

ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD ZIMBABWE NATIONAL
CHAPTER



WSD



20 May 2020

Report

SUSTAINING SCIENCE IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

On the 20th of May 2020, OWSD Zimbabwe National Chapter hosted an online WhatsApp talk to discuss a topic dubbed, “Sustaining science in the COVID-19 pandemic.” The topic was presented by Tofara Chokera the CEO and founder of TofaraOnline a consultant company which empowers young women in business to embrace digital marketing and embrace technology for business growth. Her presentation was eye opening and it evoked thoughts in the young women’s minds to think about there life after COVID -19.

The online event was opened by a presentation from Fortunate Farirai the OWSD Zimbabwe National Chapter Chair. She gave the audience an insight on the objectives of OWSD Zimbabwe National Chapter which include: to inform women from Zimbabwe and the region about opportunities to access higher education in science (including OWSD PhD and Early Career fellowships and prizes) and to encourage and support women from Zimbabwe and the region in their careers as scientists. “There is no wealth than knowledge and no poverty like ignorance” she exclaimed encouraging women to share information and ask questions about the pandemic.

The presenter Tofara Chokera posed important questions for women scientist on how to survive the pandemic and provide solutions that will make life easier. She used the African environment as a case study and how best African scientists can stand in this pandemic and change the narrative. “The world changed overnight as thousands of people died in a short space of time, schools closed, everyone on lockdown and everything changed,” she exclaimed. She encouraged women to reflect on the future and on what each and every individual can do to sustain themselves and the community. She encouraged women to embrace the opportunities brought by the pandemic as it presents an opportunity to change the way research has been conducted and shared, so that science can become more open, more efficient and more collaborative. The presenter also inspired women scientists to identify problems in Africa and solve them. Bring positive solutions to the new world covid-19 has brought and embrace change. She highlighted that Africans are facing a lot of problems, some have lost jobs, gender inequality, lack of technology and innovation, lack of knowledge and skill, lack of clean water and sanitation. She highlighted that it is important for

women scientists to have an open eye and solve the problems of Africa using the knowledge they have acquired before and resort to new ways of doing things.

She also gave an insight of the sustainable development goals. The sustainable development goals are a call for action by all countries –poor, rich and middle income-to promote prosperity while protecting the environment. They recognise that ending poverty must go hand in hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, equality and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and working to preserve our ocean and forests. As women in science it should be the key to solve problems Africa is facing during this pandemic. She explained eight of the sustainable goals which include: No poverty, good health and wellbeing, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, industry innovation and infrastructure. She encouraged women to come with innovative ideas which can solve the sustainable development goals which have worsened because of the pandemic. Create better opportunities for the society. If you empower some women, you empower a community. The presentation was closed off by a question and answer session.

Catherine Kazunga, the vice treasurer for OWSD Zimbabwe National Chapter gave the closing remarks and thanked participants for asking informative questions. She showed appreciation towards the presentation as it was informative and lightening. She highlighted that members need to move out of the box and embrace new technologies. She encouraged women to embrace opportunities which benefit the country as a whole. Women should also be innovative and find the best way which solve problems outside the lab and embrace it as scientists. She emphasised on impact every member is bringing into the community.