

# Deep in the villages

*...Communities commend NGO programmes on rights and freedoms  
...Cases of domestic violence, tribulations of widows have gone down*

GUTU-After spending considerable time with members of the community around St Xavier Gono Parish in Gutu in Masvingo province on Thursday last week, one would be forgiven to have thought that they were in some law university corridors.

From the young to the old, almost everyone can talk about their fundamental rights and freedoms. Whether they enjoy them or not that is another issue. But what is evident is they fully understand them.

Under a mutsabvi tree, near St Xavier Gono Parish, the young and the old and men and women used songs,

drama and poetry to illustrate the importance of human rights and freedoms during joint commemorations to mark International Human Rights Day on 24 November 2016.

Villagers gave credit to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJP) - a non- governmental organisation that highlights the plight of Zimbabweans and assist in cases of human rights violations.

CCJP works with some of its partners such as Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), Masakhaneni Projects Trust and Trocaire to ensure that citizens in Gutu district enjoy their rights enshrined in the May 2013-enacted Constitution. Barnabas Matenga of CCJP Matenga said his organisation was fighting to ensure that children get their birth certificates with ease, issues of inheritance do not leave the widows vulnerable as well as educate citizens to avoid gender- based violence.

“People in Gutu are welcoming our programme well. They are very participative and it seems like people are now aware of their human rights and from what we have just heard here you will confirm that it appears people are now aware of their human rights,” Matenga told The Legal Monitor after the International Human Rights Day joint commemorations. “On the issue of birth certificates, we are engaging with the local Registrar-General’s office so that it can come here and talk to the people because mostly it’s on people not knowing the procedures or the importance of having birth certificates, so I think engaging that office will help raise awareness of the rights to birth certificates.”

Blessing Nyamaropa, the ZLHR Masvingo-Manicaland Regional Manager urged communities to be “assertive” when demanding their constitutional rights as all citizens were equal before the law.

“Do not mistake being assertive for being violent. No! Demand information which you want from all public institutions such as government hospitals and the Registrar-General’s Office,” said Nyamaropa, responding to an aged man who asked why it was difficult to get proper service from those two institutions.

“You have to be a relative of someone there or being known by someone high to get a service at these places. Why?,” the old man asked Nyamaropa.

Since May 2013, Zimbabwe has had a new Constitution, which many have described as progressive as it protects and promotes fundamental rights that. But most human rights advocates have called on the State to ensure Zimbabweans actually enjoy those rights.

To the hundreds commemorating the International Human Rights Day in Gutu, Nyamaropa urged them to think about the world they wanted to live in.

“Is it a world where people are not free to speak on issues that affect you? Is it a world where people can torture each other, is it a world where people can be disappeared, is it a world where anyone can be murdered without anything happening, is it a world where children cannot go to school, is it a world where women die while giving birth, is it a world where people will die from hunger, is it a world where we walk so many kilometres to get water?”

“So when we think about all these things and we reflect on the world we want to be in, the issue of human rights come into place. We all agree that we want to live in a peaceful world, a country that respect divergent views, a country where children go to school, a country where medication is available in hospitals, a country where people can sit together and freely discuss on any issues, a country where differing in views does not result in violence, a country where as we are here, we can approach our leadership to advocate for our issues and will be able to address those issues.

“I think we all wish for that, that we can live peacefully in our community with our leaders who are responsive to our needs, our rights being respected. Our fundamental freedoms that we cherish as people being respected. Us as Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, those are the things that we believe in, a world where human rights are respected, a country where all people are equal, where no one is above or under the law, a world where men and women have equal opportunities. A world where no-one will say women cannot be involved in this and that because they are women is what we cherish. So us as lawyers who fight for people’s rights, our word is that we are there to help you so that some of your wishes may be fulfilled, if you have any issues that you have, if any issue happens that you feel your rights have been violated, get in touch with Barnie (Matenga), some of the issues may take long and results may not come instantly yet you may have your expectations, we promise you that as your human rights lawyers, we are there to assist you, even taking the case to court. If the issue needs engagement, we engage. So after today and all the work we have done here, as a community you are now empowered to be assertive, we want communities that are assertive. Stand firm and speak because you know your rights.”



