



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Fatma Ally

Interviewer: Varanya Chaubey

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CHAUBEY: My name is Varanya Chaubey and I'm speaking with Fatma Ally who is Chairperson of ZAFELA (Zanzibar Female Lawyers). Today is November 18, 2008.

I want to thank you for participating in the interview.

ALLY: *Okay, thank you.*

CHAUBEY: I'd like to begin by learning a little bit more about your personal background. Would you describe the position you hold now?

ALLY: *Okay. For the time being, I'm the Chairperson of the Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association. Before having that post—this post I've had since January 2008. Before that election, I was an Executive Counselor of ZAFELA.*

CHAUBEY: How did you get involved in law? What is your career path?

ALLY: *Our career path—according to our Constitution of Zanzibar Female Lawyers and our objective in our organization—Actually we have most of our activities or most of our object—the main object is to provide legal aides for the women and the children in Zanzibar. Also, to promote the legal awareness in Zanzibar, and when we get the chance to—just to make a lobby before the government and House of Representatives to make some amendments or to repeal some laws which seem to have an element of discrimination against women.*

CHAUBEY: Would you tell me briefly about how you started working on elections and what are the kinds of work you have done on elections?

ALLY: *In 2005, when Tanzania had elections, ZAFELA with collaboration with other NGO's (non-governmental organizations); Zanzibar Legal Service Center and Zanzibar Law Society, together we provided civil education to the whole in Zanzibar. In cooperation with these organizations we succeeded to provide voter civil education to Zanzibar constituents.*

CHAUBEY: You mentioned there was an umbrella organization that was working to provide this kind of knowledge. Would you describe how you shared these responsibilities between organizations? Were some organizations responsible for some aspects or how did you organize yourselves?

ALLY: *Actually, this organization is a legal organization. For that time, ZAFELA did not meet the requirements that are needed by UNDP (the United Nations Development Program), so that is why we were advised to cooperate with other NGO's in order to manage to do what we had planned on that election.*

CHAUBEY: I see. Would you describe some of the responsibilities you undertook while working on the civil education campaign?

ALLY: *Yes. We were providing an assistance or legal education. It's not a legal education; it's a civil education, voter education. We just did a wake-up—awareness of the public to know about election rights that are their constitutional rights, and when their rights are rejected, what they are supposed to do in order to have their rights.*

CHAUBEY: Could you describe how you went about doing this? How did you reach out to people? What are the methods that you used?

ALLY: *We had several meetings in different constituencies. When we reach there, we provide the posters, and we have a chance to talk with the public. After providing—we make a presentation about the whole constitutional rights about elections. They have a chance to ask any question or any problem, or if they are familiar with some things that have appeared before. We reply to them how they can solve those problems or what steps can be taken if something happens.*

CHAUBEY: So you had interactive forums with people as well?

ALLY: Yes.

CHAUBEY: What are some of the challenges you've noticed in your work in trying to educate people in Zanzibar? What are some of the biggest challenges that come up?

ALLY: *Okay, the big challenge that we were facing at that time—some Zanzibarians, they take it as just—it's not as usual. They sense—we are just—actually, they think we just want to lobby them, maybe we are just for special parties, so we just come there to make-- (BREAK)*

CHAUBEY: Okay, go ahead.

ALLY: *Okay, some of the people who have negative attitudes on what we have done, they think that we are there just to favor some parties, maybe to lobby them—“No, this is—you are supposed to vote for this party.” Well, it is not correct. So, when they found somebody who says “Yes, you have these rights according to our constitution, you are supposed to—”, they say “Ha, they just—they want to invite us, but they have their special targets.” Some of them are scared to appear at these meetings because of fear, “No, they are just coming to make a lobbying before us. They just come here for special parties.” That is the main challenge which we were facing at that time.*

CHAUBEY: That seems like a pretty big challenge.

ALLY: Yes.

CHAUBEY: Would you describe how you went about handling this and getting around this problem?

ALLY: *Yes, actually, we had—just to explain before them, we are not under—we are not supporting any party. We are just a legal institution, as a legal NGO. Yes, we know these are the constitutional rights and some of the Zanzibarians, they don't understand what the importance of using their rights to vote and to elect the leaders that they wish to take that post. So, we just emphasized to them we do not intend to—maybe to influence someone here, to make a vote with certain parties. But yes, we want to provide an education and to enlighten them how they can use their rights, and when they get any problems, how they can handle those problems. Some of them, they understand, and the mass had changed, yes.*

CHAUBEY: So, telling them that you are a non-partisan, neutral organization, that is one way to build their trust?

ALLY: Yes.

CHAUBEY: Are there any other methods that you think would work well that you would recommend to people in other countries to try?

ALLY: *Pardon?*

CHAUBEY: Are there any other methods—apart from telling them that you are neutral, anything else you tried that worked?

ALLY: *Yes, actually this is not news, even it's practiced in different countries. Before an election, there are a lot of organizations in different countries that provide a certain kind of education that we provide before then. Actually, they understand [indecipherable 08:50] and we got a good response.*

CHAUBEY: You mentioned there are some problems that people will bring up in an interactive forum, like they had a particular problem last time and then you would suggest how to go about solving it. What are some of the problems that people have brought to you that they have faced?

