



WUA Alumna Nyaradzo Mashayamombe Highlights the Power of Advocacy in Driving Social Change

HARARE, Zimbabwe – Women's University in Africa (WUA) alumna, lawyer, media entrepreneur, and renowned women's rights Advocate **Nyaradzo Mashayamombe** challenged students and alumni to become active agents of social transformation during the University's 4th Alumni Engagement Lecture Series held on 21 August 2026.

Delivering a thought-provoking presentation titled “**Advocacy as a Tool for Development: Championing Policy and Social Change for Girls,**” Mashayamombe shared practical lessons from her advocacy journey and reflected on how strategic engagement contributed to landmark education reforms in Zimbabwe.

The founder of **Tag a Life International (TaLI)** and **Identities Media**, affectionately known as “Nyari,” emphasized that advocacy goes beyond raising awareness. Instead, it is about transforming community challenges into laws, policies, and actions that improve people's lives.

“I'm not speaking from theory. I'm sharing the reality of what it means to change laws in Zimbabwe,” she told participants.

Drawing on the successful **Every Child in School (ECIS) Campaign**, Mashayamombe demonstrated how collaboration among civil society organizations, communities, policymakers, and young people can influence policy change. The campaign contributed to reforms that strengthened the right to education and culminated in the enactment of the Education Amendment Act.

She explained that effective advocacy begins with understanding the lived experiences of communities. Through TaLI's work with girls and young women, the organization identified that many children, particularly girls, were dropping out of school because of the financial barriers associated with accessing education. This often increased their vulnerability to harmful practices such as child marriage.

According to Mashayamombe, successful advocacy requires a strong understanding of both legal frameworks and social realities. She highlighted Section 75 of Zimbabwe's Constitution, which guarantees every child's right to state-funded basic education, noting that constitutional rights become meaningful only when they are supported by effective legislation and implementation.

“The Constitution is the mother of all laws, but it becomes powerful when people can enforce their rights through legislation,” she noted.

To advance the campaign, TaLI mobilized a broad coalition of local, regional, and international partners working to promote children's and youth rights. Together, they built a movement with a clear objective: translating constitutional guarantees into enforceable law.

Mashayamombe stressed that successful advocacy must be grounded in evidence and driven by a clear policy objective. She also acknowledged the role of parliamentary champions, including Speaker of Parliament **Advocate Jacob Mudenda**, Honourable **Monica Mutsvangwa**, and other legislators who supported the campaign's efforts within Parliament.

She further highlighted the importance of strategic partnerships, relationship-building, and media engagement in achieving advocacy goals.

"You need champions who think about your cause even when you are not in the room," she said.

Leveraging her expertise in broadcasting and storytelling through Identities Media, Mashayamombe utilized radio, television, and public dialogue platforms to amplify the campaign and raise national awareness.

These collective efforts contributed to significant policy outcomes. In 2019, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education introduced measures aimed at improving access to education and supporting vulnerable learners, including pregnant girls. This was followed by the enactment of the Education Amendment Act, which was signed into law in 2020 and became operational in 2021.

Reflecting on the advocacy journey, Mashayamombe identified eight essential elements for achieving meaningful policy change:

- Community realities
- Evidence
- Understanding the law
- A clear policy ask
- Movement building
- Strategic champions
- Media engagement
- Persistence

"Laws don't change overnight. They require people who are committed, prepared for inconvenience, and willing to remain focused on the outcome," she emphasized.

She encouraged students and young professionals to recognize their potential as future leaders and changemakers capable of influencing policy, advancing justice, and addressing societal challenges.

Having since earned a law degree after graduating from WUA, Mashayamombe also challenged participants to embrace lifelong learning and continually strengthen their skills and knowledge.

"Never stop learning. Keep growing yourself."

In closing, she reminded the audience that achieving sustainable development requires passion, courage, resilience, and a commitment to addressing society's most pressing challenges.

"Community reality, evidence, law, a clear ask, movement building, champions, media and persistence. These are the tools that can transform an issue into policy and policy into lasting change."

Her presentation resonated strongly with students, staff, alumni, and guests, reinforcing the critical role of advocacy in advancing human rights, promoting gender equality, and shaping policies that create opportunities for future generations.

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