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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Women's Development Forum (WDF), Women's Empowerment Unit (WEU), South African Local Government Association (SALGA), National Women's Coalition (NWC), the Office on the Status of Women (OSW) as well as the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) wish to express gratitude to the following sponsors and donors:

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Over and above this we owe an incalculable debt to all the participants of the Symposium whose presence signalled support and encouragement needed in the struggle for gender equality.

***Phumelele Ntombela-Nzimande***

*Acting Chair: Commission on Gender Equality*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Foreword

*Ms. Barbara Watson: Executive Director WDF* ..... iii

**List of Abbreviations** ..... iv

**A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** ..... 1

**B. COMMISSIONS** ..... 4

1. Policy and Advocacy ..... 4

2. Capacity Building ..... 5

3. Transforming Institutions of Governance ..... 6

4. Women and Elections ..... 6

**C. PROPOSED FUTURE STRATEGIES** ..... 8

**D. WORK-PLAN** ..... 10

**E. DISCUSSION PAPERS** ..... 13

**1. Opening Speech**

*Dr. Brigalia Bam: President WDF* ..... 13

**2. Transforming Ministries and Institutions**

*Dr Ivy Matsepe-Cassaburi MPL, Premier: Free State Province* ..... 14

**3. Experiences of Women in Governance**

3.1 *Ms. Tersia Wessels: New National Party* ..... 16

3.2 *Ms. Pat Richards: Democratic Party* ..... 19

**4. Access to Participation and Transformation**

*Ms. Thenjiwe Mtintso, Deputy Secretary-General: African National Congress* ..... 20

**5. The Role of the Office on the Status of Women**

*Dr. Ellen Kornegay, Chief Executive Officer: OSW* ..... 26

**6. Entrenching Democracy and Good Governance Through the Empowerment of Women**

*Dr. Patricia McFadden, Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies* ..... 28

**7. The Role of SALGA with regard to Gender Transformation in Local Government**

*Councillor Alice Coetzee, South African Local Government Association* ..... 35

**8. The Role of Women in the Transformation of Legislative Institutions**

*Ms. Lindiwe Zulu MPL, Deputy Speaker: Gauteng Provincial Legislature  
Head of the Women's Empowerment Unit* ..... 40

**F. BACKGROUND ON PARTNERS** ..... 43

**G. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS** ..... 45

**H. PROGRAMME OF EVENTS** ..... 51

Since the first Democratic Elections of April 1994, South Africa has been a society in transition and transformation, in an effort to entrench its newly found democracy. The adoption of the new constitution has been widely hailed as a very forward thinking document, which guides us all in our major national efforts having opened the doors to many possibilities. For women, however there is a need to be ever vigilant of these clauses as a way of ensuring that women's needs are not understated. As we come to the end of our first term of democratic governance, leading us to the second elections in 1999/2000, it was deemed necessary for the Women's Development Foundation (WDF) to evaluate gender specific audit of women's gains, the challenges facing us to chart a possible way forward in the political arena before the forthcoming elections. Hence this Symposium.

As this idea grew and began to take shape and form, WDF felt very strongly that there are other organisations involved in this broad area of work. For this reason there was a need to `hold hands together` with strategic partners in hosting this Symposium. This would give all a chance to broaden our target group and also to strengthen our network. The partnership would also ensure that we use our collective human and limited monetary resources in a meaningful way.

Positive consultations began with the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), the Office on the Status of Women (OSW), Women's Empowerment Unit (WEU), the Gender Unit of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and finally the National Women's Coalition (NWC). Consulting every step of the way ensured that every partner's interests and needs were reflected in the proceedings and the possible outcomes of the Symposium. By working closely together, we have strengthened our ties, broadened the area of expertise and have also broadened the network.

As will be seen from this report, despite the increasing policy dialogue and the emerging political recognition of gender concerns, women in political leadership have had to face constant struggles in bringing to the fore development issues affecting women in particular. The gender imbalances have remained in favour of men in the political arena and in the three levels of government, especially at Local Government level where governance impacts on people. Political parties seem not pay the desired attention to this problem. Whilst we engage in the struggle, we are mindful of our hard won gains as reflected in the following report- and for this we applaud all women and men of goodwill who have contributed to this progress.

Finally, the purpose of "Entrenching Democracy and Good Governance Through the Empowerment of Women" is to advance a Government that is open, accountable and participatory. A Government that extends rights and freedoms to all its citizens whilst providing a safe and secure environment for local and national development. Such a Government would reflect the aspirations of our Constitution as we move into the twenty-first century.

