HUMAN RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATIONS A SUCCESS

Habakkuk Trust joined the rest of the world to celebrate human rights day on the 10th of December 2015, which were held under the theme ‘Our Rights, Our Freedoms – Always (this was also the theme for the UN 2015).’

The main celebrations, held at Whiteswater Secondary School in Matobo Ward 17 on the 11th of December 2015, were attended by over 450 people including Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission Commissioner Japhet Ntabeni Ncube, Matobo Rural District Council officials, local traditional leaders, Ward 16 and 17 Councillors as well as community members from Wards 16, 17 and 25.

The event also featured soccer matches between Ward 16 and Ward 17’s finest teams and the winning team (Ward 16) then played with former Highlands football stars. The lineup also had entertainment by Victory Svanjoba Arts group, an Amabhiza arts group from Ward 16, a praise poet as well as music.

Habakkuk Trust has nine Community Advocacy Action Teams in Matobo District which are advocating for human rights related issues in their Wards with branded t-shirts, newsletters and copies of the Constitution were distributed to encourage community members to know their rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Habakkuk Trust believes that total community transformation and sustainable development as well as music.

Highlanders football stars. The lineup also had entertainment by Victory Siyanqoba Arts group, an Amabhiza arts group from Ward 16, a praise poet as well as music.

Our Freedoms – Always (this was also the theme for the UN 2015). Habakkuk Trust joined the rest of the world to celebrate human rights day on the 10th of December 2015, which were held under the theme: ‘Our Rights, Our Freedoms – Always (this was also the theme for the UN 2015).’

The event was aimed at bringing together community members and making them aware of the importance of upholding and promoting human rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Habakkuk Trust believes that total community transformation and sustainable development can only occur if people know their rights and exercise their responsibilities as citizens of Zimbabwe.

Branded t-shirts, newsletters and copies of the Constitution were distributed to encourage community members to know their rights and freedoms and what they can possibly do when their rights are violated.

Habakkuk Trust has nine Community Advocacy Action Teams in Matobo District which are advocating for human rights related issues in their Wards with the view of improving the welfare and livelihoods of the people.

MORE WOMEN TAKE UP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Habakkuk Trust has trained five more Wards on local level advocacy in Matobo District, with four of the wards being led by female councillors.

Amongst the trained in Matobo’s only female headman, heading Ward 17, 18, 24 and 25, Headman Rukuni, born Enure Ncube which is a first in rural communities.

In an interview with Habakkuk Trust, Headman Rukuni said she faced resistance from men in the community who did not want to be led by a woman.

She also alleged that there were some officials in government departments in the District that looked down upon female leaders making it hard for them to address pertinent community challenges.

“Many young people are not employed and many of them depend on their relatives in South Africa. What we lack most are human rights training and skills training programmes that would encourage us to do something better with our lives instead of rushing to get married. However there are no programmes aimed at teaching young people about their rights and no programmes that focus on young people only.

Adelaide Ndebele from Dewe village Ward 17, said: “There should be programmes or activities aimed at empowering young people alone because once young people are combined with their elders, they lose their voice. There are hundreds of youths at Dewe village but usually when there are community meetings, you will only see one or two of them. I think young people are keen and want better with the people of their age, not with elders. Youth participation in community initiatives was going to be far much better if there were programmes, like these ones, targeting young people. It has always been difficult for young people to speak in meetings or make solid decisions where old and young community members are present. What we lack in our communities is information or knowledge concerning our rights. Instead most of the times we get to be taught on health related issues (muphando takile). There are many young people in our village. We need to be trained separately from the elders of the community so that we can come up with and implement our own ideas.”

Fibian Moyo, Shumbeshe village in Matobo Ward 16:

“Poor communication is one of the reasons why people, including young people, do not participate in community development. You will find that most areas especially in this Ward have no mobile phone network access. This makes it difficult for people to communicate and share information on important community meetings and initiatives.

I think young people are keen and want better with the people of their age, not with elders. Youth participation in community initiatives was going to be far much better if there were programmes, like these ones, targeting young people. It has always been difficult for young people to speak in meetings or make solid decisions where old and young community members are present. What we lack in our communities is information or knowledge concerning our rights. Instead most of the times we get to be taught on health related issues (muphando takile). There are many young people in our village. We need to be trained separately from the elders of the community so that we can come up with and implement our own ideas.”

