Explain how opposition and civic society contributed to change the tragic circumstances in Zimbabwe
• Touch on the roles that Zimbabweans have to sustain the changes
Inspiring to change - A case study of Zimbabwe

- 1890 – Zimbabwe colonized by the British government
- 1890 -1980 lived under colonial rule
- Colonial government promulgated unfair laws which resulted in discrimination and exploitation of citizens
Zimbabwe 2

- 1963 liberation war started
- 1980 independence from colonial rule and ZANU PF government took oath of office
- 1983 Gukurahundi – 20,000 ndebeles thought to have been killed
Other violence during independence

- Acess to information and Protection of Privacy Act
- Public Order and Security Act
- Operation Murambatsvina
- Operation Chinyavada
- Operation Chipo Chiroorwa
- Dictatorship took roots
Culture of violence

- “A revolution ceases to be one when it begins to eat its children.”
- Culture of violence born in 1890 and has remained in Zimbabwe
- State abuses citizens and women bear the brunt of violence
- Choices limited since opposition is attacked and government rigs elections effectively
Chinja Maitiro, Maitiro

Chinja

- 1999 New political party MDC born from the civic society
- The leaders are from the largest worker’s union and worked with the National Constitutional Assembly
- (Change the way you have done things) refuses to use violence under whatever circumstances
Chinja maitiro 2

• Are rumoured to have won the 2000, 2005 and 2008 elections but ZANU claims victory for all elections

• ZANU PF calls itself a “liberation war party” and MDC calls itself a “development party”
March 2008 elections

- Civic society including women campaigns vigorously for peaceful elections
- During International Women’s Day theme for WCoZ is “Vote in Peace vote for Peace”
- WCoZ sends a petition for peaceful elections to all political parties
March 2008 elections 2

- The elections happen with much less violence and women are overjoyed
- It's clear that the opposition has won since results are posted outside each polling station
- ZEC announces results at 6 constituencies per day!!
March 2008 elections

- Gvt refuses to announce presidential results
- Finally released after six weeks of tempering with them
- Civics and many international players refuse to accept results
- The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission announces new run off presidential elections in six weeks
Liberation War Tactics

- ZANU PF devises national strategies to force the population to vote for it
- Recruit youth militia and rural chiefs, pay them and arm them with torture tactics
- Rest is history
Results of the terror campaign

- Officially 25,000 people are displaced (UN)
- 200 are killed (MDC)
- 10,000 are treated for serious injuries (ZDHR)
- About 70% of the population is heavily intimidated
- All required to vote for ZANU PF and they requested to write down the serial numbers of their ballot papers
Terror campaign 2

- MDC pulled out of the elections
- ZANU PF won a landslide victory!!!
Civic during violence

- Violence areas sealed off but women went and recorded violence
- Spoke out against it
- Sent reps and documents to UN, AU and SADC presidents and embassies in the country
- Mitigating with displaced women and children, clothes, shelter, counselling, security, food, health
- Made sure SADC and AU observers saw the displaced people since gvt denied any violence
The good infiltrates the bad!!!

- MDC agrees to join ZANU PF in a Government of National Unity 15 September 2008
- 13 February GNU formed
- Confidence levels in the government dramatically go up
- Suddenly some of the industries open and begin producing goods
- Government employees return to work in solidarity with the government
- Zimbabweans in the diaspora also return in large numbers
Schools reopen

• Teachers return to work in solidarity with the government
• The allowances are not enough but working for change
• In 2008 school children in public schools had had only 21 days of uninterrupted education
• The education department marks 2008 exams and begin releasing results
Changes happening

- Funding partners begin to support health sector
- Health centres which had been laying idle begin to open up
- Women access reproductive health care and primary health care
- Health workers return to work in solidarity with new government
Food and other commodities become available in the shops

- Previously empty shops fill up with goods
- Rare items like mealie meal are found in shops
- Meat, juices, cooking oil, soaps, margarine back in shops
- It's now possible to fill up a basket with Zimbabwean goods!!
Levels of violence reduced significantly

- The ZANU Torture machinery crumbles slowly
- However it rears its ugly head once often especially when the Prime Minister’s dies in a very suspicious car accident
- CIO and other agents routinely phone and threaten civic society activists
- Scale of violence much smaller and has no funding!!!
Role of women in the transition

• For Zimbabweans this cycle of change needs to be completed
• Necessary to get the country through transitional justice and peace building phase
• Start with truth telling at village, province and national level
• Documentation of violence incidence done and needs collated
• Secondly, women and civics are lobbying for a justice process where the perpetrators of violence receive sentences, even if they are later pardoned.

• Women are insisting that perpetrators of politically motivated sexual violence should never be pardoned in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1820.
Window of opportunity 3

- Thirdly there should be a reparation process to pay back what survivors lost.
- It can never be enough but an effort should be made as part of the healing process.
- After the reparations communities can then begin the process of healing.
National Healing and Peace building

- Women are taking their role seriously in this process
- Zimbabwe lived with a strong culture of violence
- Need to break from culture, change it for the good, get society to a culture of peace, tolerance and nonviolence
Community rebuilding

- Need to rebuild community trust under girded by the term UBUNTU
- All communities need awareness in civic and human right education
- Process can be started by women during this window of opportunity
- ZANU PF taught people that it was criminal offence not to support it!
- Communities need to know what is right and proper
Zimbabwe women

- Those who remained proud and optimistic Zimbabweans
- The country has enough wealth and if run properly is self-sustaining
- Prepared to continue the struggle
- Our goal is to get a constitution that guarantees our rights as equal citizens
- 50% women in decision making – revolution we want and a friendly electoral system
Inspiring change in your setting

• Believe in what you want to do
• Hope and optimism is critical in any situation
• Recruit more people to your cause – find the allies
• Contributed in various ways towards this goal
• Get influential people as your allies
• Aim for the change you want to make and one day it shall be done
• Never doubt that a small group of people can change the world – it's been proven over and over again

• I thank you