To all partner organisations and participants, thank you for your participation. Phambili makhosikazi Phambili!! Aluta Continua!

In conclusion the greatest challenges of all will be how each partner implements successfully the mandate from this Symposium as well as the response of political parties to the call for the inclusion of more women in their lists.

Ms. Barbara Watson  
Executive Director: Women's Development Foundation

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress
<b>AWEPA</b>	European Parliamentarians for Africa
<b>CGE</b>	Commission on Gender Equality
<b>DP</b>	Democratic Party
<b>DPSA</b>	Disabled People of South Africa
<b>ECLGA</b>	Eastern Cape Local Government Association
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agricultural Organisation
<b>IAJ</b>	Institute of Advanced Journalism
<b>IEC</b>	Independent Electoral Commission
<b>IFP</b>	Inkatha Freedom Party
<b>IPU</b>	Inter-Parliamentary Union
<b>MEC</b>	Member of Executive Council
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>MPL</b>	Member of Provincial Legislature
<b>NCOP</b>	National Council of Provinces
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NOLGA</b>	Northern Cape Local Government Association
<b>OSW</b>	Office on the Status of Women
<b>NIPLAR</b>	National Institute for Public Interest Law and Research
<b>NIZA</b>	Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa
<b>NP</b>	National Party
<b>NWC</b>	National Women's Coalition
<b>PR</b>	Proportional Representation
<b>PWG</b>	Parliamentary Women's Group
<b>SALGA</b>	South African Local Government Association
<b>SAMDI</b>	South African Management Development Institute
<b>SARIPS</b>	Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies
<b>WDF</b>	Women's Development Foundation
<b>WEU</b>	Women Empowerment Unit

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# E XECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the outcomes of the Symposium on “Entrenching Democracy and Good Governance Through the Empowerment of Women”. The Symposium took place from 13 - 15 November 1998 at the Eskom Conference Centre in Midrand. It was convened by the following organisations (refer to page 43):

- ◆ Women’s Development Foundation (WDF);
- ◆ Commission on Gender Equality (CGE);
- ◆ Office of the Status of Women (OSW);
- ◆ The Women’s Empowerment Unit (WEU);
- ◆ The National Women's Coalition (NWC); and,
- ◆ The South African Local Government Association (SALGA).



*The panel*

The overall objective of the symposium was to celebrate the achievements, and to identify potential obstacles hampering the participation of women in governance and democracy. In addition, the symposium was meant to develop strategies that would ensure continued momentum towards gender equality. Furthermore, the symposium was an endeavour by the co-hosting organisations to encourage continued collaboration between Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) through information sharing and programme partnerships.

This conference was held against the backdrop of the first democratic elections (1994) in the country, whereby women mastered 27% of seats in the national assembly and 24% in the provincial legislatures. A world comparison of women's participation in national and local politics placed South Africa 10th of out of 46 countries (as at 30 June 1994). The achievement of women are detailed in the following tables:

## **WOMEN IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Women</b>
African Christian Democratic Party	2	0
African National Congress	252	90
Democratic Party	7	1
Inkatha Freedom Party	43	10
National Party	82	9
Pan Africanist Congress	5	1
Total	400	111

### WOMEN IN THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES

Province	Seats	Women
Gauteng	86	25
Western Cape	42	10
KwaZulu-Natal	81	11
Northern Province	40	11
Mpumalanga	30	6
North West	30	11
Free State	30	7
Northern Cape	30	7
Eastern Cape	56	14
Total	425	102

Source: South African Report to CEDAW.

#### 1. Specific Objectives of the Symposium

- To give women in leadership an opportunity to review and reflect on their experiences in the new democracy, and highlight the significant challenges facing women in the various fields;
- To create a platform for women to discuss gender gains and losses since 1994;
- To review the existing gender machinery.

#### 2. Presentation Themes:

- Transforming Ministries and Institutions;
- Entrenching Democracy and Good Governance Through the Empowerment of Women;
- Experiences of Women in Government; and
- Women in Public Service.

#### 3. Achievements of Women since 1994 as identified by the Symposium Participants

- The inclusion of women as political representatives in all spheres of government;
- The appointment of women to senior positions in government;
- Participation of women of South Africa in policy formulation processes;
- An increased number of social service policies that benefit the disadvantaged population of South Africa of which women constitute the majority;
- Increased accountability, transparency and access to information;
- The White Paper on Local Government 1998, which recommends that political parties should work towards gender parity at local government level;
- The legislation passed by the national and provincial parliaments, such as:
  - The Termination of Pregnancy Bill of 1997
  - The Child Maintenance Bill

- Employment Equity Act
- The Customary Law Marriage Bill
- The CGE Act.

