



**Realising effective and sustainable  
democratic governance in Southern  
Africa and beyond.**

**Interrogating Challenges for  
Intra-Party Democracy in  
Southern Africa**

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**Introduction**

This article investigates the challenges facing political parties for entrenching and institutionalising intra-party democracy. It is abundantly evident that since the 1990s, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region has undergone a democratic transition from one-party political dispensation towards a democratic multiparty era, with the exception of a few countries. The key question to be posed is that if individual countries have indeed undergone a democratic transition at the national level, have the key institutions such as political parties also imbued a democratic culture and practice? The paper recognises this transition at the national level of individual SADC states, but suggests that political parties still lag behind in terms of entrenching and institutionalising democracy within their own internal operations.

During the era of *one-party rule*, the SADC region was marked by various forms of authoritarian type of governance both at the national level and within parties themselves. Centralisation of power was the order of the day in the running of national and party affairs. However, with the transition to a multiparty democratic dispensation in the early 1990s, the political landscape of SADC member states changed quite dramatically and the governance realm began to be shaped by democratic ethos, culture and practice. Be that as it may, although at the level of a nation-state, political liberalisation has paid dividends and improved the governance process, this positive trend has not sufficiently trickled down to the micro-level of key institutions such as political parties, despite having improved their operations

compared to the authoritarian era of one party regimes.

We discuss these issues and isolate five (5) major challenges for the enhancement of intra-party democracy namely (a) leadership, (b) primary elections, (c) party funding, (d) gender equity, and (e) management of the internal affairs of the party. Firstly we present some prefatory remarks on the meaning and significance of political parties in a democratic setting in the next section of the paper. The third section delves into some discussion on the nature of party system over the past three decades and their implications for the role of political parties in governance. The fourth section interrogates some key challenges confronting political parties in respect of entrenching and institutionalising intra-party democracy and to this end focuses a spotlight on the five (5) factors mentioned above. The final and concluding section winds up the discussion and restates the key observations made in the main discussion of the paper.

### **The Conceptual Framework of Analysis**

Before we delve into the debate, it is imperative to explain in a fairly sketchy fashion the meaning and significance of political parties. Political parties are organised groups that are formed with a sole purpose of contesting control over state power and government and directing a country's development process in line with their own ideological orientations and their policy frameworks as defined in their manifestos. According to Maliyamkono and Kanyangolo "a political party is an organised association of people working together to compete for political office and promote agreed-upon

policies" (2003: 41). Citing Heywood in a book published in 2002 entitled *Politics*, Dlamini observes that four characteristics distinguish political parties from other organised groups:

- Parties aim to exercise power by winning political office;
- Parties are organised bodies with a formal membership (card carrying);
- Parties typically adopt a broad issue focus, addressing each of the major areas of government policy (small parties however may have a single issue focus, thus resembling interest groups); and
- To varying degrees, parties are united by shared political preferences and a general ideological identity (2004: 6).

Parties are among the most important organisations in modern democracies; "students of political parties have commonly associated them with democracy itself. Democracy, it is argued, is a system of competitive political parties. The competitive electoral context, in which several political parties organise the alternatives that face voters, is what identifies contemporary democracy" (The Encyclopaedia of Democracy, 1995: 924). Their specific roles and effectiveness in a democracy is essentially determined by (a) the nature of the party system in place in a country; (b) the nature of the electoral system in place in a country; and (c) equally important, the effectiveness of a parliament in a given country.

A party system is important in determining how political parties play the political game. There are basically four (4) known party systems namely one party system, two-party system or duopoly, a dominant party system and a multiparty system. The electoral system sets boundaries for the parties' electoral contest for the control of state power by

setting out the institutional framework for elections and defining formulae for calculation of votes into parliamentary seats. Evidence now abounds suggesting, in fact, that the two dominant electoral systems in Southern Africa, namely the British-style First-Past-The-Post and the Proportional Representation models, have their own distinctive impact on the nature of party organisation and party political representation in the legislature (see Matlosa, 2003a). Having contested elections, parties then undertake much of their political work in parliament; thus the effectiveness of any parliament also depends overwhelmingly upon the vibrancy of political parties. Throughout the SADC region, there are basically two types of the legislature namely the unicameral and bicameral parliament.

