

# GENDER EQUALITY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

## *Gender mainstreaming, party manifestos, party lists and municipal planning*

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### ABSTRACT

*Women's representation and participation in political parties and governance processes require examination. South Africa is a signatory of the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which commits member states to put in place measures to bring about 50% representation for women in decision-making positions by 2015. This article draws on research findings and interventions undertaken by the South African Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) to raise issues relating to gender equality, women's political representation and municipal gender mainstreaming and service delivery in relation to the May 2011 local government elections in South Africa. CGE research findings include an analysis of political party lists in terms of women's representation, the gender mainstreaming in a sample of political party manifestos and an analysis of gender mainstreaming in a sample of municipal integrated development plans (IDPs). The CGE enquiry focuses on the extent to which the gendered needs of communities, and constitutional and legislative prescripts, inform and are prioritised in these IDPs. The CGE's interest centres on the gendered aspects of poverty, inequality and local social and economic development. CGE research points to poor representation of women in positions of leadership, despite the country's commitment to the 2015 protocol. In addition, there is evidence of gender insensitivity and a lack of gender transformation within political parties and inadequate internal policies and programmes to promote and support*

*women and address issues such as sexual harassment. Recommendations point to the need for legislation on the 50% quota to compel parties to enact measures to encourage and promote women's participation and leadership and ensure their equitable representation on party lists.*

## INTRODUCTION

Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) findings on trends in women's political participation and representation in South Africa's national and provincial elections are revealing. With women comprising the majority of South Africa's population as well as the majority of registered voters it is disturbing to note that this has not translated into equal representation as party candidates and public representatives. IEC statistics after the 2011 local government elections reveal that women comprise a mere 38.5% of all municipal councillors.

Immediately prior to the local elections women comprised 36.81% of proportional representation candidates on party lists submitted to the IEC. The final outcome of 38.5% reflects a marginal increase in women's representation at the local level, particularly since the 2006 local government elections, when women comprised 36.5% of all councillors. However, it must be remembered that for the 2006 elections the African National Congress (ANC) had implemented a 30% quota system for women. With the ANC raising this quota to 50% with effect from the 2009 national elections, analysts were anticipating that women's representation in local government would increase dramatically after the 2011 elections.

It is significant that despite the ANC's implementation of its 50% quota system the fact that the party has lost ground to parties which have very poor representation of women on their party lists has resulted in a considerably lower level of women's representation than was anticipated. This has worrying implications for women's political representation at national and provincial levels – should the ANC's support at the polls continue to decline and other political parties refuse to adopt a voluntary quota system, this means that the apparent gain in women's representation in these spheres is under threat.

The CGE is concerned that parties are failing to comply with the provision of the Municipal Structures Act (MSA) that they should seek to ensure that women are equally represented on – and distributed across – their proportional representation lists. They are also clearly not taking adequate steps to enable women's full political participation, within the context of a deeply patriarchal society. This results in fewer women standing for nomination and fewer women being nominated by parties to contest wards, and prevents women and men from supporting female candidates. Clearly, now more than ever the urgent need for

the introduction of a legislated quota system is apparent as policy guidelines and voluntary quota systems are not having the desired impact.

Very few municipalities appear to realise the importance of mainstreaming gender in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their programmes. Few consider gender in their operational plans, noting, for instance, how the particular needs of vulnerable groups, and women in particular, will be addressed through the provision of services such as electricity, water and sanitation. In the main, integrated development plans (IDPs) do not address gender mainstreaming in service delivery planning, do not refer to the National Gender Policy Framework, the Gender Policy Framework for local government, or any municipal gender policy, and do not refer to gender equality or women's empowerment. Targets set and data captured are not gender disaggregated. For example, in one district, no targets are set for the number of households and beneficiaries, disaggregated by gender, who are set to benefit from poverty alleviation interventions, making monitoring and evaluation difficult.

#### THE SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE 2011 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Given the realities of persistent poverty in poor communities and inadequate access to basic services it is understandable that all political parties participating in the elections structured their manifestos with special emphasis on service delivery. All were careful to articulate the responsibilities of all spheres of government with regard to service delivery and promised to ensure the constitutional rights of every citizen to dignity, respect, accountability and transparency associated with the functions and structures of municipal governance.

It needs to be said that the elections took place within a context of high levels of popular dissatisfaction. This was evident in research indicating that a number of violent and other 'service delivery protests' that took place prior to the local government elections were the result of the disillusionment of communities with local government, which was described as corrupt, nepotistic, inefficient and factionalist (Idasa 2011; Alexander 2010).

Analysis of these protests reveals the proliferation of independent candidates as well as calls from civil society organisations for boycotts of the elections throughout the country, including the ANC's stronghold of KwaZulu-Natal, where the slogan 'No Houses, No Land, No Vote' adopted by Abahlali BasemJondolo (Shack Dwellers Association) and its affiliates, as far back as 2004, was resuscitated.

