INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY AND THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN

Bookie Monica Kethusegile-Juru, Gender Advisor, SADC Secretariat

1.   Introduction

The fact that gender equality is an essential ingredient of good democratic practice is not an issue of discussion for an august gathering such as this one. That there can not be democracy where "decisions about changing the 'lives of people' are taken without the participation of more than half of the very lives that have to be changed, is I believe, clearly agreed by all of us here. It cannot be participatory democracy when decisions are taken by some on behalf of others.[1]

The inclusion of women in decision-making is a fundamental human right and an issue of social justice. Further, it has been argued that the participation of women in leadership positions has brought about "another perspective" and resulted in increased focus, attention and allocation of resources to life quality issues such as health and education. The participation of women has been credited with bringing about qualitative transformation of institutions, laws and policies.[2]

As Zofia Kuratowska, Deputy Speaker of the Senate, Poland, noted " nobody with common sense can doubt that the participation of women in the political decision-making process should be comparable to men."

I will therefore not spend time preaching to you on this, but rather, will share the evidence that we have of the extent to intra-party democracy allows for the inclusion of women in electoral politics. [3]

There is no doubt as to the political commitments by SADC Member states at regional level with regard to the attainment of gender parity in politics and decision making and indeed in all other spheres of life.

In view of these expressed commitments, we will seek to explore the performance or practice of SADC member states in the representation of women in political decision making positions and share the trends in best practice that present themselves with respect to how some parties facilitate the entry of a critical mass of women into political leadership.

Finally, we will seek to reflect on the lessons that can be learnt from these experiences for the DRC, and their implications for the future in which gender parity will become the norm in SADC political systems.

---

[1] Mtintso, Keynote Address – Into the Future: Gender and SADC, 1997

[2] Molokomme, Representation of Women and Men in Politics and Decision-making Positions in SADC, 2001

[3] Molokomme, Building Inclusiveness in SADC's Democratic Systems: The Case of Women's Representation in Leadership Positions in Report of the Southern African Elections Forum, EISA, 2001

2.   The Commitments

The commitments of SADC Member States to gender parity in politics and decision making have been made at the highest levels in global, regional and national instruments.

At the regional level, the Declaration on Gender and Development, signed by SADC Heads of State or Government in September 1997, commits SADC countries to, among others:

ensuring the equal representation of women and men in the decision making of member states and SADC structures at all levels, and the achievement of at least a thirty percent target of women in political and decision making structures by the year 2005.

In implementation of this commitment, the Plan of Action for Gender in SADC that was approved by the Council of Ministers in September 1998 identifies as one of its six objectives the achievement of this target.

In order to realise this target, a Regional Programme of Action on Women in Politics and Decision-making was adopted by SADC Gender Ministers in June 1999, and is now being implemented.[4]

On receiving a progress report on the implementation of the Declaration at their Summit in Maputo in August 1999, SADC Heads of State or Government further committed themselves to adopting special measures, such as constitutional and/or legislated quotas and nominations of women, to ensure the attainment of agreed targets.

Let me share some statistics on the numbers of women in SADC Parliaments and cabinets to demonstrate how SADC countries are performing against expressed commitments.

3.   The Situation of Women And Men in Politics And Decision-Making in SADC

The situation is summarised in tables 1 and 2, as well as figures 1, 2, and 3. The figures as at February 2001 (there have been changes in the course of this year that may not be reflected here) reveal the following general trends:

3.1   Parliament

---

[4] Regional Programme of Action for Women in Politics and Decision-Making in SADC: Beyond 30% in 2005, SADC Gender Unit, 1999

- The average percentage of women in parliament for the region (excluding DRC, for which figures were not available) is 17.9%.

- Three countries largely account for this average: South Africa, which at 29.9% is closest to reaching the 30 percent target; followed by Mozambique, at 28.4% and Seychelles at 24%. Tanzania is next at 21.2%.