### **Party Systems and Democratisation in Southern Africa: From One-party to Multiparty Regimes**

One of the most fascinating political developments in the SADC region since the 1990s has surely been the transition from one-party to multiparty political dispensation. This transition has had a profound bearing on both the democracy project broadly speaking and specifically, on the party systems and party organisation. It is only fair to observe that today more parties take part in the political activities of SADC countries and are thus able to contest state power through regular elections. This observation is validated by the party political competition for state power that will be ushered by five (5) general elections to be held in Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa in 2004 and the four (4) others that will be held in Angola, Mauritius, Tanzania and Zimbabwe in 2005. Furthermore, party organisation in a majority of the regional states has been

opened up to greater public scrutiny, even if the majority of parties still face critical challenges to democratise their internal management, operational, systemic and institutional arrangements. Whereas the political systems in the region were marked by centralisation through the adoption of the one-party rule and authoritarian political culture since the 1960s, major transformations are currently opening up the political market-place to broader contestation over state power, increased participation of the citizens in the political process and empowerment of disadvantaged social groups.

### ***The One-Party Era***

Immediately after the political independence of the 1960s, a number of Southern African states adopted the one-party system on grounds of (a) the need to focus attention on economic development; (b) need to prioritise imperatives of nation-building and reconciliation following the decolonisation process; and (c) the need to lessen the intensity of politics perceived as divisive and thus inimical to the achievement of the two objectives above. It was thus argued that the one-party regime was the most suited political system for the region, while the Western-type multiparty liberal democracy was generally perceived as antithetical to the challenges of development, nation-building and reconciliation. Whatever the merits of argumentation in favour of the one-party rule of the 1960s-1980s, to all intents and purposes, this trend was part and parcel of the early institutionalisation of authoritarian rule of various sorts in the region. It is worth noting that the most consistent vehement proponent of the one-party state was the late Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (Nyirabu, 2002)

who argued strongly that “where there is one-party and that party is identified with the nation as a whole, the foundations of democracy are firmer than they can ever be when you have two or more parties each representing only a section of the community” (cited in Wanyande, 2000: 108). The single party would not only exercise unfettered political hegemony over the state and society, but it would also subsume organs of civil society such as trade unions and farmers’ associations under its hegemonic political wings (see Matlosa, 2003). It worth emphasising, though, that the one party regime in the SADC region assumed two distinctive forms namely the *de facto one party rule* and *de jure one party rule*. With the exception of Swaziland whose dominant political/dynastic elite has imposed the authoritarian absolute monarchy, a majority of independent SADC states embraced *de jure one party rule*. These included Angola, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. While Botswana and Mauritius have managed to embrace and uphold a political culture of pluralism and political tolerance anchored on a relatively stable multiparty political landscape since independence, political developments in Lesotho (1970-1986), were marked by a *de facto one party rule*.

Having said this, it is worth noting that one-party system of the 1960s-80s had its own distinctive imprint upon the party organisation in a majority of the states and the extent to which parties embraced intra-party democracy. First and foremost, given the all-pervasive political culture of centralisation within the framework of one party, political parties were also highly centralised. Second, this centralisation also inculcated and fuelled personality cult politics wherein a party was often

equated with the leader and *vice-versa*. Third, both the centralisation and personality cult tendencies in the management of parties during the one-party era led to some form of authoritarian administration of parties and, in most instances, it became difficult to even change the top leadership of the party. Fourth, although most of the parties argued that they were able to allow internal debate and free flow of divergent ideas, in practice, political tolerance within parties became non-existent at worst and almost impossible at best. Fifth, although the parties had their own wings devoted to women, their structures did not exhibit gender equality at all as the wings were not really meant for that purpose. They were used within the framework of the patriarchal ideology mainly to mobilise women behind a predominantly male agenda.

### ***The Multi-Party Era***

Following the collapse of both the Cold War on a world scale and apartheid on a regional scale, we now live in a new political era in the SADC region as elsewhere in the African continent. Political centralisation that had pervaded the region and assuming various forms such as mono-party, one person and military rule, has been increasingly replaced by political liberalisation and a political culture of pluralism.

