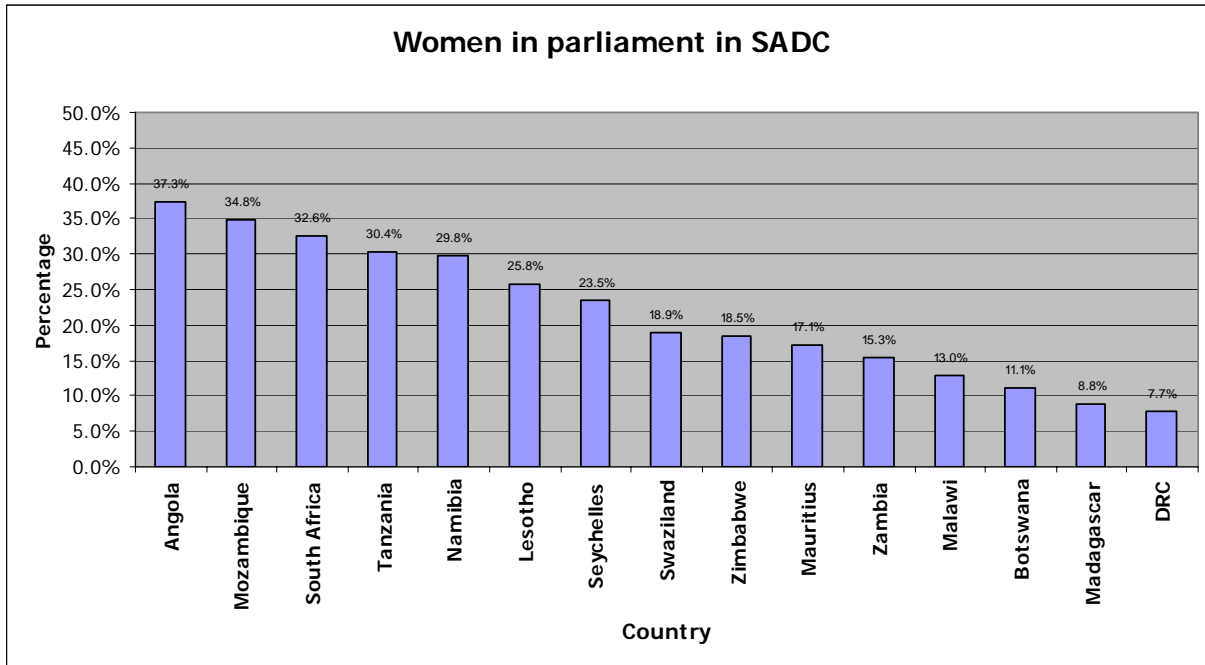




# GENDER, ELECTIONS AND MEDIA WORKSHOP MANUAL



## WHERE ARE WOMEN IN SA POLITICS?



The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development to which South Africa is signatory sets a target of 50% women in all areas of decision-making by 2015.

1. With reference to the graph above where does South Africa rank in the regional stakes with regard to women in parliament?
2. Which Southern African country has the highest representation of women?
3. Which Southern African country has the lowest representation of women?

## SA's global position

Rank	Country	% Women in parliament
1	Rwanda	56.30%
2	Sweden	47.00%
3	Cuba	43.20%
4	Finland	41.50%
5	Netherlands	41.30%
6	Argentina	40.00%
7	Denmark	38.00%
8	Angola	37.30%
9	Costa Rica	36.80%
10	Spain	36.30%
11	Norway	36.10%
12	Belgium	35.30%
13	Mozambique	34.80%
14	New Zealand	33.60%
15	Iceland	33.30%
16	Nepal	33.20%
<b>17</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>33.00%</b>
18	Germany	32.20%
19	Belarus	31.80%
20	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	31.70%

