



## **RAU puts a demand on young women to lead in their communities**

**March 2019**

Research and Advocacy Unit held a two day training workshop on devolution of power for 30 young women from Kadoma and Bindura in Harare last week.

The workshop, held under the theme, *'Creating demand for devolution by young women'*, was aimed at building capacity for young women on gender, devolution, power and agency with the view to create champions in leading responsive governance programmes in their respective communities.

RAU Director Shastry Njeru who officially opened the workshop, encouraged women to “dream big” and “never give up on their dreams”. He also emphasised that men and women were created equal by God therefore women should take up positions that were traditionally a reserve for men.

Mr Njeru encouraged women to ‘start small’ and prepare themselves for bigger positions in



future and reiterated that young women should participate, be visible and make a meaningful contributions while asserting their rights in the process.

*Women from Kadoma and Bindura follow the proceedings during the first day of the workshop.*

Stephen Ndoma from the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI) made the debut presentation entitled 'Unpacking devolution'. The presentation kicked off on a light note as the young women were asked to name local leaders from their respective areas up to the Members of Parliament. Most of the participants were aware of the leadership in their areas and the duty bearers. The presenter went on to outline that Zimbabwe is a unitary state where all governance powers are kept within the central government. He was however quick to point out that the President has shown desire to exercise devolution of power and align the laws to the 2013 constitution.

The women who were trained in the workshop are expected to act as opinion leaders in their localities, teaching their fellow young women how to increase their presence and participation in governance.

Section 264 of the constitution which provides for the devolution of power to provincial and local governments was central to the discussions that were taking place. Provincial and local governments are given the power to make decisions on how to use resources to benefit local communities. Women identified a myriad of issues that need to be advocated for through various actions to encourage government to fast track the devolution of power.

The second day of training was focused on advocacy training, where participants were equipped with knowledge and the mind-set conducive for carrying out advocacy on issues that affect them.

Participants identified fear of being victimised as one of the major barriers to their participation in politics. A 2019 RAU report on women agency revealed that political violence is the major factor that discourages women from participating in politics. The same report reveals that there is no change in the number of women directly elected to the [National Assembly but the number of women elected to local governments dropped by 3%](#).

RAU will roll out the ongoing programme to educate young women on devolution and increase their agency to participate in governance to other parts of Zimbabwe. The fact that women added up to 54% of registered voters reveals they have a desire to participate and that desire has to lead to a more gender balanced society starting from the lower tiers of government like local government.