The demise of apartheid in South Africa was a crucial factor for the region’s transformation away from authoritarian rule (centralist and hegemonic political culture) and towards multi-party political pluralism (decentralised and pluralist political culture). The apartheid driven regional destabilisation of the 1970s and 1980s led to the militarisation of politics and provided part of the justification for

one-party rule which was linked to the nation-building project by the ruling elite. The one-party, it was argued, would forge a national unity required to face up to external threat of apartheid aggression. The ending of apartheid, thus helped facilitate the process of political liberalisation. This phenomenal development which led, *inter alia*, to majority rule in both Namibia (1990) and South Africa (1994), as well as the sustainable peace in Mozambique (1994), was also accompanied by internal political pressure mounted by civil society organisations in a majority of Southern African states for democratic rule and democratisation. Despite their weaknesses and disjointed organisation, civil society “in the form of trade unions, women’s organisations, churches, civil and human rights groups, media associations, lawyers’ associations and other professional and non-professional groups” (SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 1998: 95) have contributed to the emergence of a multi-party political pluralism in the region (see Matlosa, 2003b). Thus, it can be argued today, with certainty, that a majority of SADC states with the exception of Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Swaziland have all embraced the multiparty politics of a liberal democratic model. The three basic elements of liberal democracy are:

- a meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organised groups (especially political parties) for all effective positioning of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force;
- a highly inclusive level of participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that

no major (adult) social group is excluded; and

- a high level of civil and political liberties - freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organisations - sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (Sørensen, 1993: 13).

Although the current debate in the region recognises the positive political advances that have come with the liberal democratic model for the nurturing of democratic governance, questions are now being posed as its adequacy, further entrenchment and the consolidation of democracy. This is so because liberal democracy tends to emphasise political rights almost at the expense of socio-economic rights of citizens. Not only that; despite the liberal democratic model in the region, almost all the countries today are characterised by what in political science is termed a ‘dominant party system’(see Giliomee and Simkins 1999). The dominant party system is more entrenched in Botswana where the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has ruled the country since 1996 (Molomo, 2000) as clearly illustrated in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Botswana Parliamentary Election Results: 1965 – 1999**

Party	'65	'69	'74	'79	'84	'89	'94	'99
BDP	28	24	27	29	29	31	27	33
BPP	3	3	2	1	1	0	0	0
BIP	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
BNF	-	3	2	2	4	3	13	6
BPU	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0
BCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>

Source: Molomo, 2000

The trend of a dominant party system, however is not confined to Botswana’s long-enduring liberal democracy. Table 2 below highlights this trend throughout the SADC region in terms of the

dominance of the ruling party in the legislatures.

**Table 2: Dominance of Ruling Parties within Legislature and Nature of Representation**

Country	Ruling Party	Main Opposition Party	Size of Legislature	No. of Ruling Party Seats	% Ruling Party Seats	Appt Seats
Angola	MPLA	UNITA	220	129	53.7	0
Botswana	BDP	BNF	47	33	54.2	7
DR Congo	-	-	210	-	-	-
Lesotho	LCD	BNP	120	79	66.0	0
Malawi	UDF	MCP	192	93	47.3	0
Mauritius	MSM/ MMM	PTr/MXD	66	54	51.7	4
Mozambique	FRELIMO	RENAMO	250	133	53.0	0
Namibia	SWAPO	COD	104	55	76.1	6
Seychelles			34	30	61.7	0
South Africa	ANC	DA	400	266	66.4	0
Swaziland	-	-	85	-	-	30
Tanzania	CCM		274	244	89.1	42
Zambia	MMD	UPND	158	69	46.0	8
Zimbabwe	ZANU	MDC	150	63	53.0	30

Source: Electoral Institute of Southern Africa Database

Within the entire SADC region, the dominant party system assumes the following forms (a) electoral dominance for an uninterrupted and prolonged period (eg Botswana Democratic Party as shown in table 1 above); (b) dominance in the formation of governments, (eg the legislature as in table 2 above); and (c) dominance in determining the public agenda (Giliomee and Simkins, 1999: xxi). The dominant party system in Southern Africa is also symptomatic of the weakness, fragmentation and disorganisation of opposition parties (Olukoshi, 1998).