- Seven SADC countries are at 15 percent or higher, that is, beyond the half-way mark. These are: Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Seychelles, Tanzania and Namibia.

- Mauritius at 5.9% is furthest from reaching the target, followed by Swaziland, at 7.3%, Malawi, at 8.3%, Zimbabwe at 10%, Zambia at 10.1% and Lesotho at 10.3%. Zimbabwe and Mauritius representation of women dropped after their elections of 2000.

3.2   Cabinet

- The average percentage of women in Cabinet in the region (excluding DRC, for which figures were not available) is 12 percent - lower than the average for women in parliament. The DRC figures that we got in April 2001 indicate 20% of the Ministers being women and no Vice Ministers out of a total of 12.

- South Africa, at 29.6%, is closest to achieving the 30% minimum target, followed by Seychelles at 23%. The appointment of eight women by President Mbeki to the South African Cabinet after the 1999 elections, and eight women deputy ministers (61.5%), put South Africa among the top countries with women inclusivity in the world.

- Angola, Botswana and Tanzania are at, or above 15% while Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland, are close to 15%, the halfway mark. Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Mauritius, are furthest, in descending order, from reaching the target for women in cabinet.

- In the seven countries for which data was available, the average proportion of women deputy ministers was 19.6 percent, suggesting that women are generally better represented at the deputy ministerial level. This figure is however largely influenced by South Africa's 61.5%.

3.3   Some comparisons and recent trends

- At 17.9%, the proportion of women in parliament in SADC is considerably higher than the sub Saharan Africa of 9 percent; the African average of 11 percent; and the global average of 13.4 percent. The proportion is also higher than that for Europe (excluding the Nordic countries) and the Americas, at 15 percent. Three of the top ten countries in the world with regard to women in

parliament (South Africa, Mozambique and Seychelles) are in Southern Africa (Lowe Morna 2000).

- In the five SADC countries that held elections in 1999, only one maintained the proportion of women parliamentarians while four witnessed an increase in the level of participation of women. In the case of Botswana, the figure more than doubled from 9 to 18 percent. Mauritius and Zimbabwe which held their elections in 2000, the figures for the representation of women dropped quite markedly from 7.6% to 5.9% and 14% to 10% respectively.

These comparisons should make the SADC region proud of its achievements, however, this relatively favourable position should be seen against the performance of individual countries. As indicated above, three countries largely account for these relatively impressive averages.

More than half of SADC Member States are still below 15% - which is far from the 30% target to be reached in less than five years.

Moreover, those countries that are doing well in one area, such as in Parliament are not necessarily performing as well with respect to Cabinet and other levels of decision-making, such as local government and senior public service positions.

Mozambique, for instance is below 15% in Cabinet despite being the second highest in Parliament and Namibia, while not one of the high performers with respect to Parliament and Cabinet, has an impressive 43% women in local government.

Seychelles is the main exception in this regard, and is an all round good performer, with the latest figures showing a record 60% of women in local government.

These trends naturally beg the question what it is that the countries that are performing well with respect to women's representation in political positions have done to attain these impressive figures. To what extent has intra-party democracy and various election systems facilitated or hindered the inclusion, and maximum participation of all social groups, especially marginalised groups such as women.

4.   The Role of Electoral Systems

Although in-depth research has not been conducted in all countries, available evidence from within SADC and outside suggests that the choice of electoral system can greatly contribute to the achievement of gender equality in politics. This refers to electoral systems at various levels, ie. the overall system at national, provincial, and regional level, as well as the procedures and systems within parties, such as primary elections. The latter are often ignored, but they

certainly have a major impact on the representation of women in political leadership.

4.1 Intra-Party Electoral Systems and Procedures

The process of selecting candidates within political parties is just as important, and perhaps even more important for inclusivity than the type of electoral system at national level (Molokomme 1999). Political parties have their own internal procedures for selecting those who will stand for them, and someone who seeks political office and does not survive the selection process at the party level, cannot stand as that party's candidate. It is therefore important that selection procedures within parties be inclusive, transparent and democratic.