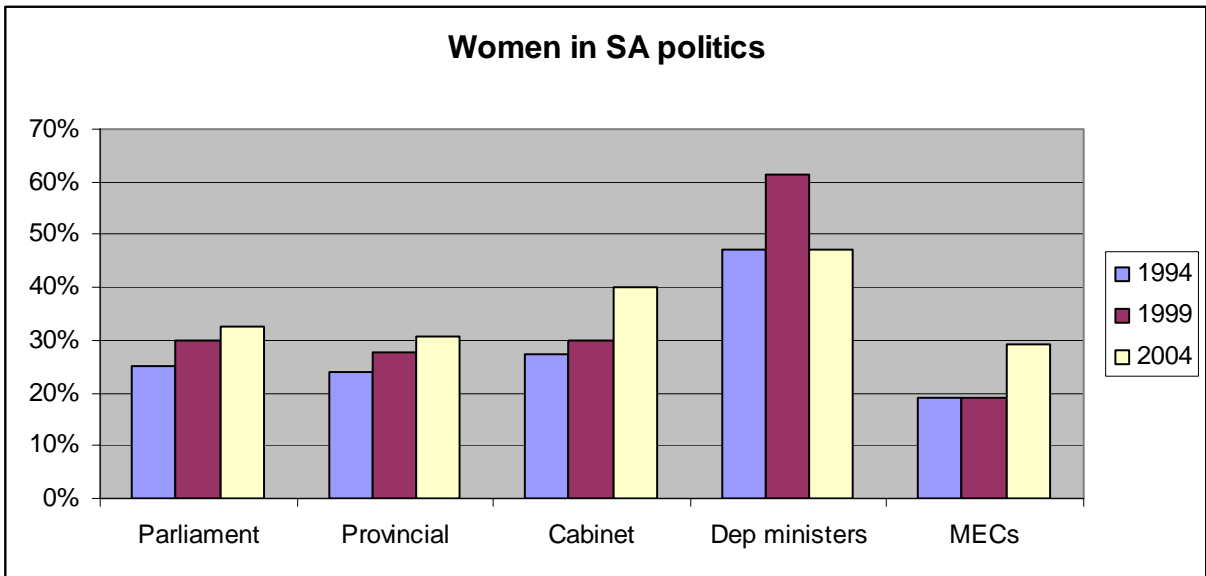
1

With reference to the table above:

1. Where does South Africa rank globally with regard to women in parliament?
2. Which countries have done better than South Africa?
3. Can South Africa do better?
4. Should South Africa do better? Why?
5. Read the two articles that follow. Barack Obama appealed to women voters. How many has he appointed to his cabinet? Where does the US, the most powerful democracy in the world, feature with regard to women in decision-making?

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<sup>1</sup> www.ipu.org



1. In which area are women best represented? Why?
  
2. In which area are women worst represented? Why?
  
3. What changes have there been between in the three elections from 1994 to 2004?
  
4. What changes need to take place between now and 2015 for the SADC target that SA subscribes to be achieved



## KEY FACTS

The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is a key challenge for democratic processes and human rights movements in Africa. While African governments have taken steps to address women's lack of political, economic and social rights, the pace of movement towards achieving full equality is characterised by a series of 'stops' and 'starts', and there are often many mixed signals. For example, while the African Union and SADC region has committed itself to the target of 50% women in decision-making positions in all of its structures, the representation of women in government, parliament, local government and other political spaces in Africa is still low.

For example, women comprise only 17.3% of the members of parliament in Sub-Saharan Africa. The 15 countries that comprise the Southern African Development Community (SADC), on their own however, have an average of 21.9% women in parliaments, making SADC second in regional rankings across the globe, second only to the Nordic countries.

The African country of Rwanda with 56.3% women in its parliament has shown that parity can be achieved. Nineteen African countries went to the polls in 2007/2008, with many facing challenges to democratic processes. Elections are an opportunity to increase women's representation, raise issues of gender inequality and women's human rights violations and to press for building gender sensitivity into accountability systems.

South Africans are faced with many challenges as the fourth democratic elections in 2009. The period leading up to the elections has been fraught with political upheaval. There have been several pivotal moments during the last five year period that have contributed to the uncertain political climate, these include:

- The former deputy president, Jacob Zuma, being removed as deputy president and subsequently being implicated in two legal matters relating to corruption and rape.
- The African National Congress (ANC) electing Jacob Zuma as its leader in its 2008 congress in Polokwane.
- The removal of Thabo Mbeki as president and the appointment of ANC secretary general, Kgalema Montlanthe as president of the Republic.
- The launch of the new political party, Congress of the People (COPE).

The consequences of these events have changed South African politics fundamentally. The power struggles in the ruling party, the ANC, has opened the door for the formation of other parties. South African voters have another potentially strong opposition voice to vote for.

Former President Thabo Mbeki had a clear and strong commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality. He illustrated this commitment by appointing women into key positions, and pushing the gender agenda in all spheres of government. Gender activists are concerned about the next government.

There is concern that the gender gains that have been made will be eroded and indeed as a nation, that we will regress. Two critical issues of concern include Zuma's rape trial and his polygamous lifestyle.

It is essential that the media and communities interrogate some of these questions and raise them as the election draws closer. Also, to hold political parties accountable to regional instruments such as the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development that calls for 50% representation of women at all levels of decision making by 2015.

**WHAT DOES SA NEED TO DO TO INCREASE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS?**

**Changes in women's representation in South Africa**

PARTY	1994			1999			2004		
	Total	Women	% women	Total	Women	% women	Total	Women	% women
ANC	252	90	35.7	266	95	35.7	297	111	37.4
DP/DA	7	1	14	38	6	15.7	47	10	21.3
IFP	43	10	23	33	9	27.2	23	8	34.8
NP/NNP	82	9	10	28	4	14.2	1	0	0.0
UDM				14	1	7	6	2	33.3
ID	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	1	25.0
ACDP	2	0	0	6	2	33	4	1	25.0
FF				3	0	0	4	0	0.0
UCDP				3	1	33	3	0	0.0
PAC	5	1	20	3	0	0	1	0	0.0
Other				5	2	40	10	2	20.0
TOTAL	400	111	27.7	400	120	30	400	135	33.8 <sup>2</sup>

1. With reference to the table above showing changes in women's representation in parliament by political party, which party is doing best and which is doing worst?
2. The ANC is the only political party that has a quota for women. The other parties argue against quotas. Are quotas necessary? Do they make a difference? Are there parties that have succeeded in increasing women's representation without quotas?

<sup>2</sup> The current representation of women in parliament has increased from 32.6% in 2004 to 33.8 in 2009 due to parliamentary reshuffling.

3. One of the key factors that has worked in favour of women in South Africa is the PR or list system. Why is this so? COPE is campaigning for the electoral system to be changed to a constituency or first past the post system. What effect would this have?

### Quotas and electoral systems in action: South Africa's local government elections

	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2006</b>
PR	27.9%	38.1%	43%
WARD	10.8%	16.9%	37%
TOTAL	19%	27%	39.7%

Local elections in South Africa are run on a dual PR and ward system. The ANC had a 30 percent quota in 1994 and a "zebra" or fifty percent system in the 1999 elections for women in the PR local government seats. In the 2006 local government elections the ANC adopted the 50% system for all seats, PR and ward seats.

1. With reference to the table and chart above, in what way does women's representation in PR and ward seats differ at the local level? How has this changed over time? Why?
2. What difference has the ANC position on quotas made to the representation of women at the local level?
3. Do you think the ANC is likely to apply the 50% quota at the national level in the same way as it did at the local level? Why or why not?
4. The 50/50 campaign is arguing for a legislated quota in South Africa. There are precedents for this in the region (for example at the local level in Lesotho, and national level in Tanzania). There are many global precedents for legislated quotas. Is this an option for South Africa? Why or why not?



## Opinion

### South Africa: Political change threatening gender commitments?

By Susan Tolmay

While South Africa has made all the right moves towards reaching the Southern African Development Community (SADC) target of 50% of women in all areas of decision-making by 2015, it has still failed to achieve parity in any area of political decision-making. Though SADC leaders reaffirmed the 50% commitment this past August when they signed the regional Protocol on Gender and Development, progress remains slow.

If South Africa is to honour this commitment, the next two elections must see a large increase (18%) in women's representation. With trends showing only a 3.9% increase since the first democratic elections 14 years ago in 1994, it seems apparent that there is a need for drastic measures.

Recent events in South Africa have seen some substantial shifts in the political arena. While the African National Congress (ANC) has been the best performer to date in terms of women's representation in all areas of decision-making, there are some worrying trends.

National progress towards the 50% target largely results from the ANC's voluntary adoption of the 50/50 principal in all elected structures within the party, and the large majority they hold. If this majority is lost, in the absence of commitment from other parties to parity or a legislated quota, there is a high probability that women's representation will decrease.

Calls from the new ANC splinter party for electoral reform to move from the proportional representation (PR) to the constituency based electoral system is an additional factor that could see the gains of the past decade lost.

Election results in the region and across the globe show that the constituency system, also known as first-past-the-post (FPTP), is far more hostile to getting women elected. The PR system is more conducive to increasing women's representation because the electorate votes for political parties, which are then allocated seats in parliament according to the percentage of vote they received, as opposed to FPTP where citizens vote for candidates, who represent the party in a constituency.

Four of the five SADC countries (Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and Namibia) that have achieved or exceeded 30 percent representation of women in parliament follow the PR electoral system; they also all have voluntary party quotas implemented by the ruling parties. Tanzania is the exception to this rule as it has a FPTP system, but the country has a 30% legislated quota. The remaining SADC countries, which follow the FPTP system, have failed to achieve 30% women in the legislature.

At 32.3%, South Africa ranks 17<sup>th</sup> in the world and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the SADC region in terms of women's representation in parliament. No other political party in South Africa has adopted a quota; in fact, most opposition parties publicly oppose quotas, citing that they are undemocratic. However, the Lesotho Court of Appeal set a precedent when it upheld a High Court Ruling that a temporary and rotating quota was not unconstitutional. The ruling found that, in fact, quotas



were reasonably justifiable in circumstances where it is an indisputable fact that women have been disadvantaged and marginalised socially, economically and politically.

While there has been a small 7% increase in combined opposition women members of parliament (MPs) from 15.1% in 1999 to 22.3% in 2008, this is far from parity. While the ANC accounts for the majority of women parliamentarians, there has been no progression over the past 14 years with the party having maintained 35% women MPs.

In fact, there have been decreases in women's representation in all areas of political decision-making between the period 2004 and 2008, ranging from 0.8% in the National Assembly to 5.6% in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP.) The combined parliament has seen a 1.3% decline while the cabinet reshuffle by incoming President Kgalema Motlanthe shows a 3.3% decrease in women ministers and deputies.

While these drops may seem marginal, they are a cause for concern in a country where we should be seeing progressive increases as opposed to any kind of regression. A further concern is the fact the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) failed to put forward a woman candidate for the top position in government ahead of the parties' national conference in December last year, despite the presence of a number of strong and likely women candidates within the party.

The question is can we leave the required increases - ranging from 10% in local government and cabinet to 18% in parliament - over the next two elections to the whims of political parties? Or do we need something more binding which applies to all political parties and which can be enforced?

Political parties are the gatekeepers for women's entry into politics because they control the nomination process. They therefore play an integral role in ensuring women's representation in all of their structures and at all levels. Members of the South Africa 50/50 campaign are proposing a legislated quota requiring all political parties to have equal numbers of women and men on their party lists, which would carry sanctions for non-compliance.