# Rights Day Commemorations In Pictures

On Thursday last week, *The Legal Monitor* crew was part of the International Human Rights Day joint commemorations held at St Xavier Gono Parish and organised by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and attended by its partners Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Zimbabwe Peace

Project, Trocaire and Masakhaneni Projects Trust. From drama on right to food, about domestic violence, marching for right to education, singing about rights, going through some enshrined rights to inheritance problems faced by widows... it was all there.





# Rights in poetry

GUTU-Some used poems to express their knowledge of their rights in the country's Constitution even if they were yet to enjoy them. It was mainly the right to life, right to education and equality before the law regardless of gender.

## *Observe My Rights*

I am a child and I know my rights  
I should enjoy my protection from the law

And from all of you in the community  
I shall enjoy the name of a nationality and  
special social security

I need love and understanding  
I need to be educated  
Please observe my rights  
Our rights are vital for our life  
They are important to humanize our character

They are essential to activate our spirits  
Our rights are the foundation for life  
Children are also human

Rights are to be given to us all  
Not to be specified

It is our rights to know our rights  
Our rights are vital for our life  
It is our right to express our feelings

To throw advice to social issues  
Accumulate our ideas and practise them  
To be listened to with great attention  
Our rights; the foundation of our life

It is our right to do what we can  
To have time to build our careers  
To have a room to showcase our talents  
Our rights: the foundation of our life

by: Esina Jerah



Esina Jerah



## *Dear Lord*

Eathel Masara

Thank you for my mum and daddy  
They loved me to see me when I am glad  
Thank you for their tender care  
And all the happy times we share

by: Eathel Masara

## *A woman*

Listen when I am speaking  
Don't abuse me  
Don't force me when I do not want  
Allow me to say it out because it's my right to speak  
I have the right to enjoy my life in this community  
Long ago after I got married  
I was not allowed to do a lot of things, simply because  
I am a woman  
All that I wished for, they would say you are a woman

But because of brother Barnie  
I now have rights to stand up in my community and talk  
to others  
I am now able to get into an office like others  
I am now able to stand as a woman and be appointed to  
do what I can do  
Because of the education I got about my rights

by: Shamiso Ruchicha

## *I have rights*

I have the right to choose my own religion  
And my parents should help me decide what is wrong and what is best to me  
I have the right to special education,  
I have the right to the best healthcare,  
I have the right to give my opinion  
And adults to help me decide what is wrong and what is best for me.

by: Theresa Hozheri

## *My rights as a child*

I am talking about you parents,  
Treat me as a child, don't interrupt me,  
It is said, a child who doesn't cry die on her mother's back,  
Mother wake me up to go to school and don't be angry,  
Don't say the child has grown,  
I am still a child, being in grade five does not mean I am a grown up,  
Buy me a pencil when it gets lost,  
Don't be angry because I lost it,  
Buy me books so that I can write with others,  
Buy me uniform so that I can look like other children,  
It's my right for you to cook for me in the morning before I go to school,  
Teachers don't beat me up when I fail,  
I will not say anything more lest you will think I will expose what you did to me, don't tease me  
about my dead mother,  
Treat me the same way you treated your own child, give me time to rest, Give me time to write  
my homework,  
I will not say anything more,  
Parents respect my rights as a child,  
Thank you.

by: Plaxedes Mufiri



Plaxedes Mufiri



# ‘Wanna bring smile to people having sleepless nights’

Among those that attended the celebrations in Gutu is Blessing Nyamaropa (BN) the ZLHR Masvingo-Manicaland Regional Manager. The Legal Monitor (LM) had a chat with the lawyer who yearns to bring a smile to people having sleepless nights:

**LM: What brings you here to this community, out from your office?**

**BN:** We have a working relationship with CCJP, so we have been here before where we have been doing rights literacy campaigns together with CCJP, so basically our working relationship is that if CCJP identifies any cases that require lawyers to intervene they refer those cases to us, then we are able to take up those cases and litigate on behalf of the community so that whatever challenge the community is facing can be addressed.

**LM: What issues usually come, especially in rural places like these ones?**

**BN:** Issue of statelessness is a challenge whereby most people from generation to generation they don't have like birth certificates, it's a real challenge in this community. Those are the cases we have received which we are trying to find how they can be addressed from this side, it's a big challenge because children, they don't have birth certificates, parents they don't have birth certificates. It will affect generations and generations. Basically for us we have an interest in those cases because those people without identity documents are regarded as stateless, they cannot do anything in this country, which means they cannot participate in the national processes that will be taking place in the country as Zimbabweans.