Given the ANC's financial and organisational superiority over other parties as well as its nationally based infrastructure and sophisticated mobilisation it

was no surprise that it won seven of the eight metropolitan councils and 198 municipal councils and 64% of the vote (2% less than its previous record). In different circumstances this victory would have been hailed as resounding, but the ruling party's campaign was distracted by in-fighting, visible factionalism and voter abstention. Major ANC victories were, however, recorded in most previously Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)-dominated municipalities, in some instances further assisted by competition from the newly formed breakaway grouping from the IFP, the National Freedom Party. The IFP now controls only five municipalities, down from 33 won in the previous local government elections (Mantzaris 2007).

The ANC was, however, resoundingly defeated in the Western Cape, where the Democratic Alliance (DA) won an outright majority in Cape Town, increasing its percentage of the vote from 43% in 2006 to 61% and its voter support from 15% in 2006, when it controlled seven local councils, to 24%, with control over 18 councils (Independent Electoral Commission 2012).

In order to comprehend fully the electoral dynamics from the perspective of women's political participation and representation additional comparative gender-based parameters must be considered. Noting that women in their multiple societal duties and responsibilities as mothers, workers, caregivers and community members have been in the forefront of the country's developmental efforts at the local level, the implication is that they should, as expounded eloquently by Pottie & Ford (2001), be at the forefront of local electoral policies.

Initially, women comprised only 19% of local councillors, with this figure improving in the 2000 local elections, where they attained 28.2% representation. The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (now the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa – EISA) produced the following tables drawing on IEC candidate statistics:

**Table 1**  
**Local candidate gender trends 2000-2011**

Gender	2000		2006		2011	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Women	8 562	28.46	15 718	34.78	19 731	36.81
Men	21 519	71.54	29 471	65.22	33 865	63.19

**Table 2**  
**Candidates in 2011**

Province	Candidates					
	Total		Women		Men	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	7 220	13.47	2 743	37.99	4 477	62.01
Free State	3 282	6.12	1 167	35.56	2 115	64.44
Gauteng	9 054	16.89	3 571	39.44	5 483	60.56
KwaZulu-Natal	10 390	19.39	3 554	34.21	6 836	65.79
Limpopo	6 688	12.48	2 593	38.77	4 095	61.23
Mpumalanga	4 368	8.15	1 571	35.97	2 797	64.03
North West	4 036	7.53	1 608	39.84	2 428	60.16
Northern Cape	1 600	2.99	649	40.56	951	59.44
Western Cape	6 958	12.98	2 275	32.70	4 683	67.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>53 596</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>19 731</b>	<b>36.81</b>	<b>33 865</b>	<b>63.19</b>

This reflects a decline in women's representation in comparative terms, despite the fact that the percentage of women candidates had increased in the same period, in direct conflict with the principle and implementation of gender parity, as Lowe-Morna & Mbadlanyana (2011) of Gender Links noted in their electoral analysis. An analysis of gender outcomes of the 2011 local elections indicates that women fared better at the proportional representation as opposed to the ward level, as a result of entrenched patriarchal views about women's political representation.

**Table 3**  
**Overview of the gender outcomes of the 2011 SA local government elections**

	Women Councillors	Men Councillors	Total	% of Women Councillors
PR	2 086	2 727	4 813	43%
Ward	1 408	2 869	4 277	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 494</b>	<b>5 596</b>	<b>9 090</b>	<b>38%</b>

Such realities demonstrate that a legislative quota for gender representation is required if South Africa is to meet its 2015 obligations, as leaving parity in representation to political parties alone is not addressing the problem.

### GENDER ANALYSIS OF PARTY MANIFESTOS

This section highlights the 2011 local election manifestos of six dominant political parties as represented in the National Assembly: the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), the African National Congress (ANC); Congress of the People (Cope); the Democratic Alliance (DA); the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the United Democratic Movement (UDM), in comparison with their 2009 manifestos, to track the extent to which commitment to gender equality has improved or deteriorated.

Party political manifestos during an election period are structured in such a way as to sell the party's policies and programmes. A study of the 2009 manifestos indicates that all the parties undertook to improve the lives of citizens in the fields of health, security, agriculture, infrastructure, education, housing, justice and crime. However, in general, the manifestos fell short of mainstreaming gender, the promotion of gender equality and the enhancement of the status of women.

There was little reference to the promotion of gender equality or to the participation of women in leadership positions. Political parties that mentioned gender did so in a vague way, while others did not feature gender at all in their manifestos. Below is a summarised analysis of gender representation in the 2009 manifestos of the above-mentioned parties:

PARTY	APPLICATION OF QUOTA SYSTEM	GENDER-SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN MANIFESTOS	GENDER MAINSTREAMED IN MANIFESTOS
ANC	Committed to 50% women on the party list, Parliament and government	Upscale the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/Aids to 95% in all districts.	Non-sexism a guiding principle throughout the manifesto.
		Combat violence and crimes against women and children by increasing capacity of the criminal justice system to deal with such violence.	Massive expanded public works programme linked to home-based care, crèches, school cleaning, renovation, tree planting and school feeding.