ALLY: *Actually, most of them—they told us their rights to have that right to vote was rejected because they are not meeting certain qualifications to be a voter. So, we assisted them how they can succeed to meet those rights. We can assist them how to take their petition before the courts, and some of them had success and have those rights.*

CHAUBEY: Do you have examples of the kinds of reasons why these voters who are eligible were rejected by the Commission? (BREAK) You mentioned some of the ways in which you reach out the people is that you have interactive sessions and then you mentioned posters as well. Could you tell us a little bit about all of the various ways that you reach out and maybe describe in detail the posters you use, if there are any other ways?

ALLY: *The features on those posters?*

CHAUBEY: Yes.

ALLY: *Actually, there is a picture that shows there is an election process, someone putting his vote in the box, like that. Sometimes we provide the poster that has the public meeting, maybe there is a party leader who may be on that election, maybe there are some monies which are taken by that person. They just want to invite the public to vote on him and he will provide them money. We just want to enlighten the person, that is not a good leader and they are not being influenced by giving certain money just to vote for him, to know that is their rights and there is no one who can force them to vote for him just for giving—or just for favoring them by giving money or some promise like that.*

CHAUBEY: These posters—did you place them in the town or did you put them in the newspaper? How did you distribute that message?

ALLY: *When we have meetings in the different constituencies, when we go there, we go with that poster. After our presentation or after our conversation with the public, we try to provide them to everybody who attends if there's enough for all of them. But if it's not enough, we just give a few of them and we hope that most of them find the message carried on that poster.*

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- CHAUBEY: Do you use radio or any other media to increase voter education?
- ALLY: *Yes. That has been done on the part of our organization itself. Because we know those are the constitutional rights and we know most of the women don't understand about those rights. So, in our organization programs that we made on television and the radio, we did that.*
- CHAUBEY: This is a female lawyer society that you are a Chairperson of. What are some of the specific messages that are targeted to women to encourage them to exercise their right to vote?
- ALLY: *The right to vote is a right to everyone. Even if you are a woman, you are not supposed to hesitate to take your rights. So yes, we encourage all of the women to use and to have those rights—to practice, not to hesitate and maybe have fear that when I practice my rights maybe someone will assault me or someone will neglect me. So, they just know that that is their constitutional rights, so they are supposed to use them as required.*
- CHAUBEY: When you developed these messages that are on your posters, or if you use radio programs, who is involved in creating these messages?
- ALLY: *The donors who make a support or who donated as to provide that civil education.*
- CHAUBEY: Is there some representative from the donor organization and some representatives from your NGO? Or is it just the donor organization that compiles the messages?
- ALLY: *The message was prepared by our—(BREAK)*
- CHAUBEY: So who is it that creates that the messages? (BREAK) So who is it that creates the messages?
- ALLY: *The messages have been created by the Electoral Commission. Some of them were created by the Electoral Commission of Zanzibar with assistance from several stakeholders, but those who sponsored the creation are donors from different international organizations.*
- CHAUBEY: I see. Are there meetings held in consultation with the ZEC (Zanzibar Electoral Commission) about these messages? How often are these meetings held and who are the organizations who are invited to participate in meetings with the ZEC to create these kinds of messages? Which organizations are invited?
- ALLY: *Those who are interested to participate in voter civil education. All of them get a chance to talk, even to make a creation about how the message will be sent to the public. It had been done in that way.*
- CHAUBEY: One of the questions that we have is how long before an election do you have to have the voter education campaign started? When do you aim to reach out to the people with your messages? How much time before the actual election?
- ALLY: *On the last election, it was delayed because the election was done in October, while the civil education was started three months before the election. Three months before elections is not enough time to provide the proper civil voter education to all the constituencies in Zanzibar. If it's possible in the next coming*

election, it's better to have more time to well prepare and even enough time to rotate in all constituencies and to have enough time to communicate and to provide that education. If a person meets any problems through the whole process to elections, it will be proper to him to reach or to find the remedies for those problems or how he or she can solve or can find the solution of the problem that he faces.

CHAUBEY: What were some of the reasons why last time the campaign was delayed?

ALLY: *As I had told you before, most of—Actually we depend on donor support. So if the donor delays, we delay. We have not enough funds to support this operation.*

CHAUBEY: How effective do you think voter education in Zanzibar is right now?

ALLY: *We have already created awareness. Most people now, they know these are our constitutional rights and hopefully if it is rejected to someone, he will not top to say "Oh, so there is not anything which I can do to get these rights." He or she will fight to get those rights. So, most Zanzibarians are now aware about these rights.*

CHAUBEY: Some groups of people are very hard to reach with voter education. Would you describe—are there some groups that are very hard to reach in Zanzibar? Which groups are they?

ALLY: *Zanzibar is—Women for some how, because most of the meetings were conducted in the evening. In the rural areas, the women in Zanzibar—at that time, most of them engage themselves in their domestic activities like cooking, etc. So, some they—"Oh, unless my husband can attend that meeting and when he comes back he will provide the whole summary, what had been provided in that meeting." So, they are not very interested to engage themselves in these meetings.*

CHAUBEY: Have there been any steps that have been taken to correct this problem?

ALLY: *Yes, that is why I told you though our program on television and radio we try our best just to enlighten them, don't escape. They are supposed to leave their domestic activity when there is a team or there is someone who—(BREAK) We just assist them. They are supposed to leave their domestic activity when there is someone who provides that voter civil education when he is visiting in their areas. There is a need to attend that meeting and to listen to what they are supposed to know about elections.*

CHAUBEY: Why are the meetings held in the evening usually?

ALLY: *Actually, okay, just a moment—(BREAK)*