Before the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa women constituted 2.7% of Members of Parliament. Because the ANC provides for a 30% quota for women 27% seats of the National Assemble seats in the 1994 elections went to women. The decisive role of the ANC quota, together with the proportional representation system directly increased the representaion of women (Mtintso, 1999). In the 1999 elections women's representation further improved to reach the present near 30%. The appointment of eight women Ministers and eight deputy Ministers by the President improved the position of women in Cabinet.

Similarly, a major victory for feminists in Norway was the acceptance of gender quotas, which were at the beginning very controversial. They were eventually accepted by the leftists, the Labour Party, and later by the Centre parties. The Labour Party then introduced gender quotas in government. Thus in 1996, 40% of the MPs in Norway were women, 45% in the Executive of Government; 33% in the Council of local municipalities and 40% of the regional councils.

Again, like the proportional representation system of the ANC, in Norway a list of candidates nominated from each party run for several seats in every constituency. It is therefore much easier for women to be nominated and elected in this system. This also provides opportunity for broader recruitment and participation of women in party leadership positions. It is a "rule" in that country that every name on the list of candidates should be a woman's name.[5]

Back home, in the SADC region, the 28.4% women in Parliament of Mozambique are largely due to FRELIMOs deliberate policy to include women. Thus, out of a total of 129 Members of Parliament, FRELIMO has 37.7%, RENAMO 13.4% and UD 11.1%.

In Namibia the number of women increased significantly when the affirmative action law was applied in the first two local government elections leading to the current 43% of local government seats being held by women while women only

---

[5] Hilde Frafjord Johnson, M.P., in Women in Decision-Making: Empowerment for Action, AWEPA 1996

occupy 3% of the regional decision-making positions and 19% of Parliamentary seats where the affirmative action law was not applied.[6]

Unfortunately, in most cases procedures are at best gender blind, and at worst not sufficiently transparent and democratic. Generally, they have not been conducive to the election of women, and in some cases, they have contributed to the marginalisation of women candidates within parties. The option of going independent is the only other route, but this has not proved to be feasible, especially for women.

It appears that the most common method of selecting internal party candidates, especially in constituency-based systems, is through primary elections. Primary elections are of at least two types: the direct and indirect system. The direct system is where all members of a political party who qualify can vote for the candidate of their choice in the primary election. The indirect system, which appears to be more common, is where voters select a smaller number of representatives to vote on their behalf in the primaries. An example of this is the electoral college system.

The latter system has been criticised on the basis that it is more susceptible to manipulation, especially by the wealthy and influential members of the party. It is often argued that it is easier to buy the votes or influence the few people in the electoral college than a whole lot of voters. In many cases where this system has been used, it tends to return the same powerful candidates or groups of people to power (See Somolekae 1998).

In view of the gender imbalances within parties and society generally, this system is not conducive to the election of marginalised groups such as women. In fact, in the case of Botswana, women politicians have identified this system as one of the stumbling blocks to their standing for office.

Direct elections are more likely to benefit women candidates because they tend to do most of the organising, fundraising and campaigning for their parties at the grassroots level, and are better known and appreciated by their own constituents at this level.

4.2 Examples of Various Electoral Systems

4.2.1 Proportional Representation versus Constituency-Based Systems

Writing on the situation in the Commonwealth, Lowe-Morna (1996) observes that there is overwhelming evidence to suggest women stand a better chance of getting elected under the PR system rather than the constituency-based system. The reason for this, she argues, is because in the former case 'candidates focus on the party and its policies, rather than on a particular individual. This works in

---

[6] Eunice Iipinge et al, The status of Women in Politics and Decision-making in Namibia, 2000 – 2001

favour of women – at least in getting their foot in the door-because of the in-built prejudices against women'.

The experience of SADC countries supports the observation globally that the proportional representation and list system is more conducive to the representation of women than the constituency based system. The case of Norway is one such example.