PARTY	APPLICATION OF QUOTA SYSTEM	GENDER-SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN MANIFESTOS	GENDER MAINSTREAMED IN MANIFESTOS
ANC		Vigorously implement broad-based economic empowerment and affirmative action policies and adjust them to ensure that they benefit broader sections of the people, especially workers, youth, women and people with disabilities.	
Cope	No quota	Clause 7: Respect for the values of the principles of the South African people (respect for the dignity of women, protect the innocence of children).	Not mainstreamed
		Clause 12: Broaden people's participation in the economy; measures to strengthen the implementation of the Employment Equity Act (affirmative action) and broad-based black economic empowerment.	
		Establish a Women's Development Fund to fund and assist women to engage in productive economic activity.	
DA	No quota	No specific women's projects.	Gender not mainstreamed in the manifesto.
		Only mentions women in its introduction.	The manifesto is issue based but is not specific about the beneficiaries. It dwells on the detail of how the DA will run government.

PARTY	APPLICATION OF QUOTA SYSTEM	GENDER-SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN MANIFESTOS	GENDER MAINSTREAMED IN MANIFESTOS
DA		Men, women and children living anywhere in the country should be able to go about their daily business in their communities knowing that they are safe from criminals; that their local government provides basic services quickly, efficiently and affordably; that the public transport system allows them to move around quickly and safely.	
IFP	No quota	Moral challenge (crime). Most morally repugnant crimes such as murder, violent assault, and crimes against children, women and the aged.	No gender mainstreaming in all thematic areas.
UDM	No quota	Create jobs for all South Africans; quality education for all; safety and justice for all South Africans (violent crimes, as well as crimes against women and children, are of particular concern).	No gender mainstreaming.  Talks in general terms about creating jobs, offering quality, safety and justice, for all South Africans.
ACDP	No quota	Extend the rollout of antiretroviral treatment and the prevention of mother to child transmission programmes.	Gender is not mainstreamed. The manifesto only talks about issues in general terms without specifically mentioning who the beneficiaries will be. For example, under housing, the ACDP says it will 'incrementally provide access to adequate housing for all'.
		The role of women as mothers of the country's children is an essential building block for a healthy society.	



<b>ACDP</b>		Supports measures aimed at protecting women and children as vulnerable citizens against abuse.	
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Source: Extracted from Gender Links 2009, pp 14-15<sup>1</sup>

The following synthesis provides an overview of the extent to which the same parties addressed issues of gender equality in their 2011 local government election manifestos.

PARTY	APPLICATION OF QUOTA SYSTEM	GENDER-SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN MANIFESTOS	GENDER MAINSTREAMED IN MANIFESTOS
<b>ANC</b>	Committed to 50/50 gender representivity after the 2011 elections.	Manifesto based on the principles of equality, non-racialism and non-sexism, as set out in the Constitution.	Local government is working hard to achieve gender equality. ANC is set to achieve 50/50 by 2011, which shows compliance with Goal 3 of the Millennium Development goals on gender equality and women's empowerment.
		Women are represented in local government, with 42% of councillors being women; a gender equality policy with clear quotas; sex disaggregated quotas represented.	National Health Insurance to be introduced.
		The level of poverty and unemployment will be halved by 2014, especially for child- and single-headed households, which will benefit the majority of single mothers, who are unemployed.	Create child and family friendly facilities.

1 The CGE made this presentation in partnership with Gender Links during the 2009 national summit.

PARTY	APPLICATION OF QUOTA SYSTEM	GENDER-SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN MANIFESTOS	GENDER MAINSTREAMED IN MANIFESTOS
ANC		Provide services to single- and child-headed households.	Youth participation in job creation, skills development and national youth service programmes. These will be attained through the Expanded Public Works Programme, the Industrial Development Corporation and infrastructure programmes.
		Establish support for safe houses and shelters in each community that will provide temporary but potentially lifesaving support for abused women and children, and provide social workers in school districts.	
		Municipalities to ensure that there is equal access to employment and skills development for women and youth.	
DA	No quotas	A wide range of suggestions for reducing poverty through growth and jobs, service delivery programmes and governance issues, but no mention of how these will be attained through gender equality.	Issues of service delivery and caring for the poor and dealing with infectious and lifestyle diseases and skills development are widely addressed, but not from a gender perspective.
		An open society is founded on the Bill of Rights, the rule of law, democratic decision-making, transparency, accountability and tolerance.	
		People living in poverty need a caring, helpful government that ensures they live with dignity and access to opportunities.	