**LM: You as a human rights lawyer, what is it that you are proud of, something that you say, even if I am to do this for free, I would do it again?**

**BN:** Bringing a smile to someone who has been enduring violations is something I really enjoy. As a human rights lawyer, the work we do is trying to bring a smile to some people who have been having sleepless nights, to some people facing challenges then you come in as a human rights lawyer, you assist that person and you put a smile on that person's face.

**LM: How has been your relationship with the state?**

**BN:** Basically what we do as human rights lawyers if there are issues that require us to engage the State, we first engage the State by bringing to their attention the violations, some of them are administrative, we bring their attention to some of the violations for them to take remedial actions, basically that is our relationship, sometimes they respond sometimes they don't, but we make sure the issues are brought to their attention.



Blessing Nyamaropa

...41-year-old- Shamiso Ruchicha (SR) from Gono village, ward 27 had to say:

**LM: You said a lot of positive comments about Barnie; what prize would you give Barnie for what he did to your life?**

**SR:** I would give him a very big prize because he empowered us to know our rights, I would give him something big that will even help him even at his workplace, because he never taught us our rights out of desperation, but he did it from the heart.

He helped us that even in our homes, we got to know that some of the things we used to do, would infringe the rights of even our children and other members of our community.

As a woman I am now able to know where my rights have been violated, we took it to our homes and it liberated so many families, people now know their rights.

That if a woman goes to attend a meeting, she has a right to do whatever is there.

Men always thought that if their wives go to meetings where they meet other women, they will be cheating, so, many people were liberated in our community, its our rights to go and socialize with other women and learn things that help us enjoy our lives to the maximum, we have a right to attend meetings and get whatever information shared there, so we really want to thank Brother Banny for that.



Shamiso Ruchicha



Happy Barnie...Barnabas Matenga says he is happy with the way people in Gutu are grasping rights issues

...The Legal Monitor (LM) also talked to Barnabas Matenga (BM), the Project Officer for CCJP in Masvingo.

then around inheritance and then around gender based violence but it's just a few cases.

**LM: What brings you to Gono?**

**BM:** It has been a community which has been neglected for quite a while, so we were working nearby in Guni community and we decided to work here because there hasn't been much donors.

**LM: How important is the International Human Rights Day to CCJP?**

**BM:** It is really important, from my experience I have come to realise it's important to be familiar with your human rights so that you can \*live\* the human rights

**LM: What are the issues that come up in this community?**

**BM:** Mostly issues around birth certificates and

**LM: What else would you want someone who is not here to know what it is happening here?**

**BM:** People are very participative and it seems like people are now aware of their human rights, from events going on, it appears people are now aware of their human rights

**LM: You talked about the problem of birth certificates in this community, what are you doing to address that?**

**BM:** We are engaging with the Registrar-General's Office so that they can come and talk to the people because mostly its on people not knowing the procedures or the importance of having birth certificates, so I think engaging the Registrar-General's Office will help raise awareness of the rights to birth certificates.



All smiles now...Juliana Maramba says she did not know much about human rights issues before CCJP came into Gutu. Now she hopes to become a committed human rights defender

Hear what 39-year-old Juliana Maramba (JM), from Mujanja here in Gutu had to say about the day:

**JM:** “We came here to commemorate this program where we are taught to know our rights, so we are celebrating because this program helps us in our lives, so that if we know our rights we will be able to live peacefully in our country I have been knowing my rights for six years now or even more.

During all the time I lived without knowing my rights, I was living a miserable life, I was not free to go to places where we meet other women, I did not even know that I can freely attend meetings where I can learn from others as well as living an individualistic lifestyle, so it wasn't really good for me.

Mostly CCJP, first to come with educative programs was Regai Dzive Shiri then CCJP, here we fully embraced their programs.

What pains me a lot and what I really desire to be emphasised is the issue of politics, so that everyone knows that they are free to choose a leader of your choice especially the President, so it really makes me sad because people are still living in fear, people are not fully enjoying their rights, because they are always reminded of the past when they voted for certain leaders and faced the consequences.

This educative programs that we get, I really believe that whoever comes to attend and listen will benefit a lot because they are coming to empower us with knowledge on how we can live as well as our religion, even issues to do with our wellbeing then they also emphasize on how we can fully enjoy our rights, previously people never took CCJP seriously but now they have understood, so I see God will intervene to ensure that people make their personal choices, the problem will only be that we do not know what our country will be like in the future”