Participants, however, expressed the view that although these above-mentioned factors had contributed meaningfully towards the empowerment and emancipation of women, gaps still exist. Women unanimously agreed that there are still a lot of challenges to be overcome in order for them to celebrate victory on these points. For example, although the representation of women in government has increased, their representation is still far below the overall proportion of women in South Africa. Despite the fact that a number of laws addressing women's concerns have been passed by parliament, many women who are directly affected by these laws are still not aware of them and their impact on their lives. Government institutions and ministries still do not have a proportional representation of women. Women are still relegated to lower positions than those of men.

As much as organisations such as WDF, SALGA and others have engaged in capacity building initiatives for women political appointees, there is still a lack of a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to their efforts.

The participants were divided into commissions discussing the following topics:

- ◆ Policy and Advocacy
- ◆ Capacity building
- ◆ Transforming institutions of governance
- ◆ Women and elections

#### **4. Challenges Still Facing Women**

- Lack of a coherent national agenda for the empowerment of women;
  - Inadequate resources, skills and technical assistance enabling gender structures to carry out policy and advocacy functions;
  - Lack of mechanisms or strategies for the implementation of government policies;
  - Lack of a comprehensive policy for women on maternity as well as inadequate child care provisions;
  - Limited amount of time often allowed by government for public comment on policy documents;
  - Inflexible working hours by women in all tiers of government;
  - Lack of specific process aimed at making government policies more gender sensitive.
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## 1. POLICY AND ADVOCACY

### 1.1. Gains

- Women are involved in all spheres of government;
- Access to and participation in policy-making processes;
- There is progress towards the transformation of the civil service;
- At national level working hours are flexible in principle, but in practical terms they are not;
- Gender focal points in government;
- The implementation of social service policies that benefit everyone, especially women;
- An increased level of gender sensitivity at national government level.

### 1.2. Gaps

- When women assumed leadership positions they were less capacitated in terms of skills;
- Senior positions are still monopolised by men, for instance only one out of nine premiers is a woman;
- Lack of mechanisms and resources necessary for reaching out to women at grassroots level for effective participation in policy formulation;
- Inform women of their rights and the power they possess;
- In policy development, there is insufficient time to make meaningful commentary on policy issues;
- Inflexible working hours at local and provincial level for elected officials and functionaries;
- No clear implementation and monitoring strategies for policies passed by government;
- At advocacy level gender debate has been made a political issue;
- Engendering systems or structures are in place but there is a lack of sufficient technical support, capacity and resources.

### 1.3. Recommendations

- The development of a coherent women's empowerment agenda at all spheres of government;
- A need for an increased number of women in the civil service, especially in senior positions such as Director-Generals;
- Civil society (NGOs



*Local Government Councillors - North West Province*

and CBOs) to help with dissemination of information;

- A need to review public service rules and regulations which affect working conditions for women.

## **2. CAPACITY BUILDING**

### **2.1. Gains**

- Women are now represented in all levels of government;
- Conferences like this one allow women to debate issues jointly regardless of their political affiliation;
- Credit should be given to organisations such as WDF for the tremendous amount of work they have done in providing training to women leaders.

### **2.2. Gaps**

- Women are still not fairly represented in decision-making positions;
- Women are not united when dealing with general issues affecting them, unlike men who have a "Boys Club" that serves as a support base;
- There is no structured training programme for women as soon as they are appointed into leadership positions;
- There are many service providers offering training to women but they do not co-ordinate their activities;
- The environment not conducive to women's active participation;
- Women to support structures such as NWC while it also adopts a proactive modus operandi and makes its programme known;
- Women lack life skills to participate effectively in decision-making.

### **2.3. Recommendations**

- The quota should be extended from 33.3% to 50%;
  - The partners need to look at developing a women's manifesto which cuts across political boundaries and represents issues affecting women;
  - Women should lobby for gender balancing in the upcoming elections, especially with regard to Ministerial and MEC positions;
  - The development of a training manual for all women leaders is necessary;
  - Service providers need to co-ordinate all training programmes and activities;
  - A database of service providers should be compiled;
  - Women should evaluate the support they give each other and improve on it, the "Pull Her Down Syndrome" (PHD) should be done away with;
  - The transformation of institutions should go hand in hand with capacity-building initiatives;
  - Voter education for women at grass-roots level should go beyond the 1999/2000 elections.
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### **3. TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNANCE**

#### **3.1. Gains**

- We recognise the importance of existing structures that are responsible for putting up women's agenda;
- The existing decision-making structures and processes are regarded as instruments that help women to be in positions of power;
- Women's presence and participation in government and parliamentary committees give them an opportunity to advance the objectives of gender equality and further the interests of women as a whole.