On a positive note, the political liberalisation that accompanied the onset of multiparty democratisation since the 1990s has had some positive impact on the management and administration of political parties in the SADC region. First, the political culture of centralisation which was a feature of the era of one party rule has been jettisoned as the decentralisation within parties has become increasingly entrenched. Political parties in a majority of SADC countries today are anchored more upon

the strength of their provincial, district, community and village branches, despite enormous power and authority still resting with the party central committees in the national capitals. For instance, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa draws much of its strength from its provincial and community branches for its continued hegemony over the political landscape in that country and this is further bolstered by its strategic alliance with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the main labour movement – the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

Second, decentralisation has also considerably reversed the deleterious politics of personality cult wherein a party was equated with the leader and the strong leader was perceived as the embodiment of the party. This should not be read to mean that political parties do not have strong leaders, but rather that a majority of today's political leaders are much more democratically minded in running party affairs than those of the one-party era, as it were. This explains, in part, why some attempts by some leaders in the region (eg Frederick Chiluba, former president of Zambia and Bakili Muluzi, president of Malawi) to manipulate the national constitution with a view to extending their terms of office were foiled during the last couple of years.

Third, both the decentralisation and institutionalisation of some democratic ethos within the management of parties during the current multiparty era have led to some form of democratic opening in the administration of parties and, in most instances, this allows regular alternation in the top leadership of the party. So far, the change of party leadership within the African National

Congress (ANC) in South Africa has been a fairly smooth and less conflict-ridden affair. This is also the case in Botswana where Ian Khama, the former commander of the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) will succeed president Festus Mogae in a couple of years following the general election scheduled for 2004. A similar argument for smooth leadership transition could also be made in the case of Mozambique. Here President Joachim Chissano will be replaced by the veteran politician, Armando Guebuza who will stand for the presidential election in 2004. However, it must be pointed out that the issue of succession both at the level of the party leadership as well as the national leadership, still remains thorny and often conflict-ridden. A good example is the transfer of power from Frederick Chiluba and Levy Mwanawasa within the ruling MMD in Zambia in 2003 which was marred by tension and conflict. There is no gainsaying that controversy and possibly conflict will surround the change of leadership of the ruling UDF in Malawi as President Bakili Muluzi steps down following the forthcoming general election scheduled for 18 May 2004. Further more, although the leader of SWAPO and the president of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, has publicly declared that he will not seek a fourth

term by further manipulating the national constitution, he has not yet given any indication as to who will be his successor. The longer Nujoma delays a definitive solution to the succession issue and the closer we approach the general election scheduled for 2004, the more there will be an escalation of tension and possibly conflict around this issue in Namibia. The same argument applies to Zimbabwe where the leader of the ruling ZANU-PF, Robert Mugabe, has not yet made his intentions clear regarding the issue of who will be his successor in advance of the 2005 election.

Fourth, evidently, policy debate within a majority of political parties in the region is relatively much more democratic compared to the situation that prevailed during the one-party era. This suggests that there is probably more political tolerance within parties and acceptance of divergent and diverse views and opinions. Fifth, although some progress is evident regarding gender balance in parties and their representation in key organs of the state especially the legislature, a number of parties in the SADC region have not yet increased women's participation enough as shown in Table 3 below:

**Table 3: Gender Balance in SADC Parliaments**

Rank	Country	Lower or Single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats	Women	% Women	Elections	Seats	Women	% Women
1	Mozambique	12 1999	250	75	30.0	---	---	---	---
2	South Africa	06 1999	399	119	29.8	6 1999	89	17	31.5
3	Seychelles	12 2002	34	10	29.4	---	---	---	---
4	Namibia	11 1999	72	19	26.4	11 1998	26	2	7.7
5	Tanzania	10 2000	274	61	22.3	---	---	---	---
6	Botswana	10 1999	47	8	17.0	---	---	---	---
9	Angola	09 1992	220	34	15.5	----	----	----	---
8	Zambia	12 2001	158	19	12.0	---	---	---	---
9	Lesotho	05 2002	120	14	11.7	N.A.	33	12	36.4
10	Zimbabwe	06 2000	150	15	10.0	---	---	---	---
11	Malawi	05 1999	193	18	9.3	---	---	---	---
12	Mauritius	09 2000	70	4	5.7	---	---	---	---
13	Swaziland	10 1998	65	2	3.1	10 1998	30	4	13.3

Source: Sichinga, 2004 cited in IPU

Women in National Parliaments situation as at 30<sup>th</sup> October 2003 (World and Regional averages)

