

## **REQUEST FOR SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT BY WOMEN OF ZIMBABWE**

### **Background**

Zimbabwe is going through an unprecedented political and humanitarian crisis which is deepening and accelerating by the day. The three leaders of political parties signed a deal to form an eighteen months transitional government on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2008. This agreement gives Zimbabwe its first chance in ten years to stop violence and restore socio-economic and political wellbeing. However the three political principals have failed to agree on the allocation of ministries. Zimbabwe continues to sink deeper and deeper into a humanitarian crisis with famine gripping the country. All sectors including health, judiciary, education and industries continue to crumble and collapse. The situation has become dire and there is need to put pressure on the negotiating parties to form a coalition government urgently.

Zimbabwe went to the polls twice this year, first in the March harmonized elections and then in June during a presidential run off. After the March elections Zimbabwe witnessed nationwide, massive, organized and calculated violence against perceived members of the opposition. This included abductions and murders, torching of houses and destructions of food stocks including livestock, intimidation, displacements, assaults, rape especially gang rape. The security of women and girls in both urban and rural areas is under serious threat in Zimbabwe. Between June and September 2008 WCoZ estimates that there were thousands of women who were sexually violated around the 2000 bases which were set up during the violence and terror campaign.

### **Conclude the Talks - We are Dying of Hunger Campaign**

WCoZ has always advocated for peace and nonviolence in the country. However realizing the grave crisis that faces the country now WCoZ launched the "Conclude the Talks - We are Dying of Hunger Campaign". On the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2008, about 1000 women gathered near the venue of the SADC Troika Talks to demand a resolution of the crisis and send a message to the three political leaders and SADC Troika that the talks should be concluded urgently and efforts to restore Zimbabwe should begin henceforth. Zimbabwean women are demanding an end to the talks and emergency humanitarian assistance to save millions of Zimbabweans from imminent starvation. This was the message on the placards carried by the women, translated into both Shona and Ndebele which are the two main official languages.

### **How can you be in Solidarity with women and girls in Zimbabwe?**

Zimbabwean women and girls are going through a grave crisis manifesting itself in a famine, collapse of health, judiciary and education systems. We urgently need solidarity from our sisters outside the country, either in the African regions or beyond, you can make a difference and your contribution can save lives. The women of Zimbabwe are appealing to their sisters around the world to take up the following causes as a means of showing solidarity.

#### **A. Mobilize financial resources or provide Zimbabwean women with;**

1. Non-violence strategies for conflict resolution trainings for women leaders around the country. So far only team leaders in Harare have received this training yet we need to build a critical mass of women who can begin to demand an end to the crisis at all levels across Zimbabwe through widespread nonviolent civic society protests.
2. Food has become the most expensive item in the country and there simply isn't enough to go round. If you are our neighbor, WCOZ encourages that you unite as women and girls, collect food and send it across your borders to Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe or other humanitarian agencies that you are in touch with. We need cereals, cooking oil, porridge any type of food will save lives.
3. Our hospitals are closing down and there is a dire shortage of essential medication. Please collect, fundraise and send what you can from pain killers, gloves etc.

4. Sanitary ware has become a luxury for many Zimbabwean women and girls. When you buy for yourself buy a few extra and send to us across any border.
  5. A full SADC meeting will be held to resolve the Zimbabwe deadlocked talks. Please fundraise for us to attend the talks and mobilize locally for other players to attend as well. We should send the message clearly to SADC that time is running out for Zimbabwe.
- B.** Women movements in the regions can pursue lobby and advocacy activities with their leaders so that they can in turn push for a resolution of the crisis. We are attaching our list of demands from our political leaders and SADC. Please forward these to the political leadership in your country.
- C.** Regional and international networks can also show solidarity to Zimbabwean women by sharing strategies and offering technical advice on issues of advocacy in crisis and conflict period. We would love to learn from other success stories in the region.