#### **3.2. Gaps**

- Institutions are still male dominated;
- The representation of women in structures is not proportional;

#### **3.3. Recommendations**

- Institutional transformation must go beyond the coming elections;
- The role of women in political parties is to advocate and lobby for the empowerment of women;
- Women should recruit other women into PR lists and parliament;
- There should be a 33.3% floor policy on PR lists, but women should continue lobbying for a representation of 52%;
- Networking strategies should be pursued vigorously.

### **4. WOMEN AND THE ELECTIONS**

#### **4.1. Gains**

- The inclusion of women in government brought them even closer to each other;
- Local government, including passed bills of particular relevance to women, must remain intact;
- The participation of women in government gave rise to women political empowerment organisations who saw a need to work together to address concerns and interests not only among themselves, but to include those elected in government.
- Some Voter Education training programmes are targeting women to participate in the democratic process. There are high percentages of women turnouts in Voter registration stations;
- Training and workshops that target women also focus on lobbying, caucusing and communication skills in preparation for the process.

#### **4.2. Gaps**

- The Electoral Act of 1998 does not provide for monitors outside political parties. This is critical for women, as there is no endurance of representation;
  - The same Act does not have a gender quota as a criterion for funding;
  - Most women concerns and problems covered in the report are not covered in the
-

Electoral Act for the prevention of their occurring;

- The absence of clear party gender policies;
- Entrenched patriarchal values held by decision-makers in all spheres of public life.

#### 4.2. **Recommendations**

- Parties to conform to the policy of elections and women need to be more vocal;
  - There needs to be a balance between numbers and capability, i.e. a quota should not be for the sake of increasing numbers only;
  - English and/or Afrikaans should not be regarded as the sole medium of communication;
  - No funding should be provided for political parties that do not comply with the stated quota;
  - Women's groups need to lobby for the empowerment of women in the next elections;
  - Write a letter with every woman's signature to all political parties;
  - Have a "Zebra-style" election lists, i.e. men and women to immediately follow each other on the lists;
  - Invite more men and young women to conferences.
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# PROPOSED FUTURE STRATEGIES

In an effort to address the gaps that inhibit the participation of women in democracy and governance, participants suggested strategies that would assist the co-hosting organisations and other service providers in their future planning. Immediate strategies or short-term strategies proposed at the workshop were planned jointly by all participants while medium and long-term strategies were assigned to co-hosting organisations for future planning, co-ordination and implementation. (Please refer to the attached work plan for time frames with accountable organisations.)



*Members of Parliament*

## **1. Immediate Strategies Proposed by Participants include:**

The encouragement of political parties to have a fair representation of women in the candidates' lists prepared for the upcoming elections. The following were suggested as actions that would translate the above goal into a reality:

- **The dispatch of an open letter to political parties** expressing the views of women about the parties' commitment to the inclusion of women in the positions of power. The letter would specifically mention a review (as a process that will be engaged in) of the Political Parties' Funding Act for parties that do not meet the required quota for women representatives;
- The sharing of the participants' views through both electronic and print media about the upcoming election (was suggested as one of the immediate actions to be taken) to ensure the dissemination of information to the larger population;
- The promotion of women candidates and women's organisations through a creative media strategy highlighting the importance of women's participation in politics.

## **2. Medium to Long-term Strategies Include:**

### **2.1 Participation of women in decision-making, which would be achieved through:**

- Lobbying for the fair representation of women in political positions and adopting an electoral system which extends the proportion of women from a 33% to a 50% quota in all future elections - "Zebra Style - one man, one woman";
- Encouraging the development of a uniform manifesto endorsed by women from all political parties;
- Increasing the representativity of women in policy and decision-making bodies and in the public service;
- Encouraging maximum participation by women both within civil society and government;

- Encouraging the institutionalisation of voter education beyond the 1999/2000 elections.