### Key Challenges for Enhancing Intra-Party Democracy

As indicated earlier in this paper, political parties are an essential component of a working democracy. This is a stark reality which was strongly emphasised during a recent Conference in Maputo, Mozambique, organised jointly by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the SADC Parliamentary Forum and FECIV- a Mozambican civic education NGO, between 26 and 30 January 2004 under the theme "Government and Opposition – Roles, Rights and Responsibilities". Many presentations at the Conference (see Siteo, 2004; Dlamini, Camay and Gordon, 2004; 2004; Sumbana, 2004; Shemena, 2004; Matlosa, 2004) underscored the point that political parties are a key ingredient for

representative democracy. Broadly speaking, there are two main types of parties: (a) ruling parties and (b) opposition parties in a democratic set-up. A working democracy requires constructive engagement between ruling and opposition parties through dialogue and mutual cooperation as opposed to antagonistic relations marked by instability and violent conflict.

It is not surprising therefore, that the Final Statement of the Conference Participants during the Maputo Conference referred to above concluded that there is need for an effective opposition capable of holding the executive and/or the ruling party to account for its policies through presentation of an alternative policy framework as a government-in-waiting. However opposition does exist solely to

oppose everything and anything that is initiated by the ruling party; hence Conference Participants also urged opposition parties to “develop a consensus with government on issues of national importance and in the interest of national development” (Conference Press Statement, 30 January 2004). Equally importantly, the Maputo Conference emphasised the key role of political parties in deepening democracy and proposed the following measures for enhancing this role:

- that Secretary-Generals of SADC political parties should meet to achieve consensus on common norms of behaviour;
- that there should be a Code of Conduct concerning the behaviour of parties in power; and
- that there should be a SADC Inter-Party Forum (Conference Press Statement, 30 January 2004).

In a representative democracy, citizens are governed by their representatives who are regularly subjected to periodic review through general and local government elections that either renew the mandate of the representatives or change such leadership through the ballot and not the bullet. It is in this regard that parties form the heart of politics, in a representative democracy for they are the ones who aggregate interests and mobilise citizens through their manifestos and programmes. It is no exaggeration to observe that although there can be parties without democracy in a given country, there cannot be democracy without parties, the Museveni’s experiment in Uganda with a no-party democracy notwithstanding. Put somewhat differently, most forms of governance without political parties tend to be either *benign* authoritarianism as in Uganda or *malign* authoritarianism as in

King Mswati’s Kingdom of Swaziland (see EISA, 2003a; EISA, 2003b).

Given this, it is extremely important that political parties are well organised, sufficiently institutionalised and are able to provide a visionary leadership for their own countries. The robustness of any working democracy lies primarily in a dominant political culture as well as the institutions within, have to be firmly anchored. Thus, political parties become key institutions for anchoring a working democracy and inculcating a democratic culture in society.

While our celebration of democratic transition from one-party to multiparty democratic systems in the SADC region since the 1990s is both justifiable and understandable, we are still far off from celebrating an institutionalised culture of intra-party democracy yet. In other words, the challenge facing SADC today is to nurture and consolidate democracy at the national level and strive to establish and institutionalise intra-party democracy.

If the above prognosis is correct, then the challenges that confront political parties in terms of entrenching intra-party democracy are many and varied. Camay and Gordon persuasively argue that “political competition is also severely limited when internal democracy is constrained. Many African political parties – especially dominant ones – engage in internal ‘dissent management’ leading to autocracy. They restrict voices within the party and discipline MPs and other members who disagree with leadership positions. They exercise strict control over the selection of party officials and candidates for public office” (2004:6). For the purposes of the discussion in this paper, I propose to focus mainly on five (5) challenges rotating around (a) leadership, (b)

primary elections, (c) party funding, (d) gender equity, and (e) management of the internal affairs of the party.

*Leadership* of political parties is as political an issue as the organisation itself. Undoubtedly, the effectiveness and vibrancy of any political party in respect of its contribution to a working democracy is heavily dependent upon its leadership. Thus, a party's performance during and in-between regular general and local government elections is determined, among other things, on how visionary its leadership is. In a word, a party can rise or fall on the basis of the nature and character of its leadership cadre. In a majority of SADC countries the leadership issue still remains problematic.

