

Three DRC Women's Day messages

Transformation comes through Education and capacity building

How can one significantly participate in decision-making process or vote in secrecy without reading abilities and proper training? Though the gap in literacy between men and women has declined over the time in urban areas, it still remains a challenge important in rural areas. Today, many of our rural areas lack, for instance, female engineers, university professors, doctors etc. whereas having these diplomas is often a prerequisite to occupy decision making positions or participate in public affairs.

Given this gap, it is important therefore to actively involve urban and rural women in the political, economic and social transformation. Activists and women rights advocates need to do



more to lobby and support for capacity building of rural women empowerment through transformative education. Women should be supported in their actions for their communities or countries, so as to enforce their contribution to the improvement people's living conditions. This is not a practical challenge since most of their traditional experiences in household management and care prove their capacity to address community challenges. There is need to build their capacity through relevant literacy skills and training. Activists who support and work with women are expected to provide this type of empowerment. Given this background, SYMOCEL programming for this year prioritizes civic and voter education in DRC provinces.

Sister Célestine Sumanende, member of Uele University Education Program (PEDUC)

EISA DRC

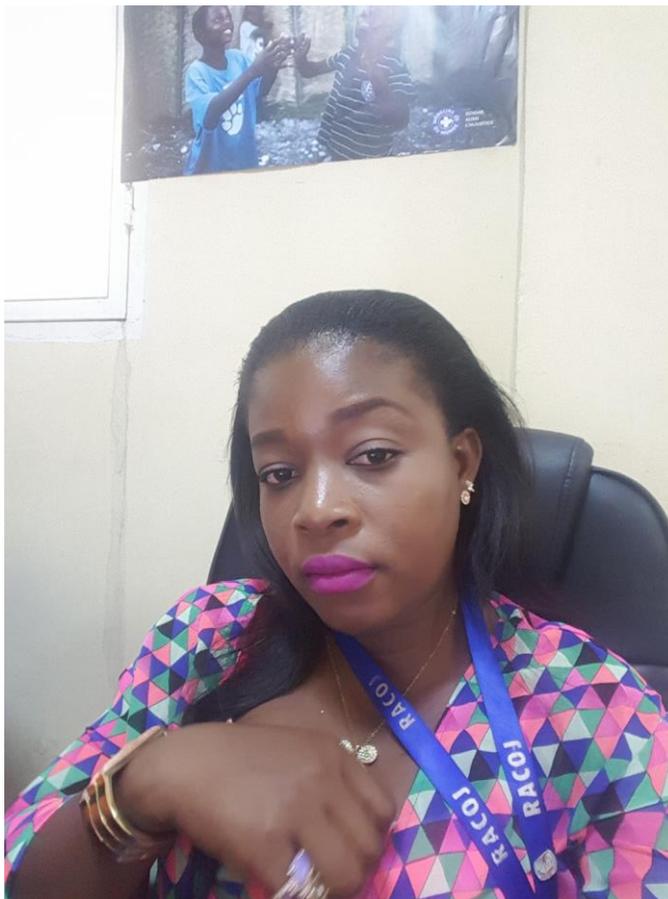
Extending voter outreach campaigns to Women in remote areas

Participation in public affairs is no longer a matter of men, women or girls, but a question of Rights. Like men, women of all walks of life are affected by elections in various ways. They are or aspire to be voters, candidates, observers, elected, human rights activists etc. The point is, there are obstacles that impede the exercise of this right be they socio-cultural, legal, logistical, or security related etc.

Within SYMOCEL, our vision, mission and goal this year is to carry out actions promoting electoral fairness and participation not only in the cities but also in rural areas by empowering young female activists and leaders. Within these communities whose relevance and participation is often only considered at the last moment in the electoral process,

the action will be a constructive one that takes into account the specific problems. It will also propose strategies and sensitize them on the benefit of Gender consideration with an emphasis on electoral participation. We believe that capacities and motivation of women from remote areas are enhanced when information in general and electoral information specifically, is provided to them in their communities. That is information reaching them in their localities, markets, schools, universities and hospitals top mention a few. It is also important to break new grounds by discussing such as family planning. People often think that these issues have nothing to do with elections. They do, and need to be addressed, as they affect women political and electoral participation.

Rachel Ndaya, National coordinator of a Congolese Youth Association



EISA DRC

How Media reflect Women political participation

The representation of women in decision-making bodies in the DRC especially in government, parliament and political parties has often been generally identified as low despite some progresses made at the local level where several women are mayors, territorial administrators, as well as provincial governors and vice governors.

At the SYMOCEL's Media Monitoring unit set up by PROCEC, we have noticed that this low female political participation is compounded by poor coverage of female politicians in the media. They are hardly heard on important political and electoral issues such as voter registration, electoral frameworks, timetable and law.

The conditions for women political participation require special attention for fair, inclusive and non-discriminatory elections at national, provincial and local levels.

Research also shows that information on the electoral process is available but is not adequately detailed on aspects such as voting processes and procedures. Consequently, many people especially women are not well informed about these matters.

This is an important gap, considering the extent to which media have a huge influence on the general public. Again, given the significance of providing this information to women not only as voters but also as candidates so that they understand voting operations and are visible.

We therefore call on the media to apply the principle of gender equity in their various programs and to produce more gender sensitive programs/articles related to the electoral process.

Florence Kamana, media analyst