Of the thirteen SADC countries represented in table one, six have constituency-based electoral systems. Four of these, i.e. Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Angola- have proportional representation systems, except at the local level in South Africa (in which there is a combination of the PR and constituency based system) and at the regional level in Namibia (where elections are constituency based). Seychelles has a mixed PR and constituency-based system. Tanzania has a constituency- based system with a 20 percent seats reserved by the Constitution for women, which are contested on a PR basis.

In other words, two of the three top countries in SADC with regard to the representation of women in parliament (South Africa and Mozambique) have proportional representation systems. The third top performer, Seychelles, has a mixed system. This shows a definite correlation between the use of PR, either in full or in part, with increased representation of women in political leadership positions.
Writing on the 1994 elections in South Africa, Mtintso (1999) observes that:

'The 1994 national and provincial elections were run wholly on a proportional representation basis. The advantage of the proportional representation system for women is illustrated by the contrast between the national/provincial and local government elections. In the seats contested on the basis of proportional representation, women won 27.9 percent of the seats. In the ward or constituency based seats, women won only 10.84 percent of the seats. This gave an overall average of 19 percent of the seats in local government being won by women.'

4.2.2 Quotas and Special measures

The PR sytem by itself is however not a complete gurantee for increased representation of women. According to Lowe-Morna (2000), the chance of women getting elected is even higher when the PR system is combined with a legislated or party-based quota for women. As is shown in the following (edited) extract from her paper, there are four possible combinations of quotas and electoral systems:

a)   ***The voluntary party quota, combined with the Proportional Representation (PR) system.***

An example of this is to be found in South Africa and Mozambique; and it is no coincidence that these two have the highest representation of women in parliament in SADC. The two ruling parties, the ANC and Frelimo, have their own voluntarily adopted 30 percent quotas. Because of the combination of a PR and list system, every third person on their list was a woman. As the majority parties, this system has ensured levels of representation by women of close to thirty percent. The disadvantage of this is that it is reliant on the ruling parties getting substantial majorities. In other words, unless every party contesting has a 30 percent quota, there is no guarantee of the "critical mass" of thirty percent being achieved.

b)   The legislated quota, combined with the proportional representation system

This is demonstrated by the experience in the local government elections in Namibia. Because the quota was legislated, as opposed to being voluntarily adopted by one or other party, the elections had a guaranteed outcome of thirty percent women. However, as some parties fielded even more women candidates, the overall outcome was 41 percent. This suggests that the combination of a legislated quota and PR system are the most powerful combination for achieving gender parity in politics- the ultimate objective.

c)   The Legislated or constitutional quota in the constituency based system

The example of this in Southern Africa is in Tanzania, whose constitution stipulates that at least 20 percent of the 283 members of parliament must be women- in other words 47 seats are reserved for women. With the eight seats that women contested directly and won, this has given women in Tanzania an overall representation of 16.4 percent in parliament. Clearly, the quota has boosted the level of representation by women in Tanzania.

d)   The voluntary party quota, combined with the constituency based system

 An example of this internationally is the Labour Party in the UK which, through its commitment to fielding women candidates managed to increase the representation of women substantially.

On the contrary in Botswana, which has a constituency system, two opposition parties (the Botswana Congress Party and Botswana National Front) had quotas of thirty percent women for the 1999 elections. However, the parties themselves did not actively ensure that the quota was met, by reviewing their procedures to enhance access by women, head-hunting for women, and encouraging them to stand for the primary elections. As a result, these parties fielded very few women by the time the national parliamentary elections came up.

On the other hand, the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (which does not have a quota for women, but yielded to pressure from party women and women's

organisations) fielded more women, many of whom were elected and are now in Parliament and cabinet. This shows that while quotas are indeed useful, another crucial factor is action from political parties, either voluntarily or under pressure, to ensure that their structures and culture enable and encourage women to stand for elected office. This issue is addressed in section 4.3.