## 2.2. **Institutional Transformation to be Attained Through:**

- Brainstorming mechanisms that would help in removing the obstacles faced by women in political positions and in public service;
- Ensuring that the transformation processes of institutions are sensitive to gender issues;
- Ensuring political and financial support;
- Brainstorming ways of discouraging the patriarchal culture still existing in institutions;
- Encouraging the establishment of a forum for women in public service that creates a platform for them to support one another;
- Reviewing policies, rules and regulations that negatively affect the working conditions of women;
- Ensuring active monitoring of institutional transformation as well as the constitutional structures tasked to do so;
- Sensitising all government institutions including Parliament and various government departments to issues that directly affect them.

## 2.3. **Capacity Building to be Attained Through:**

- Encouraging a culture of mentorship to women (in order to strengthen their participation in decision-making). The introduction of a mentor's directory or database was cited as a means for achieving this goal;
- The development and co-ordination of comprehensive training programmes for women at all spheres of government;
- The compilation of an inventory of service providers and an audit of training programmes they offer;
- The co-ordination of training programmes offered to women parliamentarians and local government councillors.

The proposed strategies will be achieved through the following detailed plan that was mapped out at the Symposium. The plan includes what the issue to be addressed is, the organisation tasked with the issue and the time frame within which the task should be completed.

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# WORK PLAN

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN ACTION PLAN: WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE

ISSUE	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	WHEN
<b>I. INCREASING REPR. OF WOMEN</b>			
<b>A. Politics</b>	Letter to political parties	Conference participants	15/11/97
	Gender criteria for funding of political parties	WEU, PWG, CGE, WDF	ASAP
	Campaign to extend the 33% quota to 50% through the "zebra style" positioning on lists i.e. a man after a woman on party lists	WDF, WEU, NWC, SALGA, CGE, OSW	Beyond 1999 elections
	Gender sensitisation of voter education	IEC, CGE, NGOs working in this area; schools, SALGA, WDF	Immediate and ongoing after elections; especially institutionalisation of such education
	Support for women candidates and evaluation of such support	WEU, WDF, other NGOs; PWG (mentoring among women in politics), SALGA	Begin as soon as lists are finalised
	Identify and build capacity of women who aren't at leadership level and who need to be there	WEU, WDF, other NGOs; PWG SALGA	Immediately for local govt. elections. After 1999 for national elections.
<b>B. Government</b>	Database of service providers	WEU, WDF, other NGOs; PWG, SALGA	Ongoing
	A policy demanding 50% gender representation at all spheres	OSW; CGE; others	ASAP
	Analysis of selection, recruitment, promotion policies	OSW, Public Service Commission?	Ongoing
	Quota for the disabled	OSW, Public Service Commission?	
<b>II. POLICY ADVOCACY</b>			
<b>A. Politics</b>	Gender analysis of party manifestos	CGE/ PWG	January
	Gender and Elections Watch	GAP, Women's Net	January - June
	Ribbon/poster campaign,/ banners/ patchwork quilt	WDF, SALGA, WEU, WNC, OSW, CGE	Early 1999
<b>B. Government</b>	Coherent agenda	OSW, NGO's	

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>BY WHOM</b>	<b>WHEN</b>
<b>C. General</b>	Invite more men to workshops on women in decision-making	WDF, SALGA, WEU, WNC, OSW, CGE	Ongoing
	Target manyanos, stokvels and schools	WDF, SALGA, WEU, WNC, OSW, CGE	Ongoing
	Special set of workshops for young women	WDF, SALGA, WEU, WNC, OSW, CGE	
	Address people in their own languages	WDF, SALGA, WEU, WNC, OSW, CGE	Ongoing
	Media strategy - identify strong women to make statements	WDF, SALGA, WEU, WNC, OSW, CGE	Mid-1999
	Campaign around specific issues e.g. femicide	OSW/CGE/Dept. of Justice, Network on Violence Against Women	24 November to 10 December and beyond
	Government report on CEDAW to be made accessible	NIPILAR, CGE, OSW	Early 1999
<b>III. INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION</b>			
<b>A. Politics</b>	Gender sensitisation of parliament, Provincial Legislatures, Local Councils	PWG, Provincial caucuses, SALGA	Ongoing
	Audit of participation by women in all levels of parliament e.g. key committees	WEU, PWG, SALGA	ASAP
	Strengthening the existing structures and making them work	WEU, WDF, Others	Ongoing
<b>B. Government</b>	Gender audit of departments & local councils	OSW SALGA, CGE (monitoring)	ASAP
	Review of organisational culture	OSW SALGA, CGE (monitoring)	ASAP
<b>C. General</b>	Links between gender structures	WDF, SALGA, WEU, WNC, OSW, CGE	
	Gender training	WDF, SALGA, WEU, WNC, OSW, CGE	
	Working hours, child care, maternity policy, benefits	WDF, SALGA, WEU, WNC, OSW, CGE	
<b>IV. CAPACITY BUILDING</b>			
<b>A. Politics</b>	Training	WDF, WEU	Ongoing
	Mentorship	PWG, political parties, caucuses, SALGA	Ongoing

