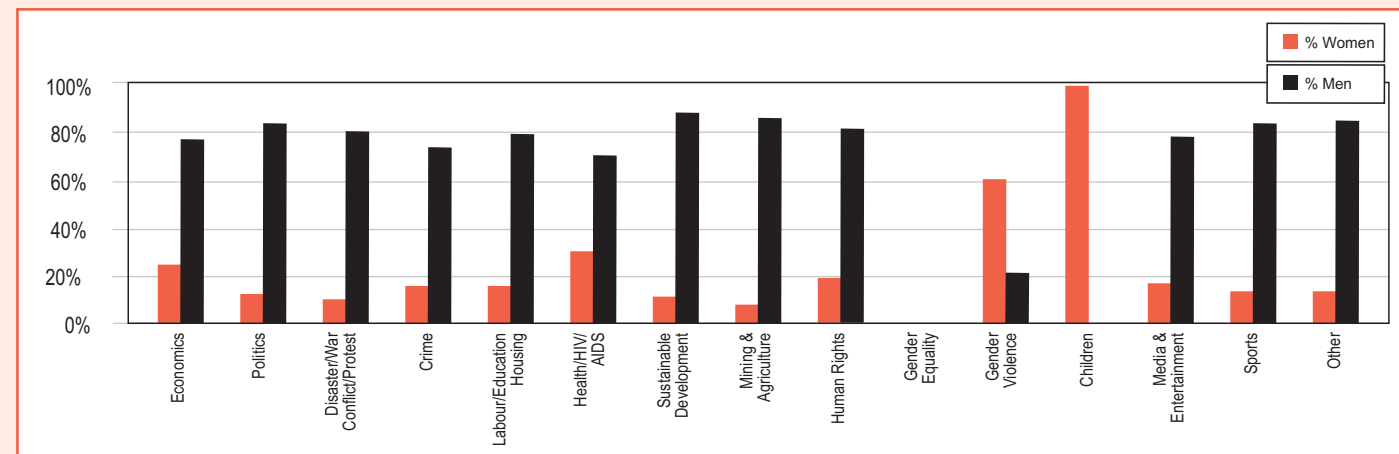


## Gender, politics and the media in Botswana

### Gender disaggregation of sources in the media by sex



The Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted in 2003 by Gender Links and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) showed that women constituted a mere 16% of news sources in the Botswana media. The only topic category in which women's voices predominated was in the gender violence category. Women's voices were least heard in the mining and agriculture; sports and political topic category (only 10% of the total). This shows that women's views and voices are systematically excluded from the news and especially from political coverage.

Women in politics are also frequently belittled and trivialised, as reflected in the headline "Peticosats in the mud bath" from a previous Botswana election. The story concerns the failure to increase women's representation in politics, despite the various targets set at international and regional level.



In June 2007 the Gender and Media in Southern Africa (GEMSA) Botswana Chapter and the Botswana Media Women Association (BOMWA) noted with alarm the Cartoon that appeared in the Monitor Newspaper of May 28, 2007. The cartoon, titled BNF Congress, supposedly depicted the Botswana National Front aspirant for Party Presidency, Kathleen Letshabo, at its Congress being castrated and bleeding.

In a statement, BOMWA-GEMSA stated that they were "deeply disturbed by the cartoon, which it finds in bad taste, and more importantly, displays the insensitivity on the part of the cartoonist and Mmegi newspaper in which it is published. The message implied by the cartoon has the effect of degrading and ridiculing women who aspire for leadership positions in the political arena."

The letter to the editor sparked a heated exchange in the Botswana media. As a follow up BOMWA-GEMSA held a gender workshop with cartoonists hosted by the University of Botswana.



### Key questions for discussion

- Is women's political participation integral to democracy?
- What difference does women's political participation make?
- Why has the Botswana government still not adopted the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development?
- Should Botswana adopt a legislated quota to increase women's participation in decision-making?
- Are political parties and government committed to gender equality?
- What mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that political parties fulfil their party quotas?
- What is the role of media in this regard?
- What role should other stakeholders, such as civil society, Botswana Association of Local Authorities (BALA), play?

