

MULTI-PARTY WOMEN'S CAUCUS

2009 - 2014

Lessons Learnt

MULTI-PARTY WOMEN'S CAUCUS

2009 - 2014

The re-establishment of a Multi-Party Women's Caucus (MPWC) in the South African Parliament in 2008 was borne of the need to create a platform for female Parliamentarians to advance gender equality as a collective, across party lines. The last 5 years confirm what we already know: Numbers matter. However, as new challenges emerge, it is also clear that numbers alone will not ensure women's issues find resonance within Parliament's processes and programme. Active participation of Parliament's women is essential in advancing a gendered agenda.

While our gains in terms of women's representation in the political and economic spheres has been mixed, the fifth Parliament presents an opportunity take further steps in ensuring that barriers to women's participation are removed. For the realisation of this ideal, all women must work together to guarantee progress for the next 20 years of our democracy.

Steering Committee

Multi-Party
Women's
Caucus

Legislative authority

Executive authority

Judicial authority

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS	DESIGNATION	PARTY
Hon. B Dhlulane, MP	Chairperson	African National Congress
Hon. C. Zikalala, MP	Deputy Chairperson	Inkatha Freedom Party
Hon. M. Tlake, MP	Whip	African National Congress
Hon. D. Ramodibe, MP	Chairperson: PC on Women, Children and People with Disabilities	African National Congress
Hon. B. Mabe, MP	Chairperson: SC on Women, Children and People with Disabilities	African National Congress
Hon. D. Robinson, MP	Member	Democratic Alliance
Hon. P. Tshwete, MP	Member	African National Congress
Hon. P. Themba, MP	Member	African National Congress
Hon. B. Ngcobo, MP	Member	African National Congress
Hon. L. Makhubela-Mashele, MP	Member	African National Congress

<u>Parliament¹</u>	<u>Cabinet</u>	<u>Masters of the High Court</u>
National Assembly (NA) 42.3%	Ministers 39.3%	42.8%
National Council of Provinces (NCOP) 32.1%	Dep. Ministers 46.8%	
Presiding Officers in NA 40%	Premiers 55.5%	
Presiding Officers in NCOP 50%	Heads of National Departments ² 26.1%	State institutions supporting democracy 50% of these are headed by women
WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN PARLIAMENT	Heads of State-owned Enterprises 24.8%	
Deputy Speaker (NA)		
Deputy Chairperson (NCOP)		
Leader of the Opposition		
Chairpersons 36%		
Party Whips 45%		
Deputy Secretary to Parliament		MECs
Provincial Legislature	Eastern Cape 50%	Free State 50%
Speakers of Provincial Legislatures 22.9%	Gauteng 55.5%	Kwazulu Natal 40%
	Limpopo 40%	Mpumalanga 40%
	North West 50%	Northern Cape 30%
	Western Cape 0%	

Women within State Structures 2009 - 2014³

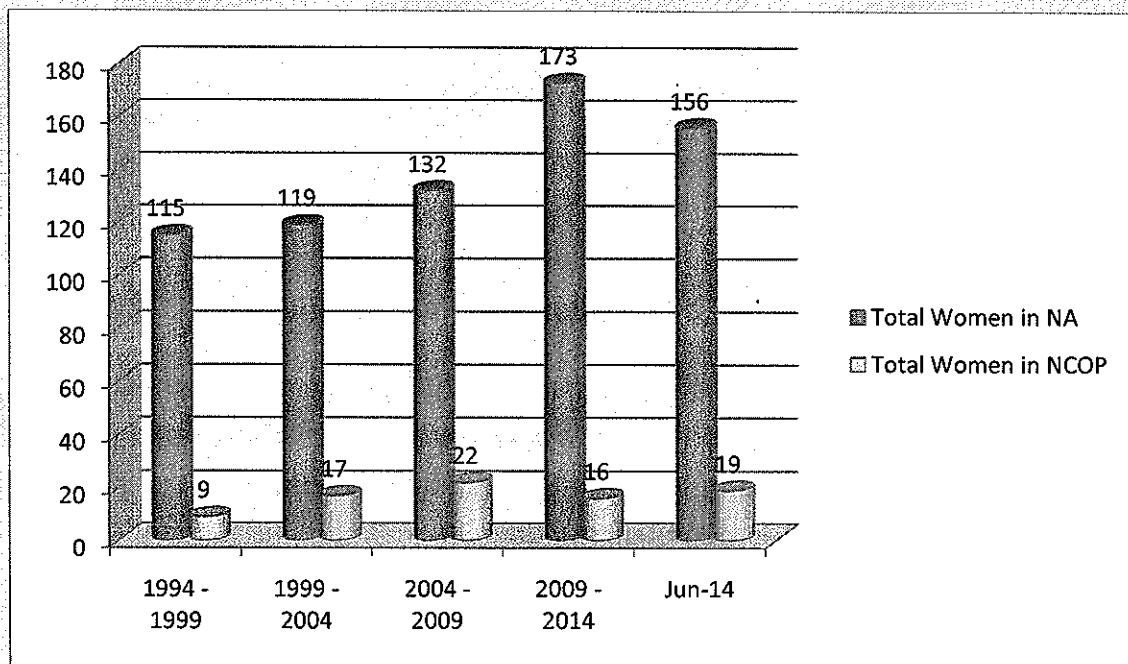
¹ SA ranks 8th in the world in terms of women's representation in the national legislature (IPU)

² Includes DGs, GCIS CEO & National Police Commissioner

³ Levendale, C. Fact Sheet: Women's representation in political and leadership positions (2013)

Women's Representation in Parliament

Elections/Term	Total Women in National Assembly	Total Women in NCOP (permanent delegates)
1994-1999	115	9
1999-2004	119	17
2004 - 2009	132	22
2009 - 2014	173	16
2014 -	156	19



Strategic Priorities: MPWC Business Planning 2009

Strategic Imperative	Priority Focus Areas
Representing the interests and concerns of women Members of Parliament	Identify interests of women MPs in Parliament; Develop a Gender Policy; Capacity Building Programme
Promoting the discussion of women's issues in Parliament	Round-Table Discussions on gendered matters of national interest; Maintain network of relevant civil society organisations
Making submissions to the PC and SC on Women	Identify issues of concern – those that affect legislation
Introducing a women's perspective and focus in Parliamentary activities, including in the programming of debates	Develop, and implement a gender mainstreaming strategy within Parliament
Engaging on developmental and empowerment issues with women in political structures outside Parliament and women Members of Parliaments Internationally	<p>Maintain network of regional, continental and international political stakeholders within the area of gender</p> <p>Engage regional, continental and international political stakeholders on platforms provided</p>
Any other matter within its mandate referred to it by either House	Legislative Role in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Strategic Priorities: MPWC Business Planning 2013

Capacity Building

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Information Sharing
- Encouraging organisational/ institutional memory

Political Support

- Members to facilitate political support for programmes
- Prioritisation of 50/50 representation within parties

Sufficient Budget

- The MPWC to lobby for more adequate funding
- Strengthening budgetary allocations for women's issues
- Strengthening of research in this regard

Use of Parliamentary Tools

- MPWC to prioritise introducing a women's perspective to Parliamentary programming
- Debates, motions, statements and questions to be fully utilised

Collaboration

- Given the Caucus mandate, partnerships within and outside of Parliament must be fostered
- An established network, including within the provinces is critical to advancing women's issues

MPWC Events 2009 - 2014

Represent the interests and concerns of women Members of Parliament.

Introducing a women's perspective and focus in Parliamentary activities including in the programming of debates.

Promoting the discussion of women's issues in Parliament

Making submissions to the relevant committee on issues affecting women

Engaging on developmental and empowerment issues with women in political structures outside Parliament and women Members of Parliaments internationally

Millennium Development Goals

The MPWC, with the support of the UNDP, hosted a training session for Members of the Caucus to orientate Members on what the MDGs entail and how they impact on women's lives.

Climate Change

In anticipation of the COP 17 climate change negotiations taking place in South Africa in November and December 2011, the MPWC undertook to host a workshop on the gendered implications of climate change in the context of COP 17.

Roundtable on Gender-based Violence

A national roundtable on multi-sectoral interventions and actions on gender based violence was hosted in Parliament, with the theme, "Calling for multi-sectoral interventions and actions on gender based violence".

Participation

- Presentations by SWEAT 2012/2013
- 56th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women 2012
- National Women's Conference 2011/2013
- South African Parliament's Women's Parliament 2012/2013

The Role and Mandate of the Multi-Party Women's Caucus

The MPWC is comprised of all women Members of Parliament, from all parties, in both Houses of Parliament. It has both a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, who are elected by the Caucus at the beginning of the Parliamentary term. Given that over 40% of Parliamentary seats were held by women (which translates to over 166 Members of the Caucus)⁴, it was deemed necessary to establish a Steering Committee to provide strategic guidance to the work of the committee, without being overwhelmed by the numbers within the broader Caucus. The steering committee is also multi-party, and includes the Chairpersons of both the Portfolio and Select Committees on Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities, as well as Whips from the National Council of Provinces and the National Assembly. The steering committee functions as the management committee, and drives the mandate of the Caucus, ensuring that its work compliments that of the PC and SC on Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities. Given that Ministers and Deputy Ministers are still Members of Parliament, they also form part of the Caucus and form part of its regular meetings.

Its mandate is as follows:

- Representing the **interests and concerns of women Members of Parliament;**
- Promoting the **discussion of women's issues** in Parliament;
- Making **submissions** to the relevant committees;
- Introducing a **women's perspective and focus in Parliamentary activities**, including in the programming of **debates;**
- Engaging on **developmental and empowerment issues** with women in **political structures outside Parliament** and women **Members of Parliaments Internationally;** and considering any other matter within its mandate referred to it by either House.

This mandate flows from the following strategic objectives of Parliament:

- To **strengthen its monitoring function** and establish a strong culture of monitoring Executive action with regards to the promotion of gender equality;
- To **increase public involvement** and participation and build a responsive people's parliament;
- To **strengthen co-operative governance** and foster improved cooperation and relations;
- To improve and widen the role of Parliament in **International cooperation and participation.**

⁴ pre-2014 election numbers

Given its role, the following are important areas of work for the caucus:

- **Capacity Building:** Sessions arranged for Members typically focus on the challenges faced by women in particular, but may include more generic leadership and subject specific capacity building initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of work of female Parliamentarians.
- **Stakeholder Relations:** Relationships with provincial authorities (legislatures and traditional leadership structures), civil society, as well as internal partners including Portfolio and Select Committees, play a central role in allowing the Caucus to carry out its mandate effectively. Networks with communities, whether local, regional or international that focus on advancing the gendered agenda, are crucial in fulfilling the purpose of facilitating collective action for gender equality. It is also critical that women Parliamentarians' are able to network and within those networks, to lobby, advocate and mobilise women and men around activities promoting gender equality.
- **Coordination and Mainstreaming:** The Caucus does not have a direct oversight obligation over any department; however its Members belong to broad range of committees. This ensures that when women's priorities are identified, they can be mainstreamed to all committees of Parliament through the Caucus.

When addressing issues of equal participation in the social, political and economic development of women, it is important that we consider the relationships between men and women and its impact on families. The mainstreaming of gender issues is often necessary to create an environment for the advancement of women. Gender mainstreaming refers to men and women having equitable access to, and benefit from society's resources, opportunities and rewards, and equal participation in influencing social values and in shaping decision making. Gender equality is therefore not simply aimed at the promotion of women. Instead it represents a dual approach, of considering the developmental and equity needs of both men and women.

Challenges

After re-launching in 2008, the Caucus was provided with resources including an operating budget as well as staff (A Committee Secretary and Researcher). As a

funded, functional committee, the Caucus is allocated a timeslot to meet twice a month (on alternative weeks steering committee meetings are held). As stated above, the MPWC plays a role in capacitating women Parliamentarians on issues critical to women's agenda. The knowledge and skills gained are to enable every Member to carry out their Parliamentary duties from a gendered perspective including legislative drafting, oversight and facilitating public participation. The Caucus must ensure that women are not only represented within Parliament, but that they have access to real decision-making influence.

Although the establishment of institutional mechanisms to drive issues of targeted groups, in this case women; is internationally regarded as best practice, there are challenges in their operations. Within the South African context, key challenges within these institutions include the lack of adequate budgetary and human resource allocations, as well as unclear policy frameworks resulting in confusion of roles and responsibilities amongst institutional mechanisms.

In addition, for these structures to operate effectively, they also need to be replicated at provincial and local government level, a task which to date has proven problematic as the technical capacity to take the interests of women forward is often lacking within the other spheres of government. The task of driving these issues is often also relegated to the position of someone without any decision-making and strategic management powers within the organisation. Although South Africa is committed to the transformation and mainstreaming of gender and women's issues, much needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of these institutional mechanisms.

Opportunities

Provincial Caucuses

The initiated process of establishing provincial as well as district level Caucuses is encouraging, and presents a unique opportunity to extend the reach of the Caucus mandate for more engaged political participation by women. In order to ensure that the implications of policies and practices on women within provincial legislatures are considered, it is important that provincial and district level women's caucuses are

functional. For this opportunity to be fully utilised therefore, these structures must have the following characteristics to becoming fully fledged institutions:

- They should have support from within the institution (whether national Parliament or District Mayoral Committee);
- They need to build the capacity of its Members with regards to gender sensitive governance;
- There is a need to strengthen relations, ensure consistent engagement, knowledge exchange, and learning between the national, provincial and local structures.

Mainstreaming Gender Concerns

Another area where the Caucus has great opportunity to affect change, is its focus on coordination and mainstreaming. The Caucus does not have a direct oversight obligation over any department; however its Members belong to broad range of committees. This ensures that when women's priorities are identified, they can be mainstreamed to all committees of Parliament through the Caucus. This means that those Chairpersons who preside over issues in agriculture, energy, health, etc, can filter issues discussed within the Caucus to their committees; this ensures women's challenges are dealt with holistically and not in a fragmented manner.

Advocacy for Gender Issues

Also, by being inclusive of all female Members of Parliament, regardless of political affiliation, the MPWC leverages the gains that women have made in terms of numbers within Parliament. An under-utilised use of the Caucus, is as a space to consolidate support behind gender-sensitive policy and for women to caucus around issues affecting women they interact with either in their committees, during public hearings, or during their constituency work.

Post-2014 Agenda for the Caucus

Women's Caucuses are the ideal vehicle in transforming Parliaments to operate from a gender perspective. As a collective, women in legislative seats are in a unique position to change the trajectory of policy, and when there is a critical mass of women in these seats, they have the ability to support that legislation through the legislative process. The purpose of the Caucus then becomes two-fold: To ensure a critical mass of women within the legislative sector, and to capacitate those women to advance the rights of ordinary women. While Portfolio and Standing committees on Women and Gender issues typically focus on how legislation and its implementation have an impact on women's lives, Caucuses function to ensure that Parliaments function in ways conducive for gender equality.

In addition to ensuring Parliaments' programming and scheduling is gender sensitive, the central purpose of a Caucus is to ensure that a gendered agenda is represented in the functioning of Legislatures. Caucuses must also ensure that legislation passed by different committees of Parliament are gender sensitive and speak to the needs of women within communities. During an expert group meeting on Equal Participation of women and men in decision making processes⁵ the following mechanisms for ensuring equal participation were identified:

- Organising regular (gender) impact assessments to gauge policies and programmes aimed at equal participation, especially in relation to enhancing women's participation in decision-making bodies;
- Emphasising and re-committing to political equality for men and women;
- Support for structures and mechanisms to expand women's participation in state building, for example, the implementation of quotas for women;
- Increased participation of women in international bodies;
- Leadership training for women participating in political processes to enhance their effectiveness as members of organisations⁶;
- In addition, the conscientisation and sensitisation of gender issues is necessary to improve equality.

⁵ Rai, S (2005)

⁶ Rai, 2005

In addition, these key considerations should be kept in mind to for improve women's participation and representation in public and private life:

- It is important that an enabling environment is implemented to enhance women's access to and participation in decision-making processes, and in so doing provide the platform for them to influence the gender agenda.
- It is not enough to have women represented in decision-making positions – there must be significant participation of women, and the participation must result in influencing policy decisions and direction.
- The political influence of the gender actors within the parliamentary arena is also key to the realisation of gender goals.
- Members of Parliament have a particularly important role to play in applying a women's human rights framework and advancing the gender agenda through their oversight function. This means applying a gendered perspective to the monitoring, evaluation and analysis of all parliamentary business, as well as when engaging with government departments and civil society. It is about considering the impact of all legislation, policies, programmes and resource allocations on the lives of women and gauging whether a positive change in their lives will be effected through these frameworks and allocations.
- Women need to be represented politically, i.e. through the expression of politically gendered agendas of political parties and institutions such as Parliament, as well as be active political participants through introducing gendered discussions and debates and lobbying and advocating for women's issues and interests.
- Taking forward women's agenda, and pursuing a gender perspective in policy making and implementation, it is vital that there is coordinated action towards clearly defined goals. Women in all spheres must work as a collective.
- It is also important to develop a learning network, nationally, regionally and internationally, as a resource for women to draw useful lessons from.

References

Goetz, A (2003) *Women's education and political participation*, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/2004, UNESCO

Levendale, C (2009) *The Role of Parliamentarians in Advancing Gender Equality and the Gender Agenda*

Lowie Morna, C, Rama, K and L Mtonga (2009) *Gender in the 2009 South African Elections*, GenderLinks

Parliament of South Africa (1999) *Representivity and Public Participation*
www.parliament.gov.za <Accessed 02 March 2010>

Pease, B, (2006) *Gendering Men: Implications for Gender Equality Policy*, School of Health and Social Development, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia, October 2006

Pheko, L (2009) *Towards Women's Political Calvary*
<http://www.womensnet.org.za/news/towards-women%E2%80%99s-political-calvary> <Accessed 02 March 2010>

Rai, S, (2005) *Equal Participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership*, Division for the Advancement of Women, Inter-parliamentary Union, 24-27 October 2005, Ethiopia

Rhoda, G (2008) *Financing For Gender Equality And The Empowerment Of Women*, Research Unit, Parliament of South Africa, Cape Town

The Presidency (2000) *National Gender Policy Framework*, Office on the Status of Women, Republic of South Africa

United Nations Millennium Project. (2005) *"Taking Action: Achieving gender equality and empowering women"*

www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Gender-complete.pdf