PARTY	APPLICATION OF QUOTA SYSTEM	GENDER-SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN MANIFESTOS	GENDER MAINSTREAMED IN MANIFESTOS
<p><b>DA</b></p>		<p>Provide rebates for the poor, disabled and pensioners based on a combination of property values and level of household income and introduce an indigent policy to provide relief for residents who are unable to afford basic services.</p>	
		<p>Focus on key burdens of disease, including infectious diseases like HIV and TB and lifestyle diseases like hypertension and heart disease and establish primary health care facilities in municipalities.</p>	
		<p>Offer vulnerable people a hand up out of poverty by assisting them with skills development.</p>	
<p><b>Cope</b></p>	<p>No quotas</p>	<p>The interests of children, persons with disabilities, youth, women and older persons in every ward will receive priority.</p>	<p>The issue of service delivery is widely addressed but not in a gender sensitive way.</p>
		<p>The transformation of South African society must continue so that greater equity can prevail; to deal with crime local government must maximise the role of community policing forums.</p>	<p>The only clause that addresses gender stipulates: 'Promote the interests of women and children, persons with disability, youth, women and older people in every ward by ensuring that ward committees have sub-committees to cater for each of the above group.'</p>
		<p>Young people must be involved in economic activities soon after receiving their tertiary education and skills training.</p>	

PARTY	APPLICATION OF QUOTA SYSTEM	GENDER-SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN MANIFESTOS	GENDER MAINSTREAMED IN MANIFESTOS
IFP	No quotas	No mention of gender equality and the empowerment of women.	No gender mainstreaming
UDM	No quotas	Stakeholders, including representatives from the community, councillors, and key state departments, traditional healers and youth, women and people with disabilities must be properly represented in ward committees.	The UDM fell short of addressing gender equality in the staff composition of the council.
		The poorest must receive free basic services and any apartheid era arrears will be scrapped.	No targets set for women-specific training to empower women to compete fairly for senior management positions.
		A skills audit will be undertaken for municipal staff and training and education programmes initiated for all council staff.	No change in strategy in relation to gender mainstreaming. Simply mentioning the inclusion of women without any quota system or targets set is too generic. The party promises, for example, to ensure skills development in the councils, proper financial management systems, access to water and sanitation, decent housing and rural development, without mentioning how this would be attained from a gender perspective.
ACDP	No quotas	Support community initiatives to help prevent teen pregnancy, provide young mothers with information about the risks of abortion and the options available to them and provide assistance for young mothers.	Reference to infrastructure development programmes with no indication of how they will benefit men and women equitably.

PARTY	APPLICATION OF QUOTA SYSTEM	GENDER-SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN MANIFESTOS	GENDER MAINSTREAMED IN MANIFESTOS
ACDP		Stimulate and improve home-based care programmes, with particular emphasis on the elderly and those affected by HIV, Aids and TB.	Implement more developmental programmes with an emphasis on entrepreneurship and skills and job creation in order to reduce long-term dependence on social grants. This is mentioned without any gender specificity.
		Prioritise efforts to increase the safety and well-being of women and children.	Intention to support and assist schools in their struggle against gangsterism and substance (drug and alcohol) abuse, with no indication of how to attain this for both boys and girls.
		Prioritise initiatives to prevent and deal with the consequences of drug abuse.	No gender mainstreaming in housing, traffic and infrastructure development programmes.

The 2011 manifestos mirror the 2009 manifestos, with the ANC the only party that commits itself to a quota system and to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The analysis indicates that in all other parties nuances of gender equality have to be assumed to be embedded in the manifestos as, in the main, parties have not mainstreamed gender in their proposed interventions. The focus of most manifestos is on service delivery issues, but no gender lens has been applied to these, or specific reference made to their proposed impact on women.

A more detailed analysis reveals that parties identify a number of strategic issues and planned interventions which, in most instances, depend primarily on the availability of material resources. The ANC's manifesto identifies it as a 'broad church' and, in a few sentences, attempts to capture the attention and vote of all classes and categories of women, with brief reference to 'historically ideological'

as well as practical issues, such as non-sexism, non-racialism, equality and quotas; this despite the stark distinction between the needs of middle-class women who have access to technological and other material goods and those of poor rural women, who still walk kilometres to fetch water from rivers.

The manifesto demonstrates a brief integration of gender in relation to key service delivery issues such as halving the levels of poverty, especially among single mothers and child-headed households, putting in place support mechanisms for victims of abuse such as women and children, and the role of municipalities in ensuring equal access for women and the youth to employment opportunities.

The DA's manifesto, on the other hand, pays scant attention to matters of gender equality and, in the main, addresses matters of greater concern to the middle classes and to urban-based women voters rather than the rural poor, who do not own property and receive free medicine provided by government for diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis. The party steadfastly refuses to implement a quota system for women's representation, which is reflected in the leadership structures and positions allocated by the party. The DA, however, used three of its most senior women leaders (Helen Zille, Patricia de Lille and Lindiwe Mazibuko) as its leadership profile in the elections.

Although the party did not cover the hundreds of rural constituencies covered by the ANC, its pre-election itinerary took it all over the country and was seemingly instrumental in raising the party's profile and votes, ultimately cementing it as the official opposition and the only alternative to the ANC's dominance, beyond the Western Cape.