In addition to quotas, the electoral systems of many countries allow the Head of State to make some appointments to parliament (examples are Zimbabwe, Botswana and Swaziland). Indeed, of the eight women in the Swazi parliament, only two were elected. The king appointed the other six. Similarly in Botswana, two of the eight women in Parliament are also specially nominated, which has been a practice for sometime now.

5. Conclusions And Lessons Learnt

A number of conclusions and lessons can be drawn from the foregoing discussion.

Firstly, the important role of internal political party electoral systems and procedures, especially for primary elections, is emphasised. Related to this is the importance of demonstrated commitment and action on the part of political parties to implementing agreed measures such as quotas, which are not self enforcing. This requires a fundamental transformation of their structures, rules and institutional cultures to become more welcoming of women candidates. Such a culture needs to be internalised by party members, who should feel a sense of ownership of the process, rather than see it in narrow terms as the agenda and responsibility of the women members of the party.

A democratic party is one which believes in and operates on principles of social justice, gender equality and equity; a party which embraces the principle that women's rights are human rights; a party which allows for women and men to have equal rights and exercise their political and civic rights; a party that provides structures to enable women and men to stand for elections within their political structures; vote for those who stand for elections based on merit; it should empower its various structures, such as women's wings, to enable them to effectively participate in the mainstream activities of the party without fear of intimidation.

Democratic processes and procedures within a party would bridge the gaps between the various groups so that all are able to participate effectively and efficiently in party activities and programmes regardless of sex, class or race.

In a democratic institution any member can stand for elections to be voted into any decision-making position at any level, and all can exercise their right to vote.

Intra-party democracy and inclusivity needs to be sustainable, and this requires that a political party has in place structures and systems that will ensure that all groups are catered for at all times. Resources need to be invested to ensure that the systems and processes are sustained.

Secondly, there is no doubt that the choice of electoral system has a direct impact on the access by women to elected positions. It was observed that available evidence from SADC countries shows that as compared with the constituency-based system, the PR system is more likely to deliver more women candidates. This conclusion has wider implications, in view of the ongoing debates in some SADC countries to review PR systems in favour of a mixed system. It is therefore important that the impact of this on women's representation be fully taken into account in these debates. In countries such as South Africa, which has the highest figures of women in Parliament, changes in the electoral system for the 2004 elections could erode the gains already made, and place them behind in the achievement of the 30% target by 2005.

Thirdly, however, it also became clear that the PR system by itself is not a sufficient guarantee to get a critical mass of women into elected positions. The analysis has demonstrated that its combination with a quota system, preferably constitutional or legislated, is probably the best recipe for ensuring the desired result. While voluntary, party-based systems have worked in countries like South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia (at local government level), these are dependant upon those parties winning large majorities. This justifies the call for explicit constitutional and legislative provisions for gender equality in SADC countries. In addition, legislative provisions for mandatory quotas may be required as a temporary measure until gender parity is achieved.

Finally, there is no doubt that while the choice of electoral system plays a major role in the participation of marginalised groups such as women in elected offices, other variables are also at play, which have not been raised in this short paper. Gender biases and stereotypes that do not encourage women to enter politics remain pervasive at all levels of society in SADC member states, and governments and political parties should play a leading role in social engineering. It is therefore the responsibility of all stakeholders in civil society, researchers, independent electoral commissioners and academics such as those attending this conference, to consistently raise the issue of gender equality in leadership politics as part of their discourse on good governance and human rights.

REFERENCES

Lowe-Morna, C. 1996

Strategies for increasing women's participation in politics: paper presented to the Fifth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs.

Lowe-Morna, C. 2000

Women's Political Participation in SADC; paper presented at the International IDEA Conference on 'Towards Sustainable Democratic Institutions in Southern Africa', Gaborone, Botswana, May 2000.

