

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Swaziland: Urgent action needed to boost women in decision-making

*Mbabane, 8 November* – Gender Links (GL) is calling on the Government of Swaziland to institute a legislated quota to increase the representation of women in all areas of politics and decision-making following the just-ended urban local elections. GL has further called on the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to use her prerogative to nominate five additional councilors to appoint all women, which would raise the proportion of women councilors from 14% to 20%.

The Swaziland Constitution has a target of 30% women in decision-making, while the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development that the country ratified in September 2012 stipulates a target of 50% by 2015. GL coordinates the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance that campaigned for the SADC Gender Protocol and now works to ensure its implementation (see [www.sadcgenderprotocol.org](http://www.sadcgenderprotocol.org))

Swazi's went to the polls on 3 November 2012 to vote for councillors in urban local government authorities. The results (see Annex A) show a mere 10 women (14%) compared to 59 men (86%). The Minister nominates an additional five councilors, bringing the total number of councilors to 74. If all the nominated councilors are women, this would bring the total number of women to 15 out of 74 (that is 20%). Women constituted 18.8% of urban councilors in the 2008 elections.

Rural local elections and national elections will be held at the same time in 2013.

Melusi Hlanze, the Local Government Electoral Officer in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has expressed disappointment at the result but said that hope is not lost as the country will have national elections in 2013. He added that there is need to identify key indicators why women are failing to participate in political decision-making.

Sixty-nine wards of municipal councils, town boards and town councils participated in the elections. The two municipal councils are Manzini and Mbabane; Matsapha, Ezulwini, Nhlanguano, Siteki and Piggs Peak are town councils; and Hlathikulu, Ngwenya, Lavumisa and Mankayane are town boards.

Ezulwini Municipality achieved gender parity with three women- Gwen Hadfield, Bongiwe Mbigo and Nokuthula Mthembu and three men, Mmeli Mabuza, George Falcomer and Hlengizwe Ndzabakelwako. Men won all the seats in Lavumisa, Mankayane, Mbabane, Pigg's Peak and Siteki local authorities.

Makhosazane Shongwe is the only woman who secured a seat in the four-person Ngwenya Town Board. "I will represent Enkulu at the town board. It is a semi-urban dwelling area lagging behind in development. The major challenge is housing, I have to work with the board to ensure that decent houses are built, the lives of people are improved and women have access to the houses," said Shongwe.

Commenting on her reelection, Shongwe expressed gratitude for the support all female candidates received from the 50/50 campaign. "I attended the women in politics training in

Manzini. I acquired skills on how to campaign in my ward. I became very confident to speak to both women and men and convince them to vote for me”, she added.

GL Swaziland, the Deputy Prime Minister’s (DPM) Gender and Family Issues Unit (GFIU), the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the Swaziland Local Government Association (SWALGA) and the Alliance of Mayors Initiative for Community Action on AIDS at the Local Level (AMICAALL) formed a partnership to launch the campaign.

The campaign aimed at increasing the percentage of women in local government and build momentum towards the national elections. As part of the campaign, GL trained women candidates on how to relate with the media, come up with campaign messages and general assertiveness in communication.

“It is sad that women lost in the election, further reducing the percentage of women in urban local government. The percentage is way below the target in the SADC Gender Protocol,” commented Nonhlanhla Dlamini, the Director of GFIU in the DPM’s office.

Dlamini attributed this failure to patriarchy. “Our society still views women as minors and incapable to lead. Women have to work extra hard to prove that they can be leaders,” said Dlamini.

Nontobeko Dlamini, the youngest female candidate (26 years) to stand in this election for Ward Three in Siteki lost to Mvila Dlamini. “Voter apathy in my ward affected my chance to unseat my opponent who has been in council since 1992,” she said.

According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 19 800 Swazis registered to vote, 11 792 (60%) men and 8008 (40%) women.

The [SADC Gender Protocol Barometer 2012](#) states that Lesotho has the highest representation of women in local government at 49%, followed by Namibia at 42% and South Africa at 38%. Lesotho and Namibia have legislated quotas for women in local government and the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa has a voluntary 50% quota for women in political decision-making.

Mauritius will go to local government elections on 2 and 9 December 2012. With only 6% women in local government, Mauritius has amended its Constitution and introduced a legislated quota at the local level.

The partners involved in the 50/ 50 campaign in Swaziland have pledged to intensify the campaign ahead of the 2013 elections. Evidence from the region demonstrates the key importance of quotas in increasing women’s representation in political decision-making. This underpins GL’s urgent call for use of affirmative action in the appointment of councilors now, and legislated quotas in the future.

For more information e-mail Ncane Maziya at [swdlocalgvt@genderlinks.org.za](mailto:swdlocalgvt@genderlinks.org.za) or call 00 268 7624 0486. To read a summary of the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Barometer 2012 go to <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/sadc-gender-protocol-2012-barometer-2012-09-18>.

**Annex A: Proportion of women and men in the Swaziland 2012 urban local government elections**

<b>Council</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total Councillors</b>
Mbabane	0	0	12	100	<b>12</b>
Manzini	3	25	9	75	<b>12</b>
Matsapha	1	20	4	80	<b>5</b>
Ezulwini	3	50	3	50	<b>6</b>
Nhlangano	1	17	5	83	<b>6</b>
Siteki	0	0	6	100	<b>6</b>
Piggs Peak	0	0	6	100	<b>6</b>
Hlathikulu	1	25	3	75	<b>4</b>
Ngwenya	1	25	3	75	<b>4</b>
Lavumisa	0	0	4	100	<b>4</b>
Mankayane	0	0	4	100	<b>4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>69</b>