### Key contacts

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# Botswana Women In Politics

## FACT SHEET



### Key targets

- In 1997, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Heads of State signed the Declaration on Gender and Development in Malawi setting a minimum target of 30% women in all areas of political decision-making by 2005.
- In 2008, the Declaration was elevated to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, increasing the target to 50% in all areas of decision-making in line with African Union (AU) targets and setting a deadline of 2015 for achieving this.
- Although Botswana has not yet signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, it is currently considering its position and indications are positive. Botswana has a good track record of adopting and ratifying gender instruments at regional and international levels. In 1996, and in 2000 Botswana ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

### Key facts

- Botswana has not reached the minimum 30% representation in either the legislature (11%), or cabinet (25%) or local government (19%).
- The Botswana electoral system (First Past the Post) does not encourage the advancement of women, as citizens vote for candidates, who represent the party in a constituency, rather than the political party. The winning candidate is the one who gains more votes than any of the other candidates even if it's not an absolute majority.
- The Constitution of Botswana does not have a provision for a quota to increase women's representation. However, some parties such as the Botswana National Front (BNF) and Botswana Congress Party (BCP) voluntarily include the minimum 30% quota in either their constitutions or election manifestos. The BDP does not have a quota to increase women's representation, but women are encouraged to contest for office in the party's structures, parliament and local government. Women constituted 21% of those in the 2005-2007 BDP Central Committee.
- In the 2004 election 550,413 voters registered for elections. Out of this figure, 311,265 registered voters were women. It is assumed that out of the 421,272 who cast their vote, more women than men voted. This premise is deduced from the fact that more than half of the registered voters were women.
- In the 2004 election, 19 female candidates contested parliamentary seats and only four were directly voted into Parliament. The rest of women in Parliament came through the special nomination process.
- While the proportion of women in local government increased from 15% in 1999 to 19% in 2004, the representation of women in parliament dropped by 7.1% from 18.2% in 1999 to 11.1% in 2004.
- Based on the outcome of primary elections at the beginning of the year, the prognosis for the 2009 elections is not good. In the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) three women out of the 66 women that contested the primary elections won as parliamentary candidates. In the case of the opposition Botswana Congress Party (BCP) four women have been nominated as parliamentary candidates. There are 57 parliamentary seats. Parties often field women candidates in seats that are not safe. In 2004 elections seven women stood for the ruling party and only four won.
- With only two elections to go before 2015 (in 2009 and 2014), Botswana is still far from achieving the 50 percent mark.
- The 2009 elections will be contested by several political parties. Thus far the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), Botswana National Front (BNF), Botswana Congress Party (BCP), Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM), Botswana People's Party (BPP) and Marx Engels Lenin Stalin Movement of Botswana (MELS), have registered with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).



Campaigning for 50/50 in Botswana

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

## Gender and politics in Southern Africa

On average, SADC now has 21.9% women in both the lower and upper houses of Parliament; 3.5% higher than the global average of 18.4% as shown in table one. This is second only to the Nordic countries but still far short of their 40.8% average and considerably below the 30% target, let alone gender parity.

Table one: Comparative analysis of women in parliament across the globe

| Region                              | Lower house  | Upper house  | Both houses  |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Nordic countries                    | 41.4%        |              | 40.8%        |
| SADC                                | 21.9%        | 21.9%        | 21.9%        |
| Americas                            | 21.6%        | 20.1%        | 21.4%        |
| Europe including Nordic countries   | 21.0%        | 19.5%        | 20.6%        |
| Europe excluding Nordic countries   | 18.9%        | 19.5%        | 19.1%        |
| Asia                                | 18.3%        | 16.5%        | 18.1%        |
| Sub-Saharan Africa (including SADC) | 17.9%        | 21.1%        | 18.3%        |
| Pacific                             | 12.9%        | 31.8%        | 14.9%        |
| Arab States                         | 9.7%         | 7.0%         | 9.1%         |
| <b>Global average</b>               | <b>18.4%</b> | <b>17.5%</b> | <b>18.3%</b> |

Source: IPU and Gender Links

Table two illustrates the huge variations in this average in the parliaments of the region from 37% in Angola to 7.3% in the DRC. The variations at the local government level are even greater, ranging from 58% in Lesotho to 6.4% in Mauritius.