The short gender section in the Cope manifesto targeted the middle classes more specifically, emphasising, for instance, the strengthening and implementation of the Employment Equity Act (affirmative action). Its proposed establishment of a Women's Development Fund, however, would presumably be intended as a tool to open up broad-based black economic empowerment to support women's economic activity.

The IFP's manifesto revealed no intended target audience among women, with no mention of gender equality or the empowerment of women. The ACDP document concentrates on identifying tangible Christian solutions to real problems such as the risks of abortion and the options available to women with unwanted pregnancies, such as providing assistance for young mothers. There is also reference to improved home-based care programmes, with particular emphasis on the elderly and those affected by HIV, Aids and tuberculosis. The UDM's manifesto is replete with generalisations, with hardly a specific and tangible mention of women's issues.

In a further interrogation of party election manifestos in relation to gender equality, as part of a collaborative intervention together with Sonke Gender Justice, the CGE and People Opposed to Women Abuse, Tshwaranang, a local non-governmental organisation that focuses on gender-based violence, undertook an analysis of the extent to which parties addressed gender-based violence and HIV and Aids in their manifestos, as two key issues which have the greatest impact on women.

Tshwaranang refers to practical measures that could be undertaken at municipal level to address these issues, including prevention and awareness-raising measures, improved access to treatment and services, and improved public safety and support – all of which are suggested in the apparently neglected local government Gender Policy Framework adopted in 2007.

Tshwaranang found that, generally, the ANC, DA and UDM outline measures to deal with HIV and Aids, while Cope does not refer to this specifically, but deals with health broadly. Both the ANC and the DA aim to raise public awareness around HIV and Aids. The ANC, Cope, DA and the UDM propose various measures to combat crime, such as increased visibility, distribution and training of South African Police Service officers, the initiation of street and neighbourhood interventions and the provision of safe houses and shelters for survivors of gender-based violence.

It is both revealing and disheartening that, in a country where women are in the majority, most of the leading parties pay scant attention to gender issues, both in terms of the economic and social realities facing women and, more especially, the social and public policy challenges and imperatives emanating from women's location within a very unequal society and economy.

Women are the most affected by – and, ironically, at the forefront of combating – poverty, exclusion, disease, malnutrition and deprivation. They are the most frequent victims of violent crime, support their families, and constitute the foundation of their communities and society, yet their struggles are rewarded by political parties with generalities and few undertakings geared to specifically addressing these realities.

Having examined briefly the positioning of gender issues in the main political parties' manifestos, the CGE then assessed the extent to which party commitments to gender equality in the 2009 elections had been infused into municipal planning by the 2011 local government elections and the extent to which, at local level, politicians were leading a process of gender mainstreaming within municipal IDPs and ensuring the participation of ordinary women in their formulation. A synthesis of these findings is set out below.

## GENDER, ELECTIONS AND MUNICIPAL INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLANS

In terms of the Municipal Systems Act the municipal IDP is identified as the principal strategic planning and budgeting instrument, which guides and informs all municipal planning and developmental initiatives and serves as a blueprint for local service delivery, over a five-year period. With the intended focus of IDPs on service delivery, local economic development and job creation, environmental and health issues and land use and urban integration, the IDP is a critical tool for addressing issues whose predominant impact is on poor women. The IDP formulation process comprises a local situation analysis, the development of future visions, the formulation of development strategies and programmes of action and the implementation of monitoring and evaluation methods, with public participation throughout this process.

In addition, the concept of developmental local government envisaged by the White Paper on Local Government requires municipalities to promote social and economic development. Accordingly, several key international commitments undertaken by the state, through obligations outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Beijing Platform for Action, have a direct implication for municipalities. For example, the following gendered aspects of MDG targets should be addressed in municipal IDPs: the provision of energy, access to safe drinking water and sanitation and improvements in the lives of those living in informal settlements.

With political parties' manifestos relating directly to increased local service delivery, the gender nuances and obligations in this regard should translate into meeting the needs of women, particularly the rural poor, providing that IDPs acknowledge and reflect the gendered impact of struggles to access these resources and ensure that plans are accordingly responsive. The link between party electoral promises and local planning and service delivery requires such examination if elections are to bring about any change in the quality of life of women.

According to Todes, Sithole & Williamson (2007a), the 2001/02 round of IDP formulation was preceded by a series of major training sessions aimed at municipal managers, councillors and officials. The intention was to include gender in this training process. However, as trainers found that participants' knowledge of even the basics of local government was lacking, issues like gender – which were seen as luxuries – went out of the window (Todes, Sithole & Williamson 2007b).