In some countries, like Zimbabwe and Namibia, the succession issue is being hotly debated as the leaders of ruling parties in these countries remain mum on their succession plans. In others, such as Malawi, the hand-picking of the successor by the leader of the ruling party and the country's president, has triggered resentment leading to the resignation of the deputy president who has since joined a different party in advance of the 2004 general election. In other countries, such as Botswana and South Africa the party leadership seems reasonable stable, credible and forward-looking in terms of alternation of top party offices, although even in these countries, the process is not controversy-proof or conflict-free. It is imperative upon political parties that they strive for accountable, legitimate and visionary leadership that has the appropriate requisites for inculcation of democratic culture and practice both within the party and the nation at large.

*Primary Elections* form another important litmus test of the extent and

degree of the intra-party democracy within political parties. The process of nomination of party candidates for purposes of contestation of state power during elections has often been fraught with controversy and conflict due to manner it is executed by the party leadership. In some countries such as Lesotho and Zimbabwe, the nomination process is so centralised in a number of recent general elections, party members who have felt mistreated have been forced to leave their parties and contest elections as independents. These problems are rife in almost all the SADC countries, irrespective of the electoral model each one of them operates. However, it is much more glaring in those countries that operated the British-style First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) that easily allows candidates to contest elections in their independent capacity. The challenge revolves around the degree of openness when nominations for candidates are made. Parties need to open up to their rank and file membership for the collective ownership of nominations and party lists. In fact, it is desirable that an independent and impartial body is engaged and involved during party nominations and drawing of party lists. This ensures that the process is monitored and observed by an external impartial body as in the case of the party list process in South Africa that is facilitated and observed by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA). This practice will have to be replicated elsewhere throughout the entire SADC region.

*Party funding* and the transparency and accountability around the utilisation of party funds, forms yet another important criterion for an assessment of the profundity of intra-party democracy in the SADC region. Research shows that public funding for campaign purposes

during elections is a crucial for democratic consolidation (Lodge, 2001; Lodge, 2003). The significance of public funding presumably has led a majority of SADC countries to endorse and constitutionalise public funding for (represented) political parties (Matlosa and Mbaya, 2003).

It goes without saying that in the absence of access to resources, election campaign and results can be a “one party-show” that can hugely undermine considerable and meaningful participation of electorates (Lodge 2001:1). Due to other compelling reasons, for example, ailing economies in SADC and hence handicapping political parties’ proceeds from membership and lack of sustainability of external funding, public funding has indeed become a “burning issue”. By implication, not to address the issue of public funding seriously would undermine democratic consolidation in SADC. As Lodge seems to suggest, the issue of public funding is indispensable in SADC to avoid a situation whereby, “efficiently and expensively administered elections” (Lodge 2001:1), becomes a one-party show. Lodge shows that there are five sources, which include, own “governments, foreign donors, business, political party’s own business operations (...) and their membership and mass support” (Lodge 2001:1). The challenge for political parties is to ensure that public funds are used for the benefit of the citizenry in a responsible and responsive manner. Parties need to ensure more transparency and accountability in the utilisation of public resources in order to curb possibilities of corrupt practices.

*Gender equality* is an imperative principle for the entrenchment and institutionalisation of intra-party

democracy. The Southern African experience in respect of women’s empowerment in both quantitative and qualitative terms is a mixed bag (Molokomme, 2000). The SADC member-states took a positive step in 1997 when they signed *The Gender and Development Declaration* in Blantyre, Malawi. The member states committed themselves individually and collectively to the following policy measures, among others:

- The achievement of equal gender representation in all key organs of the state and at least 30% target of women in key political and decision-making structures by 2005;
- Promoting women’s full access to and control over productive resources to reduce the level of poverty among women;
- Repealing and reforming all laws, amending constitutions and changing social practices which still subject women to discrimination; and
- Taking urgent measures to prevent and deal with the increasing levels of violence against women and children (Molokomme, 2002:42).

The declaration was further reinforced and beefed up by the Addendum to the 1997 Declaration entitled *The Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children* adopted by SADC in 1998. The 1998 Addendum commits the SADC member states to the following principles:

- A recognition that violence against women and children is a violation of fundamental human rights;
- An identification of various forms of violence against women and children in the SADC;
- A concern that various forms of violence against women and children

in SADC countries continue to increase, and a recognition that existing measures are inadequate;

- Recommendations for the adoption of measures in a number of areas, including enactment of legislation and legally binding SADC instruments, social, economic, cultural, and political interventions, service delivery, education, training and awareness programmes, integrated approaches; and budgetary allocations (Molokomme, 2002:42).