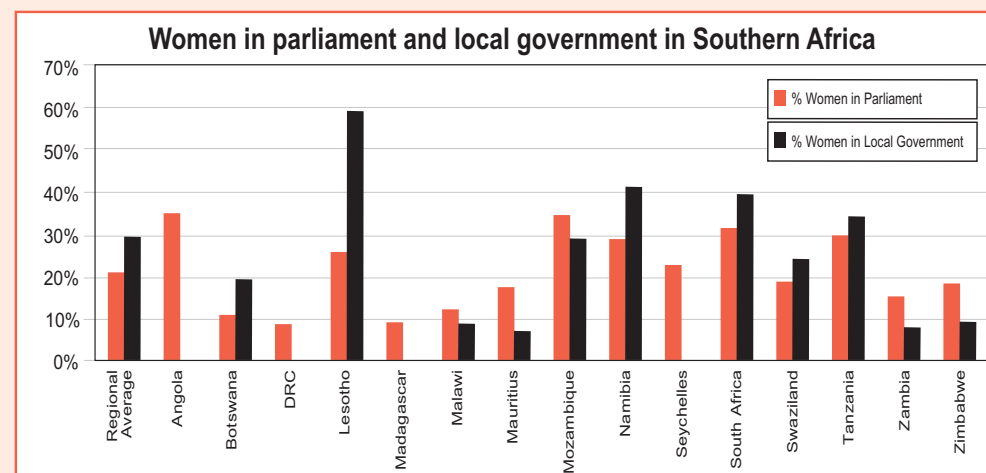
Table two: Gender and politics in Southern Africa

| Country                 | % women lower house | % women upper house | % women both houses | % women cabinet | % women local government |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Angola                  | 37.0%               |                     | 37.0%               |                 | unknown                  |
| Botswana                | 11.1%               |                     | 11.1%               | 25.0%           | 19.4%                    |
| DRC                     | 8.4%                | 2.5%                | 7.3%                | 16.7%           | unknown                  |
| Lesotho                 | 25.0%               | 29.0%               | 25.8%               | 27.8%           | 58.0%                    |
| Madagascar              | 7.9%                | 12.1%               | 8.8%                |                 | unknown                  |
| Malawi                  | 13.0%               |                     | 13.0%               | 12.5%           | 8.3%                     |
| Mauritius               | 17.1%               |                     | 17.1%               | 10.0%           | 6.4%                     |
| Mozambique              | 34.8%               |                     | 34.8%               | 25.0%           | 29.0%                    |
| Namibia                 | 30.8%               | 26.9%               | 26.8%               | 24.0%           | 41.8%                    |
| Seychelles              | 23.5%               |                     | 23.5%               | 25%             | unknown                  |
| South Africa            | 32.3%               | 35.2%               | 32.6%               | 40.0%           | 39.7%                    |
| Swaziland               | 10.8%               | 36.7%               | 18.9%               | 18.8%           | 24.1%                    |
| Tanzania                | 30.4%               |                     | 30.4%               | 14.8%           | 34.2%                    |
| Zambia                  | 15.2%               |                     | 15.2%               | 22.7%           | 6.7%                     |
| Zimbabwe                | 14.3%               | 33.3%               | 19.5%               |                 | 9.5%                     |
| <b>Regional average</b> | <b>21.9%</b>        | <b>21.9%</b>        | <b>21.9%</b>        | <b>19.5%</b>    | <b>29.7%</b>             |

Source: IPU and Gender Links

As illustrated in Table two, at the time of writing this report only five of the 15 countries in the region had achieved or exceeded 30% women in Parliament (Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Namibia). And only five countries (Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Mozambique) had achieved this target at the local level.

With 11.1% women in parliament, Botswana is the third lowest in SADC on this count (ahead only of Madagascar and the DRC). At 19.5% women in local government, Botswana is fifth to last in the ranking of women in local government (ahead only of Mauritius, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi).



## Where the political parties stand on gender issues

### Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)

The BDP is the ruling party. It does not have a quota for women, and is not supportive of affirmative action. The current chairperson of the BDP women's wing, Tebelelo Seretse, argues that quotas for women address the symptoms not the causes and therefore focuses on initiatives to support women's empowerment in increasing the gender representation of women in positions of power (Therisanyo, 2007b). Women of the BDP are encouraged to contest for offices of power in the party's structures, parliament and local government.

According to the former chairperson of the BDP, Botlogile Tshireletso, the party is making measured progress as it leads in women empowerment initiatives. Women constituted 21% in the 2005-2007 central committee (Therisanyo, 2006.) Tshireletso further emphasises that "gender equity should not be made an urban area talk shop, far removed from the realities facing women in rural areas and that the spirit of self esteem should be inculcated in the girl child as real empowerment is mental" (Therisanyo, 2007a). Seretse stresses that as the women's wing they intend to "inculcate that women can do anything they aspire at a tender age and not let cultural stereotypes shackle them, so that they may replace those who will be retiring from politics." (Therisanyo, 2007a).