However, there is the danger of legitimising patriarchy by focussing only the numbers. It is important that any discourse around quotas should also take into account qualitative factors. If any real, legitimate change is to take place, the institutions in which women have to function (which still remain largely patriarchal) need to change to become more enabling structures for women. It is also crucial that an informed electorate know how and what they should be holding their elected representatives accountable for.

The current changing political climate, political turmoil within the ANC, and the formation of a splinter party all point to a need for commitment from all parties to gender equality. Formalising this commitment through legislation will ensure that even where political parties change, the commitment to equal representation of women will remain.

*Susan Tolmay is the Gender and Governance Manager and Gender Links. This article is part of the GL Opinion and Commentary Service that offers fresh views on everyday news.*

## **Mbeki's legacy**

With reference to the attached articles:

1. When former President Thabo Mbeki first met opposition leader Hellen Zille, his gesture to straighten her collar caused a stir. Some said it was sexist (would he do the same for Tony Leon?) ; others said it was a mark of their more cordial relationship. What is your view?
2. Mbeki has been hailed as one of the most progressive modern politicians on questions of gender equality; others argue that he was just an opportunist. What is your view?
3. When the Star had a high profile panel debate on Mbeki's legacy at Wits University, all the panellists were men, and his legacy on gender issues never came up for discussion. Why is this so?
4. There has been a slight decline in women ministers since Mbeki's departure and quite a sharp decline in women deputy ministers. Should this be a cause for concern? Is this a sign of things to come?
5. Some key feminists like Pregs Govender and Nozizwe Madlala Routledge who were sidelined during the Mbeki era appear to be finding their feet again. What does this reflect on Mbeki's legacy?

## **A Zuma presidency?**

With reference to the attached articles:

1. Should the Zuma rape trial be a factor in our consideration of his suitability for leadership?
2. Should Zuma's polygamous tendencies be a factor in our consideration of his suitability for leadership?
3. How well represented are women in the Zuma team? Is there likely to be a decline in women's political representation under a Zuma presidency?



## **Opinion**

### **Politics and progressive leadership do not square**

**By Colleen Lowe Morna**

Johannesburg 26 January: It's time to stop beating about the bush where polygamy and suitability for leadership of a progressive democracy are concerned. I refer of course to the likelihood of African National Congress (ANC) leader Jacob Zuma and his four (or is it two or six?) wives becoming the first family of South Africa after the April 2009 elections.

Before the ink has even dried on this page I can hear the cries that I am white; I am a feminist and I have a western bias. I plead guilty to all three. But I also pride myself on believing in equality; knowing that two of the least comfortable bedfellows in our Constitution are polygamy and equal rights; and that criteria for leadership go well beyond legal or even Constitutional technicalities.

Picture, for example, in any other modern democracy you can think of, a leader who has a case of corruption hanging over his head; whose personal conduct in a rape case concerning an HIV positive woman half his age raised the brows of even a highly conservative judge, now preparing to enter office with a slew of wives and children that no one has an accurate count of, save that many of these additions took place simultaneously.

He might have slipped through the noose of the courts on the rape count; might still do so on the corruption count and may even be on the safe side of a Constitution that fudges the issue of polygamy. But would he pass the test of leadership, bearing in mind that a leader should not only espouse but embody the highest ideals of any given country?

The doubts cast on Zuma's credentials by the corruption case have been widely canvassed. Sadly, those relating to Zuma's attitudes and conduct towards women have not. Our national media has reduced the debate on Zuma's polygamous lifestyle to what this will cost tax payers; whether presidential security will be able to cope and which one of the first ladies will be the official escort; not whether acquiring more and more wives as if they were possessions raises concerns as to how Zuma views our Constitutional provisions on gender equality.

It's worth scrolling back to what the Constitution says on the thorny issue of gender equality versus customary law which any women's rights activist will tell you were the most painful of all the compromises made at the Congress for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) that finally ushered in a new era in 1994. The Constitution does not ban polygamy. But, in affirming gender equality as a fundamental cornerstone of our democracy, the Constitution states that should there be a contradiction between customary law and the Bill of Rights, the latter takes precedence.

By requiring that customary marriages be registered, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act seeks to ensure that all women in polygamous marriages have equal rights to property. At least part of the calculation there was that financial considerations would lead to polygamous marriages dying a natural death. By and large this practice is indeed dying out: with notable exceptions like our soon-to-be President.

Would polygamy stand the test of a Constitutional Court challenge? It seems difficult to see how provisions for equal rights between women and men could possibly be squared with a system that allows men to have as many wives as they want yet women to have only one husband! Furthermore, if every man had six wives, a very large number would have none, since women comprise half the population. How equal or fair can such a system be for men, let alone for women!

Zuma's stock response to polygamy is that many of his male political counterparts (in South Africa and elsewhere) have concubines and mistresses and that at least he is open about his multiple relationships. Whether open or secret, the term itself should cause us to cringe in an era in which UNAIDS cites "multiple concurrent partnerships" as the main driver of HIV and AIDS. What kind of example is Zuma setting to the youth when the widely publicised unprotected sex that he had with an HIV positive woman is followed within months by two (or is it three?) babies, all by different mothers?