As part of its 2011 local government elections interventions the CGE embarked on an analysis of a sample of IDPs in five of South Africa's provinces, to assess to what extent these have been gender mainstreamed, serve to give effect



to constitutional and international obligations relating to gender equality and address the socio-economic issues that have an impact predominantly on poor women. They were further assessed to determine the extent to which promises outlined in 2009 party manifestos in relation to gender equality had been taken up at local government level. The starting point, however, was to determine whether local government planning processes were being informed by the Gender Policy Framework for local government, which guides the gender mainstreaming of local planning.

### *Implementation of the Gender Policy Framework for Local Government*

Against this backdrop it is worth considering what initiatives have been implemented in recognition of women's under-representation and participation in local governance in South Africa and in engendering local development planning and service delivery. As a positive step, largely addressing this latter component, the former Department of Provincial and Local Governance (DPLG) launched its Gender Policy Framework for Local Government 'to provide guidance and support to the sector around gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment' (DPLG 2007, foreword).

This policy framework outlines a comprehensive institutional arrangement to address gender, in accordance with a detailed gender management system that includes a women's caucus as an empowering forum for women councillors, as well as a gender equality committee, also at council level, to provide political oversight of municipal gender mainstreaming processes.

An internal gender forum would coordinate gender awareness training, programmes and policy interventions within each municipality. The mainstreaming process itself would be driven by gender focal points within key departments, to influence decision making in this regard. Significantly, the function of gender mainstreaming is envisaged as being included in the performance agreements of all senior managers (DPLG 2007).

However, research reveals that within municipalities, despite the creation of this elaborate gender machinery and provision of guidelines for mainstreaming gender within IDPs, these are largely not followed and gender remains a 'side issue'. The extent to which this picture has changed, allowing for meaningful implementation of this policy framework, would need to be assessed.

It is apparent that although many of the 'everyday needs' of women may be met through IDP and service delivery these tend to be considered 'in a gender-blind manner, and attention is needed to ensure that they are implemented in a gender-aware way' (Todes, Sithole & Williamson 2007a, p5). This failure to understand and implement gender mainstreaming in needs analysis, policy

and budget formulation and programme implementation is the key barrier to the systematic engendering of the municipal processes envisaged by the policy framework. This is further undermined by the state's failure to locate GFPs at sufficiently senior level to influence policy and budget processes; they are merely add-on responsibilities for junior staff.

In addition, development agencies, which are increasingly given the task of implementing services,

... are not, on the whole, generally aware of arguments for a gender-sensitive approach to project implementation, nor do they necessarily have the skills to respond in this way. And women are not sufficiently organised at the local level in most communities to make this a real possibility. These issues will affect the prospects for the development of programmes which empower women, but they may also affect the choices that are made in communities regarding priorities for the development of particular services and facilities.

Todes 1995, p 333

It is apparent that municipalities have not implemented adequate interventions to bring about gender transformation. The lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation systems, coupled with the failure to disaggregate data on the basis of sex has an impact on the state's ability to track and assess whether policies and systems designed to benefit and empower women are having any impact, with primary interventions appearing to be limited to addressing issues of representation:

... the focus has been limited mainly to the representation of women as councilors and within management, rather than on informing and transforming the work of municipalities ... Even when women are represented in a council or are part of the management, they do not necessarily take gender issues forward. Structures to deal with the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, have been established in some local governments, but for the most part they are marginal and have little impact

Todes, Sithole & Williamson 2007a, p 5

In addressing the quest to engender local planning and service delivery processes one suggestion that emerges is that a 'specific gender planning procedure' be convened, which might 'provide a more systematic approach to the identification of needs. The specific requirements of particular groups of women – for example,

the aged – and the different experiences of women across race and class could be highlighted through such a process (Todes 1995, p 335). Other positive spin-offs would include raising awareness of gender issues among officials and development agencies and bringing more women's organisations into the planning process.

*Ministry of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs  
engagements on Gender Policy Framework*

As part of its local government elections research interventions the CGE engaged with the Ministry of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), seeking a detailed report on measures put in place to ensure the effective implementation of the Gender Policy Framework and any challenges experienced in this regard.

From a meeting with COGTA officials it emerged that during the transition from DPLG to COGTA a restructuring process took place. DPLG had an established fully-fledged local government and gender function – falling under equity and development – headed by a chief director. This dealt with policies and programmes, was responsible for cascading the 2007 policy and worked with municipalities on gender mainstreaming in service delivery.

Apparently at that stage agreement was reached with the then newly appointed minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities to hand over this gender unit to the ministry, and staff were accordingly relocated. With the appointment of a new minister the process was put on hold and the transfer of this function reconsidered. The new minister is, apparently, not in favour of absorbing this function, believing, correctly, that COGTA should implement its own programmes at municipal level

COGTA is now reconsidering how best to address gender – whether to re-establish its original equity and development function to drive the implementation of the Gender Policy Framework and undertake monitoring and evaluation. However, at present, there would appear to be no functioning unit responsible for implementing this policy, nor any budget allocation.

COGTA subsequently submitted a report to the CGE on its implementation of the Gender Policy Framework in the period ending July 2011. The CGE's analysis of this response reveals that:

- The report is gender blind. There is no evidence of compliance with the National Gender Policy Framework because throughout the report, the notion of 'gender equality' is equated with 'women empowerment'.
- The department has not appointed a dedicated gender focal person, but the

incumbent, who was located in the equity chief directorate, focused on both gender and disability; and the other officer focused on youth development issues and HIV and Aids.

- The National Gender Policy Framework stipulates that government departments should collect and use gender disaggregated data in order to track progress towards the attainment of gender equality. The report refers to several management and decision-making structures for gender mainstreaming. These are the Strategic Management Committee (SMC), the Departmental Executive Management Committee (DEXCOM), the Human Capital Management and Administration Chief Directorate, the Departmental Gender Equality Forum (GEF) and the Equity and Development Chief Directorate, which was disbanded in 2009/10. The report fails to address, however, how effective these structures have been in collecting gender data and measuring progress.
- Before the Equity and Development Chief Directorate was disbanded it consisted of a chief director, an administrator and a directorate on gender equity and disability, the latter comprising a director, a deputy director and an administrative assistant. There were three deputy directors and an administrative assistant who were assigned a secretariat function to focus on the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children campaign. This is the only intervention reported on, reinforcing the notion that the department's response to gender equality and mainstreaming is limited to the convening of events.
- The report reveals that the budget allocation for the unit responsible for external equity mainstreaming was increased threefold between 2004 and 2009/10, from R3.4-million to about R9.6-million. There is no indication how this budget was utilised, apart from the 16 Days of Activism event. The report mentions special programmes, however these have not been identified as gender equality or women specific programmes or programmes targeting both men and women.
- The report further reveals that as part of its work on women's empowerment it co-hosted (with the South African Local Government Association) annual women in provincial and local government summits from 2002 to 2009. The summits targeted women in management and decision-making positions in provincial and local government, deliberating on issues affecting them and their work and how best to address them.
- It is difficult to measure the extent to which the 2007 Gender Policy Framework for Local Government has been attained because even though the policy refers to free basic water services there is no reference to the extent to which single-headed female households or child-headed households are

receiving these services. This aspect will be revealed by the 2010/11 study the CGE is conducting.

- In terms of capacity building in the department, the report reveals that training sessions were held with municipal gender equality and special programmes practitioners on the implementation of the framework. However, there is no supporting gender disaggregated data indicating who has been trained or the impact of the training.

### *CGE analysis of municipal IDPs*

In the main, the CGE's findings reveal that, like political parties, very few municipalities appear to realise the importance of mainstreaming gender in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their programmes. Few consider gender in their operational plans, noting, for instance, how the particular needs of vulnerable groups and women in particular will be addressed through the provision of electricity, water and sanitation.

Overall, IDPs do not address gender mainstreaming in service delivery planning, do not refer to the National Gender Policy Framework, the Gender Policy Framework for local government, or any municipal gender policy, and do not refer to gender equality or women's empowerment.

Targets set and data captured are not gender disaggregated – for example, no targets are set for the number of households and beneficiaries, disaggregated by gender, targeted for district poverty alleviation interventions, making monitoring and evaluation of these interventions difficult. There appear to be few programmes and little budget for gender equality awareness raising at municipal level, while some districts report dysfunctional gender structures.

On the positive side, some districts give priority to the recruitment and selection of women and people with disabilities in addressing municipalities' own employment equity, and have special programmes for women, youth and people with disabilities. Some districts have developed district gender policy and strategies, while there is some evidence of district plans to address issues of women in all strategic objectives and programmes such as education, skills transfer and capacity building.

Some districts note the importance of prioritising the needs of women, youth and people with disabilities, and have budgeted for this. A few municipalities have shown some commitment to addressing issues that have an impact on women, youth and people with disabilities and mention their involvement in programming. Others recognise that certain categories of people should receive priority for certain services, but assumptions must be made about the extent to which these are mainstreamed into programme implementation processes.

The research findings question the opportunities for and impact of the input of community women on municipal IDP formulation and the ability of existing public participation processes to enable their meaningful participation. There is also a clear need for municipal stakeholders to be trained in gender mainstreaming, understanding and applying the local government gender policy framework, relevant commitments to international and regional protocols and conventions and ensuring the development of gender disaggregated targets and data collection.

### *Enabling ordinary women's participation*

While politicians may speak at election time of participatory development governance it is apparent from the above that strengthening women's participation and addressing gender equality in local governance beyond the ballot box requires three components that should receive the attention of political parties and find their way into party electoral manifestos: increasing women's representation in political and bureaucratic structures, engendering developmental planning and implementation processes and increasing women's direct participation in planning and decision-making processes.

This latter component appears to have been neglected by the Gender Policy Framework and current practice and requires examination. The question that emerges is: how can women be brought into these processes in a more equitable and empowered manner that enables them to articulate and engage with policy choices and deliberations?