Despite its negative position on quotas, the BDP government can point to some milestones in achieving the empowerment of women at the national level. In 2004, for example, the government spent P5 million on gender sensitisation workshops; P6 million on financial assistance to NGO, CBOs and Women's Groups and more than 90% of requests on gender training had been honoured (BDP, 2004). The former president of Botswana Festus Mogae showed his commitment to increasing women's representation by using his prerogative to appoint three women to the four available slots (Therisanyo, 2007b).

### Botswana National Front (BNF)

The BNF is the main opposition party in the country. The party to do well in the urban areas. Its constitution stipulates that 30% of the members of the Central Committee shall be women, which is an important indicator of commitment towards achieving gender equality within the party. Six of 18 (33.3%) members of the Central Committee of the BNF are women. This meets the 30% constitutional requirement. However, the party has not always translated this commitment into fielding women candidates in safe seats.

### Botswana Congress Party (BCP)

The BCP is the second most popular opposition party after the BNF. It was formed as a faction from the BNF. The BCP is the fastest growing opposition party in the country. On issues of gender equality, the BCP is committed to "the renaissance of women's roles in social, economic, cultural and political arenas through strengthening legal instruments to protect women by the abolition of customary and modern laws that discriminate against women (BCP, 1999); facilitating economic participation of women and devising mechanisms that would record and reorganise the work that women do (BCP, 1999); strengthening health services for women; making education and training more accessible to women and promoting the political participation of women" (BCP Manifesto, 2004).

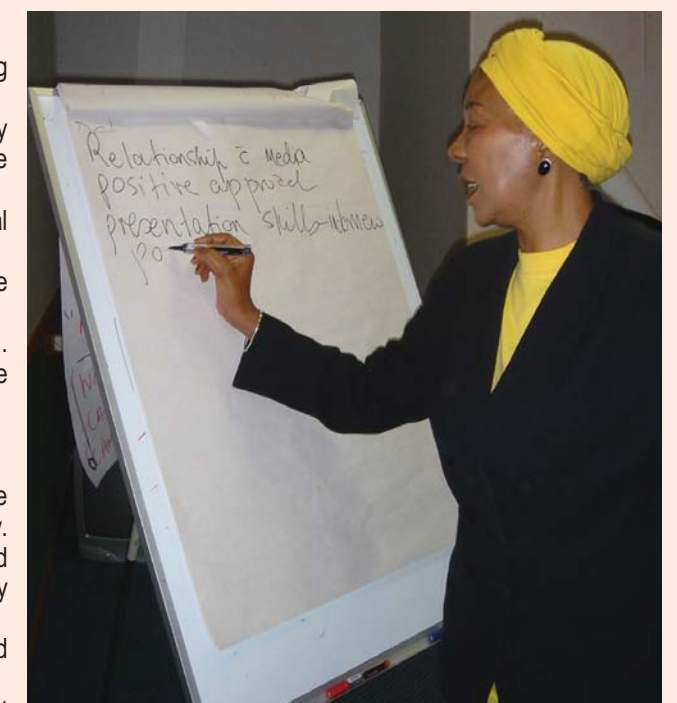
According to the party's constitution, 30% of the governing body of the party, the Central Committee, shall be women. Like the BNF, the BCP has not yet put measures in place for achieving the stipulated 30%. Nevertheless the BCP's efforts towards increasing the representation of women are measurable. In the current Central Committee, 26% of the members are women. According to the 1999 party manifesto, should the BCP win the elections, it will implement a quota system to ensure a fair representation of men and women at both national and local level through the transformation of the electoral system.

### Key challenges

- The lack of a legislated quota is a major stumbling block for increasing women's representation.
- In the absence of a legislated quota, voluntary quotas are necessary for women to have access to political office; not all political parties have quotas.
- Limited presence of women in decision making structures, such as Central Committees in political parties.
- No clear strategy nationally and within political parties to increase awareness of the role of women in decision making.
- Limited voter education to mobilise the population to vote for women.
- Few resources available, lack of support and negative attitudes are barriers for women candidates in the campaign process.

### Key action points

- Political parties should be encouraged to support women to achieve leadership positions within the party, and to campaign effectively.
  - Political parties such as the Botswana National Front (BNF) and Botswana Congress Party (BCP) should be lobbied to take their party quota seriously.
  - Sensitise voters on the importance of women participation and representation in politics.
- Civil society organisations need to step up the 50/50 campaign to boost women representation in parliament.



Ntombi Setshwaelo of Emang Basadi teaching lobbying skills  
Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna