



2016

WOMEN AND THE 2016 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's political participation is important to improve women's access to and influence in decision-making processes.¹ An important level of participation for women is at the local government level, where critical decisions about services and spending are made. In addition, women are directly affected by service delivery at this level, and thus their engagement with local government is an excellent indicator of whether the legislative gains in gender equality have resulted in an improved lived-reality for most women. Women face both legal and non-legal challenges to participating at the local government level, which will be discussed further in this paper. Positively, in South Africa, they are supported by a developmental legislative and policy framework with specific commitments to facilitate their access.

South Africa will be holding local government elections during 2016 and this is an opportune time to improve on gender representation at this level. This paper seeks to address the context of women's participation in South Africa, to outline the legislative and policy context, to provide clarity on some of the challenges women face in participating in local government, and to provide some recommendations for the way forward.

2. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT: WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

Across the world, women's participation in political and public spaces is affected by a number of factors including the gender sensitivity of the legislative and policy framework, their awareness of information about opportunities and their right to participate, and their ability to access funding and support networks that can facilitate their entry into the political arena. Furthermore, historical gender roles that simultaneously relegate women to the household and child-care and designate politics as a traditionally masculine space, as well as socio-economic realities (such as the feminisation of poverty, violence against women, and the gendered burden of disease) can make it more difficult for women to juggle their responsibilities to home and to a career in politics. In South Africa, these same parameters affect women.

Between 1994 and 2014, great strides have been made in increasing the representation of women at the various levels of Government, as will be detailed below. However this progress has not been equal at all levels of Government, with local and provincial Government lagging behind the national level in terms of the representation of women.

¹ Levendale, C (2015a) *Women's Challenges on the Road to Parliament*.



At a national Government level, in 2009, 13 of 34 Ministers were women, representing 38.2 percent. As at June 2014, 15 of 35 National Ministers were women, representing 42.8 percent of all Ministers and a marked increase from the 2009 figures.² In 2009, 15 of the 32 Deputy Ministers were women (46.8 percent). In 2014, out of 37 Deputy Ministers, 17 were female, representing 45.9 percent, which is a slight decrease in women's representation at this level.³

At a provincial level, it is of concern that of nine premiers, only two (Northern Cape and Western Cape) were female following the 2014 elections. In addition, at the local government level, the strides in gender equality have not been as great. In 2000, 38 percent of proportional representation councillors were female, and by 2011 this had increased by only 6.1 percent to 44.1 percent.⁴

However, at a local government there is still room for improvement. It is useful to consider what the demographic spread of women across South Africa is, to assess what a fair representation of women at a local government level would be. Nationally, approximately 51 percent of the population is female. This is indicated in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Female population by province, 2015⁵

Province	Number of Females	Percentage female
Eastern Cape	3 632 397	52.52
Free State	1 447 582	51.37
Gauteng	6 547 053	49.60
KwaZulu Natal	5 691 015	52.12
Limpopo	3 027 366	52.86
Mpumalanga	2 173 624	50.74
Northern Cape	594 577	50.15
North West	1 819 760	49.09
Western Cape	3 145 256	50.73

Table 1 indicates that women make up the majority of the population in all provinces, with the exception of the North West and Gauteng. Thus, if local government representatives were to accurately reflect provincial gender trends, women should make up at least fifty percent of local government representatives in all provinces.

² Levendale, C (2015a) *Women's Challenges on the Road to Parliament*.

³ Ibid.

⁴ South African Institute of Race Relations (2013). Page 862.

⁵ Statistics South Africa (2015a). *Mid-year population estimates, 2015*.



To assess whether this was the case, a request was sent to the Electoral Commission of South Africa for the recent figures on women's representation at this level. Table 2, below, indicates the current breakdown.

Table 2: Gender representation at a local government level, as at 28 October 2015. ⁶

Province	PR				WARD				Grand Total	% F
	F	M	Total	% F	F	M	Total	%F		
EC	364	434	798	45.61	274	441	715	38.32	1 513	42.17
FS	163	196	359	45.40	97	220	317	30.60	676	38.46
GAU	230	311	541	42.51	194	314	508	38.19	1 049	40.42
KZN	426	509	935	45.57	150	678	828	18.12	1 763	32.67
LIM	287	341	628	45.70	221	322	543	40.70	1 171	43.38
MPU	241	226	467	51.94	139	263	402	34.58	869	43.73
NW	213	236	449	47.44	129	254	383	33.68	832	41.11
NC	97	118	215	45.12	71	123	194	36.60	409	41.08
WC	155	263	418	37.08	137	250	387	35.40	805	36.27
Total	2 176	2 634	4 810	45.24	1 412	2 865	4 277	33.01	9 087	39.48

Table 1 indicates that 39.48 percent of local government representatives were female as at 28 October 2015. The best performing provinces in the proportional representation list were Mpumalanga (51.95 percent female), and North West (47.44 percent female). The worst performing province was the Western Cape, with only 37.08 percent of proportional representation candidates being female as of October 2015.

At a ward level the gender representation is far lower, with most provinces having less than 40 percent female representation. Of significance, KwaZulu-Natal had the lowest representation, with only 18.12 percent of ward councillors being female as of October 2015. The best performing province at a ward council level was Limpopo, with 40.70 percent of all ward councillors being female.

Table 3, below, provides a comparison of female population per province with women's representation at a local government level. It indicates that all provinces fall short of ensuring that their local government representation reflects the gender break down of their population. KwaZulu-

⁶ Information provided by Murphy, S (2015) IEC.



Natal has the largest difference between the percentage of the population that is female, with a 19.45 percent difference. The lowest difference between female population percentage and female representation can be seen in Mpumalanga, however there remains a 7.01 percent difference.

Table 3: Comparison between female proportion of the population and female representation at a local government level

	F % of population	Total F% of local government	% difference
EC	52.52	42.17	-10.35
FS	51.37	38.46	-12.91
GAU	49.60	40.42	- 9.18
KZN	52.12	32.67	- 19.45
LIM	52.86	43.38	- 9.48
MPU	50.74	43.73	- 7.01
NW	50.15	41.11	- 9.04
NC	49.09	41.08	- 8.01
WC	50.73	36.27	- 14.46

It is clear from these figures that gender-specific challenges to women’s empowerment at a local government level exist.

3. POLICY COMMITMENTS TO WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

3.1. THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP)

The NDP, South Africa’s primary policy document on development up to 2030, makes particular commitments in relation to women’s rights and issues in a number of sections. It notes some challenges that currently face South Africa, and that will either directly or indirectly affect women. One of the six priorities includes uniting South Africa around a common program, including re-committing to the values of the Constitution, one of which is non-sexism. It recognises that whilst women’s rights have certainly come a long way since 1994, “discrimination, patriarchal attitudes and poor access to quality education persists.”⁷ The NDP suggests that women’s issues must be dealt with holistically.

The section on ‘Women and the Plan’ in the overview of the NDP summarises the recommendations in relation to women, two of which specifically relate to the role of women in Government, which are:⁸

⁷ The National Planning Commission (2013). *The NDP*. Page 25.

⁸ This bullet list is directly taken from the NDP Overview, page 43.



- The role of women as leaders in all sectors of society should actively be supported.
- Social, cultural, religious and educational barriers to women entering the job market should be addressed. Concrete measures should be put in place and the results should be evaluated over time. Access to safe drinking water, electricity, and quality early childhood education, for example, could free women from doing unpaid work and help them seek jobs.

The NDP thus recognises that both legal and non-legal barriers to women's involvement in Government exist, and commits South Africa to addressing these.

3.2. THE MEDIUM TERM STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (MTSF)

The Medium Term Strategic Framework 2014 – 2019 (MTSF) is Government's strategic plan for the 2014 – 2019 electoral term and includes clear targets in relation to achieving the broader goals of the NDP. It also provides a framework for the plans of other levels of Government.⁹ The MTSF is comprised of 14 desired outcomes which are:¹⁰

1. Quality basic education;
2. A long and healthy life for all South Africans;
3. All people in South Africa are and feel safe;
4. Decent employment through inclusive growth;
5. A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path;
6. An efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network;
7. Vibrant, equitable, sustainable rural communities contributing towards food security for all;
8. Sustainable human settlements and improved quality of household life;
9. Responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local government;
10. Protect and enhance our environmental assets and natural resources;
11. Create a better South Africa and contribute to a better Africa and a better world;
12. An efficient, effective and development-orientated public service;
13. A comprehensive, responsive and sustainable social protection system; and
14. A diverse, socially cohesive society with a common national identity.

In particular, Outcome 12 sets targets for women's participation in the public service and engaging women at a local government level which were:¹¹

⁹ The Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (2014). *The Medium-Term Strategic Framework 2014 – 2019*.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Thorpe, J (2014) *The Medium Term Strategic Framework 2014 – 2019 as it relates to women and gender equality*.



- Advising and supporting municipalities in ensuring women-friendly, child-friendly, and disability-friendly planning and budgeting processes. Along these lines, the MTSF sets a target of one percent of municipalities should be able to demonstrate gender-friendly budgeting by 2014/15, and at least 75 percent should be able to do so by 2018/19.¹²
- Promoting active citizenry and leadership via the promotion of social development structures like women's forums, disability forums, and youth forums. The objective here is that at least 95 percent of municipalities should have two functioning forums by 2018/19.¹³

The Department of Women was identified as a delivery partner for this outcome.

3.3. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT GENDER POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Local Government Gender Policy Framework (2007) provided an implementation plan to ensure that gender equality is promoted at local government level. The framework had the following purpose:

- to provide general guidelines for local government on gender and development, including encouraging municipalities to develop specific policies, action plans, infrastructure and budgets towards gender equality;
- to promote and facilitate gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment through gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment;
- to give effect to State policy commitments such as the National Gender Policy Framework, as well as regional and international instruments; and
- to address specific issues affecting women (including gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS).¹⁴

The framework thus provides strategies and recommendations in order to address these goals. This policy was developed in 2007, and at the time of writing this paper, no evidence exists that the commitments contained therein have been monitored or evaluated. A comprehensive review of the policy, its impact, and of necessary changes would therefore be useful.

3.4. SALGA

At the 2015 South African Local Government Association (SALGA) Women's Lekgotla in 2015 the following commitments were made:¹⁵

¹² The Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (2014). *The Medium-Term Strategic Framework 2014 – 2019*. Appendix 14.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Department of Provincial and Local Government (2007) *Local Government Gender Policy Framework*.

¹⁵ The South African Local Government Association (2015) "SALGA Women Commission Lekgotla 2015 Declarations."



- That special measures should be enforced by legislated quotas, to ensure that women occupy key decision-making positions in local government.
- To continue to engage with political parties represented in the South African Local Government and urge them to adopt and implement strategies to promote the 50/50 representation in Local Government.
- That efforts to reach the number balance between men and women must be accompanied by capacity building to ensure quality in participation.
- To advocate for gender budgeting and ensuring that gender mainstreaming including the fight against women and child abuse is undertaken throughout the year, and not only during the 16 days of activism.
- To facilitate platforms for dialogue where women can come together to inspire and empower each other, for example, the establishment of women's platforms like 'Ingxoxo yamakhosikazi'¹⁶
- To work with a broad range of community and interest groups to address social, religious and cultural beliefs, assumptions and practices that remain as barriers to women's empowerment and gender equality.

Furthermore, the Lekgotla also resolved:

- To develop and drive the programme to revive the 50/50 campaign in preparation for the 2016 Local Government Elections;
- To increase the representation and participation of women leadership on Organised Local Government in both the administration and political wings of Local Government;
- To provide training, empowerment, and development of women councillors on various skills to build their capacity;
- To monitor gender mainstreaming in all the work of Local Government including the development of gender-disaggregated data that should inform planning and budgeting together with the SALGA Women's Commission and Section 79 Committees in municipalities as previously resolved by SALGA;
- To support and strengthen women's structures operating in Local Government;
- To establish innovative partnerships in the recognition of the need for multi-sectoral approaches to address the social ills in society; and
- For SALGA to champion the legislative reviews and reforms for the inclusion of women's representation quotas.

4. CONCLUSION

It is clear that much remains to be done to achieve gender parity in representation at a local government level. This will require a multifaceted approach that addresses both structural and physical barriers of women's access, as well as promoting gender parity within political

¹⁶ A women's forum established for women to air their concerns.



party lists. In particular, Members should consider the representation of women at a local government level within their respective provinces, and assess what steps can be taken to take up these issues within provincial legislatures, oversight in the National Council of Provinces' calendar, as well as regular committee work. In addition, some further questions for Members are taken up in Section 5, below.

5. QUESTIONS FOR MEMBERS

- What steps has SALGA taken to implement the declarations of Women's Commission held in 2015?
- What steps have SALGA taken towards gender-responsive budgeting in preparation for the elections?
- What progress has been made towards the establishment of women's forums in all municipalities, in line with the MTSF?

6. REFERENCES

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