What kind of respect does Zuma have for the women that every few months he acquires? Ah, I can hear some readers say, but they marry him willingly! In response, I would ask you to name one situation in which there is a power imbalance in society in which the underdog is not said to "willingly" do what the master wants. We would do well to scrutinise the sub-text, like the fact that one of Zuma's wives (Nkosozana) divorced him before pursuing a successful career as foreign minister while another (Kate) committed suicide after writing a damning letter about Zuma's lifestyle. Clearly, it's not all a case of happily ever after.

Is this relevant to the leadership debate? Should we be like the French, who believe that the private lives of politicians are out of bounds (except when a woman minister has a baby out of wedlock!) or like the Americans, who believe so passionately that the personal is political that they almost impeached a president for telling half truths about his philandering?

To me it's not about copying one model or the other but about putting our leaders through a battery of tests that include reflecting in their lives the fundamental values of our Constitution. As I see it, even without all the other blots in Zuma's copy book, his big-chief attitude towards women, not to mention failure to recognise that a woman wearing a kanga might in fact not be asking to have sex, disqualify him from leading this great nation. It's high time we find the voice to say that if any leader does not show equal respect for women and men – in deed as in word – he or she is simply not fit to rule.

*(Colleen Lowe Morna is executive director of Gender Links. This article is part of the GL Opinion and Commentary Service that offers fresh views on every day news).*

## **Women in opposition**

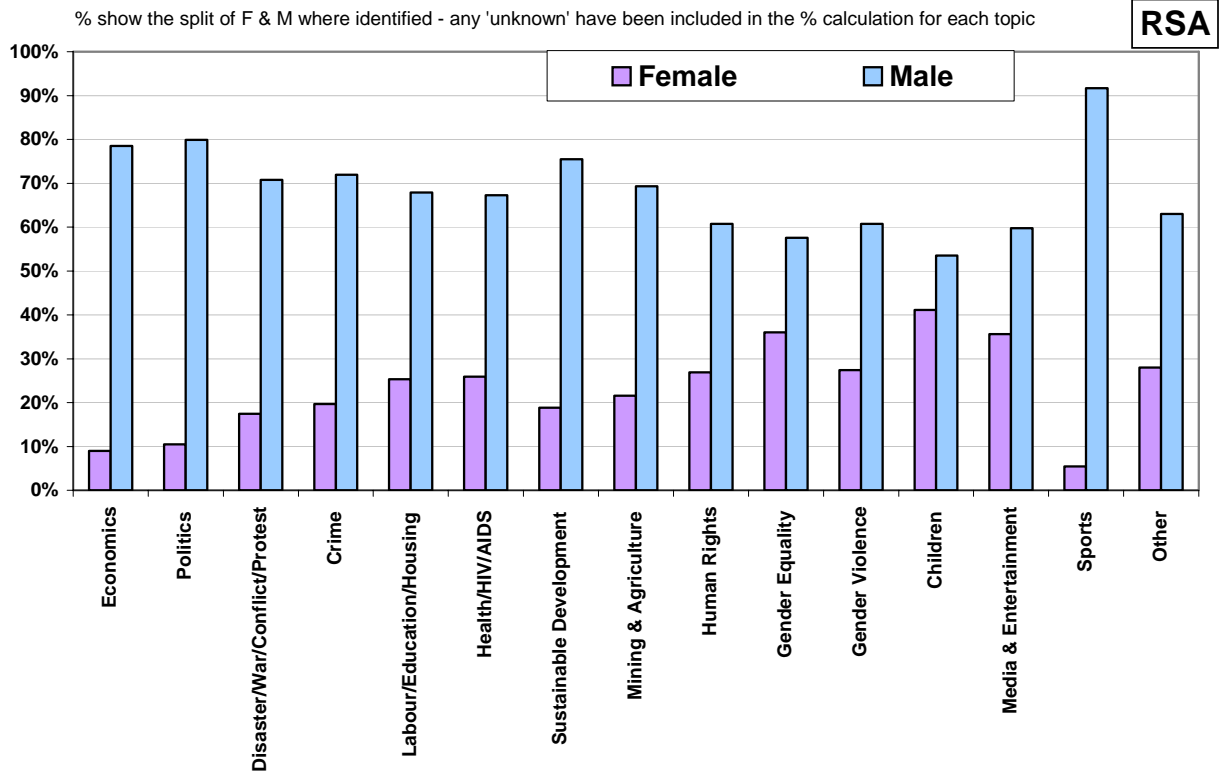
Read the articles that follow and reflect on these questions:

1. The article in the Mail and Guardian (“Where are our Palins?”) suggests that the more interesting women politicians in South Africa are in the opposition rather than the ANC. Do you agree?
2. What do you think about SA's women opposition leaders? How committed are they to gender issues? Why are women not particularly well represented in their parties?
3. What do you think about iBez4Prez!!
4. How well represented are women in COPE?
5. How has COPE coped with recent gender issues in its ranks like the sex for grants scandal?

## WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND PORTRAYAL IN POLITICAL COVERAGE

### Gender disaggregation of sources in the South African media by coun

**Figure eight: Country analysis of topic by Sex - % of each individual topic**



The graph above illustrates the break down of women sources in the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted by Gender Links and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in 2003. The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) showed that overall women in South Africa comprise 26% of news sources. This is an increase of 7% from the 2003 GMBS but is still far from parity, since women represent 52% of the population!

1. In which topic category are women's views and voices best represented and in which worst? Why?
  
2. To what extent are women's views and voices represented in political coverage? Why is this so?

## Top 100 newsmakers in South Africa 2008

With reference to the Star's top 100 newsmakers for 2008, do the following analysis:

Category	No of women	No of men	%women	Top newsmaker	
				M	F
News makers					
Heroes					
Politics					
Business					
Dinner guest					
The arts					
TV					
Letters					
Books					
Sport					
TOTAL					

1. In which area are women best represented?
2. In which area are women worst represented?
3. Is it possible/desirable to get gender balance in all areas of coverage and of making the headlines? How can this be achieved?



## **Gender blindness**

Read the article overleaf entitled "How an unnoticed dinner guest became the Deputy President".

1. In what way were the media caught unaware with regard to the announcement of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as Deputy President when this announcement was made? Why?
  
2. With reference to the headlines, "All the President's men", "all the King's men" and "all the president's men and a few women too" to what extent does the South African media suffer from gender blindness? How invisible are women politicians in our society and in our media?

## **Portrayal- "Iron ladies"**

With reference to the three articles attached:

1. How are women in politics viewed by the media?
2. Why is the term "iron lady" used? What does it mean?
3. Is there a difference in the way that strong men and strong women are viewed by the media? Why?

## Sexist stereotypes



1. With reference to the placard above carried by an American voter in the recent elections, what message does it convey with regard to the public's view on women in politics?
2. With reference to the Reuters image overleaf on Sarah Palin, what is your view on media coverage of this American woman politician?
3. With reference to the articles on Michelle Obama, how much do we know about her beyond her fashion tastes?
4. With reference to the article on Helen Zille and Botox, in what ways is the South African media fixated on the physical attributes of women politicians? Would a similar article be carried on a male politician?

## **SEX SCANDALS IN POLITICS**

1. A number of sex scandals have hit parties in the run up to the elections (see series of articles that follows). What has been their response? Is it the same or different?
2. How private or public should the lives of our leaders be?
3. List some key characteristics of gender aware, responsive and accountable leadership.



## KEY FACTS

Women's political participation is a problematic area of reporting and media under-represents and sometimes misrepresents the views of these women in the media. According to Paula Fray, the Africa Regional Director of the Inter Press Service (IPS) global news agency, women politicians occupy a low profile in the media and there is often a hostile relationship with the media that is considered unfriendly to women.

IPS global news agency is also involved in training its Africa network of journalists and women politicians on how to engage the media in their *From Polls to Polls* programmes which is about strengthening the voices and visibility of women in elections. They train journalists to cover elections from a gender perspective with a broader focus on political processes and not merely elections as events.

According to Fray, an evaluation of this process takes place on a continuous basis as the agency's reporters receive on-line training and guidance daily from the IPS Africa Editor. A formal evaluation of the first formal training of journalists and women politicians conducted in November 2007 found participating women politicians showed a better understanding of the media and higher levels of confidence in dealing with them.

Journalists reported improved efforts to seek out the views of women and a better understanding of women politicians and the challenges that they face in the media. While politicians did see an increase in media's coverage, they believe that journalists still favour men and that the media needs to be transformed in a more holistic way.

Research points to the need for such training for media. The Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted in 2003 in twelve Southern African countries by GL and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) showed that women in general constitute, on average, 17% of news sources. This increased by 2% to 19% for the Southern African region in the Global Media Monitoring (GMMP), coordinated by the World Association of Christian Communications (WACC), which took place in 2005.

And even where women are present in occupations, such as politicians, their voices are not heard in the same proportion as their representation. For example, in the GMBS, of all the politician sources, only 8% were women, and this figure doubled to 16% in the GMMP. However, neither of these figures reflects the strength of women in parliaments where the regional average has ranged from 19 to 21.9% between 2005 and 2008.

With the region currently undergoing so many changes in governments, it is time that this change includes ensuring that women are at the decision-making table. As a cornerstone of democracy, media is a vital part of this.

<b>GENDER-AWARE</b>	<b>GENDER-BLIND</b>
Gender balance of sources (voices)	Lack of gender balance in sources (voices)
Gender neutral language	Gender biased language
Awareness of differential impact	Lack of awareness of gender dynamics
Fairness in approach to issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No double standards</li> <li>• No moralizing</li> <li>• No open prejudice</li>   <li>• No ridicule</li>   <li>• No placing of blame</li> </ul>	Biased coverage of issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double standards</li> <li>• Moralizing e.g. being judgemental</li> <li>• Open prejudice e.g. women are less intelligent than men etc</li> <li>• Ridicule e.g. women in certain situations</li> <li>• Placing blame e.g. on rape survivors for their dress etc</li> </ul>
Challenges stereotypes	Perpetuates stereotypes
Simple accessible gender sensitive language	Full of jargon and stereotypical gender biased language
Gender disaggregated data	Aggregated data
<b>BLATANT STEREOTYPE</b>	<b>SUBTLE STEREOTYPE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women are presented in stereotypical roles such as victims or sex objects.</li> <li>• Men are presented in stereotypical roles such as strong business men or leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories that reinforce notions of women's domestic and men's more public roles.</li> <li>• Stories about 'special women' on specific days such as Women's Day that receive no coverage at any other time.</li> </ul>