There are hundreds of youths at Dewe village but usually when there are community meetings, you will only see one or two of them. I think young people are keen and want better with the people of their age, not with elders. Youth participation in community initiatives was going to be far much better if there were programmes, like these ones, targeting young people.

I think young people are keen and want better with the people of their age, not with elders. Youth participation in community initiatives was going to be far much better if there were programmes, like these ones, targeting young people.
HEADMEN LAMENTS THE LACK OF RESPECT AND RECOGNITION BY COUNCILLORS

Headmen laments the lack of respect and recognition by Councillors. Traditional leaders in Matobo District are complaining that they are not respected and recognised by the Councillors in their areas, which is one of the conflict drivers in their community.

Speaking at a Habakuk Trust organized leadership training workshop for all Matobo District Headmen in Mayibuye, one of the headmen said that some of the drivers of conflict in the district was the fact that the roles and responsibilities of Councillors and traditional leaders were not clearly defined. “Traditionally, we know that when there is something happening in my area, I have to be informed,” he said. “But these days Councillors tend to conduct meetings without consulting us. It’s not like we want to interfere with their meetings but at least we should know what happens in our community.”

Headmen at the meeting said there was no team work between the traditional and elected leaders because of lack of knowledge on the roles and responsibilities of each party. She said there are laws and policies we can use to understand our roles as leaders. There is the Traditional Leaders Act and there is the Rural District Councils Act. We should all know these statutory instruments in order to understand our duties as leaders. Some of these misunderstanding have to do with individual characters.”

The leadership development program was organised by Habakuk Trust to capacitate traditional leaders on human rights, leadership, conflict management and development related issues. A similar workshop was also held with all Matobo District Councils.

COMMUNITIES URGED TO REPORT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) has urged community members to report human rights violations that happen in their communities. Speaking at a human rights day celebration at Whitewater Secondary School in Matobo District, Commissioner Japhet N. Ncube said the commission has not received any complaints from traditional leaders in the region of the country.

“ZHRC handles complaints do with human rights violations,” he said. “It is surprising that we have not received any complaints from the Western Region of the country since the commission started.”

Commissioner Ncube urged community members to know their rights and come forward with their rights related issues. In programming in Matobo District, Habakuk Trust has observed that community members are not aware of human rights, the Constitution and they should do once their rights or freedoms have been violated. It has also been observed that community members violate each other’s rights and at times collaborate in covering human rights violations.

COMMUNITIES URGED TO EMPower PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Rural communities have been urged to involve people living with disabilities in decision making and development processes. People living with disabilities constitute about 10 per cent of Zimbabwe’s population but in many rural areas it has been observed that they are viewed as charity cases and usually sidelined in decision making, development and economic processes.

Speaking at a Habakuk Trust organised two-day Local Level Advocacy Programme (LLAP), held at Mazwi Primary School in Matobo Ward 16, Mr. Vernon NtaiSI who is living with a disability, reported that most members of the community do not know much about the management of the resources in their areas and how they should benefit from the said resources.

Mr. NtaiSI said the famous Matobo National Park, balancing rocks, and caves that are internationally recognized and part of the heritage have not benefitted them in any way as they continue facing economic difficulties as well as lack of access to clean water.

“It is surprising that we have not received any complaints from the Western Region of the country since the commission started.”

One participant, Mr. Mike Ncube said, “There is a lot of money generated in our Ward, at the National Park but it doesn’t come back to us as a community. Decisions are made about our resources but we are not part of the decision making processes.”

In Ward 25, participants who attended LLAP training in Phakani said their area has wild animals which they do not know if they are theirs or belong to a farm close to their villages. In Ward 17, participants claimed they do not benefit from the communal areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (COMMARP) yet they have wildlife, sand and grass which could be used sustainably. It also emerged at the workshops that not many members of the community do not know much about the management of the resources in their areas and how they should benefit from the said resources.

Matobo Ward 16 Councillor Effie Nyamukaiwa highlighted that all caves are managed by the National Museums and Monuments which Oversees Tourism attractions.

“All caves belong to the National Museums and Monuments, including those in villages’ homesteads,” she said. “As councillors we only know the number of caves that are there, the Museums authority does not let us know about the revenue they generate from the caves.”

Nyamukaiwa said the proceeds generated from other natural resources under COMMARP are accounted for but the caves are not part of the programme.

It was agreed that the councillor in Ward 16 will advocate for access to information and clarify on policies regarding the management of historical monuments and natural resources in their Wards.