



WEN Café: Global Women's Rights

11th December 2020

Summary of discussion

Chair: Catherine Fookes, Director, WEN Wales

Speakers:

- Aminat Ayodele, Advocate for the rights of women and girls and founder of The Female Speak Up
- Barbara Davies Quy, Head of Programmes at Size of Wales
- Martha Musonza Holman, Teacher and Founder of Love Zimbabwe
- Joys Violette Njini, Project Development Officer at Women Seeking Sanctuary Advocacy Group (WSSAG) Wales

The event explored questions surrounding the climate crisis, migrant women's rights, equal representation, the power of fair trade, and the recent UK government budget cuts to overseas aid funding.

- Speakers highlighted climate change's intrinsic relationship to poverty and noted the crisis greatly impacts the lives of the world's poorest people. Given that women and girls make up the majority of the world's poor, the impact of climate change is disproportionately felt by women.
- Barbara explained women are more likely to be displaced from their homes by the changing climate, face greater risk of gender-based violence when they are displaced and are also more dependent for their food and income on land that is changing as a result of the crisis.
- Joys hopes the Welsh Government will do more to support migrant women by providing further funding for important grassroots services.
- For women who have arrived in the UK as sanctuary seekers, there are great challenges to participating in public life. The work to empower them starts at the grassroots level which requires both resources and funding.
- Aminat cited Oxfam's Village Savings and Loan Scheme (VSLA) as an effective empowerment strategy to eliminate poverty in rural areas of Nigeria.
- Aminat formed The Female Speak Up network to create a safe space and platform for women to share their personal stories confidentially and without judgement. Through the group, she encourages women, irrespective of tribe, religion, race and background to 'speak up' about the issues affecting their lives instead of staying silent.
- Speakers agreed that funding the education of women and girls is key to enabling them to understand the importance of health care, realise that they can participate in decision-making, and own their own property and land.
- Creating community projects in both Zimbabwe and Wales, Martha's organisation Love Zimbabwe aims to engage communities in sustainable living and encourage practical changes to support fair trade. The charity also works with schools to help children learn more about sustainability and African culture.
- Speakers expressed their concern at the cut to the foreign aid budget announced by the UK Government. This will disproportionately impact the rights of women and girls globally.