## KEY GENDER ISSUES IN ELECTIONS

- Democracy is defined as government for the people, by the people, not by men for men. According to this definition, no country in the world has achieved democracy, as there is none in which women are represented in decision making in accordance with their numbers in the population.
- The UN has shown that having a critical mass of at least 30 percent women in decision making makes a marked difference to the way these structures function and to their agendas.
- SADC governments signed the SADC Protocol Gender and Development in August 2008 committing themselves to the 50% representation of women in all areas of decision-making positions. The average percentage of women in parliaments of the region is 21.9 percent; even lower in the bureaucracy and the judiciary. What role can the media to achieve this goal?
- Apart from the ANC, no other political party has a quota for women. The media can play an advocacy role to scrutinise the manifestos of all political parties to assess their commitment to gender equality and the equal representation of women at all levels of decision making.
- Violence against women is an important issue during the election period. Women candidates become easy targets of intimidation and harassment. This also applies to women voters and supporters. How can the media assist in ensuring violence free elections and perpetrators of violence face the justice?
- Media organisations can play an important role by providing balanced coverage of election issues by giving equal access to all contesting political parties and candidates.





## CHECKLIST FOR JOURNALISTS



### Inter Press Service (IPS) Editorial Checklist

#### Strengthening the Voice and Visibility of Women in Elections in Africa

The following checklist has been developed by IPS as part of a two-year project to improve coverage of women's participation in African elections -- both as candidates and voters -- and of the extent to which polls address issues related to gender. It is intended to help journalists become more effective in researching and writing stories on these matters.

#### CONTEXT

1. Does the story explain the type of electoral system the country uses?
2. Does it explain the advantages and disadvantages of the electoral system to women's entrance into political office?
3. Does the story highlight the factors that contribute to women's entrance into political office? For example, have parties set quotas or other special measures to ensure that women are candidates; or, are there special constitutional measures such as legislative quotas to open up more spaces for women in political offices as a way to bridge the inequality gaps? Are these factors operational within the country?
4. Does the story highlight the factors that inhibit women's entrance into political office?
5. If there are more women or fewer women standing for elections during the period of coverage, what factors have contributed to the increase or decrease?
6. Which political parties have fielded women candidates and which ones have not? Have certain political parties done better than others, and if so, why?
7. Do any of the parties' manifestoes or blueprints for action speak to the issues of gender equality and women's rights?
8. Is the story analytical? Does it go beyond the event and raise the underlying issues?
9. Does the story cite details on gender equality from the constitution and/or the government's signature to international conventions, declarations and platforms such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Optional Protocol on Women to the Africa Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, among others? [This is the watchdog function of the media. Is the government adhering to the conventions, declarations and commitments it makes through signature to such documents?]

### ***Do...***

- ✓ Include a brief explanation of the type of electoral system(s) used for presidential, parliamentary and local government elections.
- ✓ Explain how the electoral system(s) is/are an advantage or disadvantage for women's entrance into political office.
- ✓ Highlight the factors that contribute to women's entrance into political office.
- ✓ Highlight the factors that inhibit women's entrance into political office.
- ✓ Provide a brief discussion on the trends of women in political office (See 'Data').
- ✓ Include information on which political parties have fielded women candidates and which have not, and why.
- ✓ Explain briefly what the parties' manifestoes say about gender equality and women's rights.
- ✓ Go beyond the event and the numbers to explain what they mean and why.
- ✓ Hold the government accountable by citing the legal and international rights instruments it has signed. But remember, citing is not the same thing as quoting and you should try to avoid simply quoting from national, regional or international instruments and policies in your story. Instead, analyse whether government is on target with adhering to these instruments. This is done through the use of data to show how well authorities are meeting the targets or commitments agreed to, and through the voices of relevant sources. (See 'Sources')

### ***Don't...***

- ✦ Submit stories that are not well-researched.
- ✦ Provide a simplistic analysis of the coverage issue by omitting information on the country's electoral system(s), trends of women in political office, and parties' stated positions and actions on women's entrance into political office, gender equality and women's rights.
- ✦ List the factors that contribute to or inhibit women's entrance into political Office without an analysis of why the factors prevail within your country's context.

### **DATA**

1. Does your story include data on the numbers of women in the following structures:
  - Cabinet positions
  - Parliament
  - Judiciary
  - Political parties' politburos or highest central organs
2. Is all the data sourced?
3. Is the data used in ways to illustrate trends in women's entrance into political office? For example, does a story on an upcoming poll also include data about women's performance in the last two elections and their entrance into offices, to show the reader whether there is improvement or a backlash?
4. Is sex-disaggregated data used to show the situation of women in politics in comparison to men?
5. Does the story include sex-disaggregated data on women and men as voters?
6. Does the story include data on women's and men's voting patterns, if available?