Such mobilisation could place pressure on the gender mainstreaming architecture and project of municipalities to ensure that development planning and service delivery respond directly to and address developmental needs from a gendered perspective. Significantly, if supported by tailored capacity building interventions this could build women's skills and confidence in engaging with local governance processes.

A possible further consequence could be a resulting increased willingness on the part of women to be more active in this arena, to stand for election at the local level, volunteer to assume leadership roles in community development forums or take up positions within municipalities and development agencies. As research reveals, 'it can be argued that the participation of women in public affairs in the rural areas is a necessary step towards the realization of their citizenship' (Hemson 2001, p 19).

Authors have noted that in local development processes 'participation by women is variable and even where women dominate in numbers they are not necessarily able to achieve a "voice" due to power relations within institutions' (Beall & Todes 2004, p 304). It is clear that there is a need to develop alternative

models to facilitate citizen participation in municipal planning processes. More creative, accessible and empowering mechanisms are required to provide women with platforms to overcome inherently discriminatory power relations and influence local planning.

Analysis of existing participation mechanisms reveals that considerable intervention is required at the level of design of participation mechanisms to ensure that these enable women's participation. The current design and operation of ward committees, as well as municipal IDP and budget *izimbizo*, do not enable meaningful deliberation of developmental and planning issues, let alone women's full participation in this sphere.

What participation literature reveals is that greater community consultation results in better service delivery and higher levels of community satisfaction. This can only lead to improved quality of life and enhanced social capital. Positive spin-offs for women as a result of their more direct and significant participation include the potential to reduce the domestic burden and to address myriad development needs through more responsive policy, planning and service delivery. Not least is the recognition of women's input in and knowledge about ways of addressing the challenges of poverty and development, and growing women's agency and citizenry through practice.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above analysis pinpoints a number of crucial aspects associated with political and social delivery with regard to gender issues. Despite the fact that women constitute the majority in our country and that progressive legislation has been enacted to address particular forms of discrimination and areas of vulnerability, neither political parties nor most municipalities have prioritised issues of gender equality as axes of societal and economic development. This reality poses social and public policy challenges that have an impact on the vast potential of women at all levels of society and there is an appalling lack of concrete mechanisms to rectify them.

The task for political parties is clear: to demonstrate their commitment to addressing women's political representation and participation and issues that have an impact on women. We need to see a transformation of party candidate lists and leadership structures, challenging patriarchal attitudes and resistance to women's political leadership. Parties need to pay greater attention to addressing gender in their manifestos and to outlining how they propose to promote gender equality, address gendered needs and enhance the lives of women.

Election candidates should be grilled on these issues by members of the public and, when successful, should be held to account for delivering substantively on

their commitments. In addition, parties need to identify and address obstacles to women's political representation and implement programmes to encourage them to participate in political processes and support them with capacity building and access to finances and by addressing the discriminatory attitudes and mindsets that prevail in political parties and communities.

Particular measures are required to ensure that women with disabilities are enabled to participate fully, and parties should ensure that women are appointed to key positions within municipalities, such as mayor and speaker, and chair portfolios such as infrastructure and finance, to counter prevailing perceptions relating to women's leadership abilities. The CGE is engaging with legislative processes and political parties to address these issues and bring about parity in women's political representation.

Municipalities and COGTA need to address the evident shortcomings in gender mainstreaming of IDPs and poor implementation of the gender policy framework. This will require a range of measures to ensure compliance and accountability, capacity building and awareness, the creation of engendered targets and data collection, and monitoring and evaluation systems to track these.

There is also a need for greater awareness of the implications of international instruments and the gendered obligations imposed on municipalities relating to service provision, which ought to be addressed in municipal IDPs and budgets. Related to this, COGTA should take immediate steps to establish a gender directorate to oversee implementation of the Gender Policy Framework and coordinate monitoring and evaluation of departmental and municipal gender equality interventions.

It is further clear that interventions are required at participation, policy design and implementation levels to create channels for active engagement between women's lived experience and knowledge and municipal policy and programmatic responses. COGTA should take immediate steps to finalise its national policy framework for public participation, to ensure accountability for effective public participation within the performance agreements of municipal managers and to work with municipalities to develop appropriate mechanisms and guidelines to enable women's effective participation.

The CGE will campaign for the adoption of 50/50 legislation to ensure women's equal representation, as it is evident that legislative recommendations and voluntary quota systems are not having the desired impact and that South Africa will not meet the SADC 2015 target. Based on the findings and recommendations of its local government elections interventions the CGE will also engage with political parties and COGTA to address the gaps in manifestos and municipal planning and the failure to ensure implementation of the Gender Policy Framework.



Women's equal representation and participation in the political arena is essential to changing the patriarchal nature of political and governance structures and approaches to policy formulation and to enabling diverse views and solutions to the many challenges besetting democracy and development in South Africa. These keep women on the margins of decision-making processes, at the receiving end of 'empowerment' programmes and locked into unequal power relations that determine access to resources and the achievement of human dignity.

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