The signing of protocols and declarations by the political elite in the SADC region is one thing and translating those political commitments into reality through deliberate policy reform measures, is quite another. Progress towards reaching the 30% minimum target of women in key organs of the state, especially parliament is not only mixed, but points to a quiet resistance by the male-dominated political institutions. Table 3 above illustrates commendable progress by a few SADC states in reaching the minimum target as well as disappointing record of a majority of these states in living up to both the 1997 SADC Declaration and its 1998 Addendum.

Evidently five best performers in terms of meeting the requirements of the 1997 Declaration and its 1998 Addendum in so far as women's participation in parliament is concerned are Mozambique (30%), South Africa (29.8%), Seychelles (29.4%), Namibia (26.4%) and Tanzania (22.3%). The five worst performers are Swaziland (3%), Mauritius (5.7%), Malawi (9.3%), Zimbabwe (10%) and Lesotho (11.7%). One of the major factors of interest to this study, that helps us explain the picture above, is that although political culture embedded in the ideology of patriarchy is responsible for bad performance in a number of SADC

countries, equally important is the nature of the electoral system in place in each of these states. It is abundantly clear that with the exception of Botswana (with a relatively mature liberal democracy predicated upon the FPTP) and Seychelles (with a mixed electoral system), the rest of the best performers implement the PR system reputable for its tendency to enhance participation of various stakeholders in the political system. Thus, it could be argued that there is clearly a positive correlation between the adoption and implementation of the PR electoral system and the enhancement of women's participation in the legislature, although other creative measures (such as the quota system, the Zebra-list of candidates etc) are still called for to supplement this system and achieve desirable results in the final analysis. The challenge, therefore, is that parties must ensure broader inclusiveness at the higher echelons of their governance by bringing in more women to the position of leadership. Both ruling parties and major opposition parties in the region are led by men and the executive committees are also dominated by men. We are yet to see women becoming leaders of ruling and opposition parties and not just cheerleaders. To this end, SADC member states should strive to achieve the benchmarks of the 1997 SADC Declaration on gender and development.

*Management of the internal affairs of the party* is an important yardstick for the extent to which intra-party democracy is deepening in most of the SADC states. This issue is inextricably linked to party leadership in some sense, but it is also dependent upon the ideological clarity and distinctiveness of each party as well as the relevance of its manifesto and programme. The management of party affairs involves the day-to-day running of party affairs, building of national,

provincial, district, community and village branches of parties, management of party resources both moveable and immovable. This also includes the development of manifestos and programmes as well as the organisation regular meetings and conferences for parties. In those countries where the leadership of parties is rather autocratic, then obviously the management of parties tends to be less transparent and accountable to the party rank and file. In those countries where the leadership is more open and fairly democratic the management of parties tends to be more transparent and accountable. It is imperative, therefore, that parties strive for an efficient, transparent and accountable management of party affairs if intra-party democracy is to be established and institutionalised. Further more, effective and efficient management systems have to be put in place from the village/community branches up to the national structures of parties if their management is to be adequately improved.

### Conclusion

This article has attempted to tease out critical problems confronting parties in the SADC region in respect of entrenchment and institutionalisation of intra-party democracy. What we have established firmly is that under the one party regime, parties, as a general rule, were run along autocratic and authoritarian lines. We have also established beyond a shadow of doubt that with the transition to a multiparty democratic dispensation since the 1990s, the political space has been opened for pluralism and unfettered party political competition for state power. This transition has also been accompanied by some relative opening up within parties to allow some modicum of intra-party

democracy although serious challenges still remain if the commendable beginnings of the democratic transitions are to trickle down to parties. These challenges revolve mainly around (a) party leadership, (b) primary elections, (c) party funding, (d) gender equity, and (e) management of the internal affairs of parties. It is primarily the sole responsibility of leadership of parties to ensure that intra-party democracy is entrenched and institutionalised. It is also the responsibility of the party rank and file to demand and agitate for democratic reforms within the parties. Further more, civil society organisation also needs to lobby and advocate for more democratic reforms within the political parties.

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