### ***Do...***

- ✓ Look for up-to-date statistics on women in governance and political structures, the most recent data on voters, among other relevant figures, and source the data used in the stories.
- ✓ Use sex-disaggregated data to illustrate where women are in politics in comparison to men.
- ✓ Include data on women and men as voters.
- ✓ Use data in context to illustrate gender gaps, trends and to provide an analysis of the gendered nature of politics in the country.

### ***Don't...***

- ✦ Submit a story without any data.
- ✦ Present data that is not sourced.
- ✦ Use out-of-date data. Do your research to ensure that the numbers are correct and up-to-date.

## **LANGUAGE**

1. Does the story contain language that promotes sexism, gender bias or discrimination, or gender stereotypes?
2. Avoid language that promotes "ageism": "...the 60-year-old woman candidate..." etc. There may well be stories where age has to be mentioned and analysed – an item on a by-election where all candidates are octogenarians, in defiance of national trends, for instance -- but as a general rule writers need to be cautious about age.
3. Are there any specific adjectives used to describe the character or physical appearance of women politicians or candidates that convey bias?
4. Is the physical description of a female politician or candidate relevant to the story? Would you apply the use of physical description equally to men and women politicians or candidates?
5. Is the language used inclusive of women and men?

### ***Do...***

- ✓ Check carefully before submitting stories to ensure that no language, phrases or adjectives that perpetuate sexism and gender bias have been used.
- ✓ Use inclusive terms such as "women and men", "man and woman" -- and pronouns such as "they", "their" and "them" -- to avoid the use of the generic "he" and "man" for all people.
- ✓ Avoid words that exclude women, such as "chairman", "mankind", "manpower",
- ✓ "man-made", "man-to-man" and "gentleman's agreement", among others – or words that exclude men such as "housewife" and "prostitute", among others.
- ✓ When using gender neutral terms such as "farmers", "traders", "entrepreneurs", "children", "detainees", "parents", "peasants", "professionals", the "poor" and "workers", among others, be sure to use sex disaggregated data in the story to show where women are located in these groupings.
- ✓ Use the 'IPS Gender and Development Glossary' (available in English and French)
- ✓ and other sources on sexist language to avoid perpetuating discrimination and stereotypes in reporting on women in politics

### ***Don't...***

- ✦ Describe women's physical appearance or the way they are dressed unless this is central to the feature. If you feel the need to describe what a female candidate is wearing, ensure that you do so in a way which does not discriminate against her (do not mention a woman's appearance while failing to describe that of the men she is competing with, for instance -- and do not write about which woman is considered "the best dressed" of various female candidates, a categorisation not generally applied to men). In addition, guard against descriptions that simply endorse images which candidates are trying to put forward about themselves (a male candidate trying to appear "a son of the soil" through dressing casually, for example). Your job is to analyse campaign strategies -- not further them.
- ✦ Use "he" or "man" as generic terms for all people.
- ✦ Use words that exclude women, such as "chairman", including the phrase "male domain" unless used in italics or quotes as stated by a source, among others.
- ✦ Use words that exclude men, such as "prostitute", among others.
- ✦ Use language that demonises or trivialises women politicians.
- ✦ Use language or phrases to describe women according to their marital or family status, while the same is not done to describe or label male politicians.

### **SOURCES**

1. Does the story include a balance of female and male sources? [One female six male sources would not be considered a balance of voices and perspectives in terms of the sexes. As a guide: A story that includes three female and two male sources or three male sources and two female sources would be acceptable.]
2. Do the sources interviewed provide a diversity of views and perspectives on the coverage issue? [If all the sources hold the same views or, are putting forth the same arguments on the issue, then the story does not provide a balance of views, but ONLY ONE view told through different voices. It is not enough to have different voices; different views are also needed, because there is more than one side to any issue.]
3. Are all the sources from the same side of the political spectrum? [Reporters should interview female and male sources from various political parties.]
4. Does the story only include politicians and political analysts as sources? [Sources from civil society groups working on the coverage issue as well as female and male citizens should also be interviewed to provide a diversity of views and perspectives.]
5. Does the story only include the views and perspectives of women and men in one age group? [Reporters should endeavour to convey the voices and perspectives of the young, middle-aged and elderly. Women and men in all three age groups are voting citizens and may have varying views and perspectives that will enrich the coverage issue.]

### ***Do....***

- ✓ Interview both women and men to balance the voices of the sexes.
- ✓ Seek out women and men with varying views on the coverage issue.
- ✓ Women and men from different political parties and spectrums should be interviewed.
- ✓ In addition to female and male politicians and political analysts, women and men from civil society and citizens should be interviewed.
- ✓ Women and men across different age groups – young, middle-aged and elderly voters – should be interviewed.

***Don't.....***

- ✓ Interview only men, or only women for the story.
- ✓ Present only one view or perspective on an issue in a story, even if this view is stated by many people.
- ✓ Become a mouthpiece for a party or grouping by interviewing only men and women from that organisation.
- ✓ Interview only male and female politicians and political analysts.
- ✓ Do not interview sources from one age group alone.

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