Molokomme 2000

Building Inclusiveness in SADC's Democratic Systems: The Case of Women's Representation in Leadership positions in the Report of the SADC Elections Forum, June 2001, EISA

Molokomme 2000

Gender and Democracy in SADC: A Regional Case Study; Paper Presented to the Commonwealth Workshop on Gender and Democracy, Windhoek, Namibia, 9-11 February 2000

Molokomme 1999

Gender Equality in SADC; A Democratic Imperative; Paper Presented to the SADC-EU Conference on Strengthening and Consolidating   Democracy in SADC Through the Electoral Process, Gaborone, Botswana.

Molokomme 2000

Obligations and Timelines Under the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and the 1999 Programme of Action on Women in Politics and Decision making. Paper presented to the seminar on parliamentary action on the beijing Plus Five Review process, Gaborone, April 2000.

 Mtintso, T. 1999a

Women in Politics and Decision making: A Conceptual Framework; Paper presented at the Conference on Women in Politics and Decision making, Gaborone, March 1999.

Mtintso, T. 1999b

A voluntary party-based quota in a list system; Paper presented at the Conference on Women in Politics and Decision making, Gaborone, March 1999.

SADC, FEF, UNDP and Botswana Caucus for Women in Politics 1999

Beyond 30% in 2005: Women in Politics and Decision making in SADC; Report of a Conference held in Gaborone, Botswana, 28 March to 1 April 1999.

Somolekae, G. 1998
The Various Systems of Party Primary Elections in Botswana: Paper presented to the National Conference on Women preparing to Stand for the primaries in Botswana; Emang Basadi, Gaborone.

TABLE ONE: WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT AND CABINET IN THE SADC REGION

COUNTRY	ELECTO-RAL SYSTEM	WOMEN / PARL.	% WOMEN PARL.	WOMEN CABINET	% WOMEN CABINET	WOMEN DEPUTY MIN	% WOMEN MIN
ANGOLA	PR	34/224	15.1 %	4/28	14.3 %	5/43	11.6%
BOTSWANA	CONST	8/44	18.0 %	2/15	14.5 %	2/4	50 %
DRC							
LESOTHO *	CONST	10/97	10.3 %	1/12	8.3 %	0/2	0.0 %
MALAWI	CONST	16/192	8.3 %	2/22	9.0 %	2/**9**	**12.9%**
MAURITIUS	CONST	5/65	7.6 %	2/25	8.0 %		
MOZAMBIQUE	PR	71/250	28.4 %	**3/21**	14.2 %	4/33**	12.1 %
NAMIBIA *	Pr-nat/ C/Reg PR/local	19/ 99	19 %	**3/21**	**14.2** %	**5/22**	**22.7** %
S. AFRICA *	PR/Nat; PR and C/local	119/400	29.8 %	8/27	29.6 %	8/13	61.5 %
SEYCHELLES	CONST	8/33	24 .0 %	3/14	21.4 %	(no such posts)	
SWAZILAND	CONST	7/95	7.3 %	2/15	13.3 %		
TANZANIA	CONST	45/275	16.3 %	3/23	13.0 %	3/23	13 %
ZAMBIA	CONST	16/158	10.1 %	2/24	8.3 %	2/28	7.1 %
ZIMBABWE	CONST	21/150	14.0 %	3/21	14.2 %	3/16	18.7 %

NOTE: * Upper and lower house;
** new figures not available;
CABINET: Minister's only

Source: SADC Secretariat, Member States

TABLE TWO: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SADC COUNTRIES THAT HELD ELECTIONS IN 1999

COUNTRY	PRE ELECTION		POST ELECTION		INCREASE
	No of Women	Percentage	No of Women	Percentage	
Botswana	4/44	9 %	8/44	18 %	**100 %**
Malawi	9/171	5.2 %	16/192	8.3 %	**59 %**
Mozambique	71/250	28.4 %	71/250	28.4 %	**0 %**
Namibia *	14/99	14.1 %	19/99	19.1 %	**5 %**
S Africa *	128/490	26.1 %	137/490	28 %	**7 %**

* Upper and lower house

Source: IPU; SADC Secretariat, Member States