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>BY WHOM</b>	<b>WHEN</b>
<b>B. Government</b>	Training	OSW, SAMDI, others	On going
<b>C. General</b>	Research Research for Gov. Action Plans	CGE, academic institutions, NGOs OSW	ASAP
	Developing indicators for qualitative contributions by women to decision-making processes	CGE, academic institutions, NGOs OSW	ASAP

### 1. OPENING SPEECH

*Dr. Brigalia Bam, President: Women's Development Forum*

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Friends, Colleagues, Brothers, Sisters, to our special beloved friends who made this possible, without whom we could not survive, I welcome you all.

The women of South Africa are very busy. I am told that in our country a child once said to the mother "You are God!" The mother asked, "Why?" and the child replied and said, "Because we are told that God is everywhere, God does everything, all at the same time." What we are doing as the women of South Africa is that we are governing this country. Some of us have been in this journey for a very long time. Some of us are getting tired. We are lucky because we are working with young people who are very young and energetic.



*Dr. Brigalia Bam, President: Women's Development Forum*

I wish to congratulate all those involved in organising this conference. This thing of doing things together shows that we can struggle together and develop each other. We have done a good thing as partners, i.e. SALGA, WDF, CGE, WEU, OSW and WNC. Since we are going to have a number of speakers tonight, I thought that it is important to start identifying some of the issues that affect us. This country is still in transformation. Please remember that whatever you do, things are changing. Why are there so many policies? Maybe we have not begun to understand them.

The other issues relate to political structures. Our society has remained much politicised. Many organisations are still using methods used during the struggle days. In our country, racial tensions are in fact very high. It is important that we initiate debates on racism. There is change in this country; rural areas no longer have anything to offer people, hence the migration to the urban centres. Suddenly, we are discovering that South Africa is a country of the poor in spite of technological advances attained. We struggled against apartheid in the understanding that it was a violation of human rights. Now these violations are being reported more than before. This does not necessarily mean that crime is a new phenomenon. South Africa has always had crime; it has always been a violent nation. Crime is part of our past and we must start to deal with it.

It is important that women be a bridge for development, amongst the classes of people. I wonder if women are noticing the class differentials. Women are catalysts for their own communities. Civil Society in South Africa is alive, we all have a responsibility of informing it. Information is power, knowledge is power. People need to be informed. We also need to create a society that specialises in criticism.

I hope that the next days will be a fruitful event for all of us.

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## 2. TRANSFORMING MINISTRIES AND INSTITUTIONS

*Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri MPL, Premier: Free State Province*

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Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen!

I do not have any jokes tonight. I feel that in the past eighteen months I have lost my sense of humour. You all know that once one loses one's sense of humour something is wrong. I know that it is going to take a long time for us to achieve all of our objectives. As I look at all the people sitting here today, I remember what President Mandela once said: "*One gives up the battle for others to take over.*" I feel that as I hand over the baton, I can rest assured that there are people who will run with it.



*Free State delegates with Premier Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri*

We have done a lot in our country to bring about the constitution, to recognise the human dignity of people. We need to realise that the dignity of people comes through their access to water and sanitation. These are things that most of us are taking for granted as we already enjoy the new democracy. Our constitution has allowed us to set up Parliament, Commissions, Provincial Legislatures, etc. However, it is until the majority of South Africans gain access to basic needs that we can proudly say we have succeeded.

My work with people has added a dimension that I have never experienced. We have set up Ministries and processes so that they can address the inequality between men and women, rural and urban, black and white. The divide between these categories of people has increased because of global recession.

Fear makes people do the right things. All those who have no fear did all the wrong things. Corruption is not new in South Africa. We were not surprised when we moved to Parliament to realise that corruption was entrenched. Some of us benefited from this corruption through the back door from things that were either bought or sold. For many women dependent on welfare, if half the money that we lose to the foreign consultants was spent well, we could start to address some of the issues related to poverty. These consultants have networks everywhere. If we do not uproot this system it will destroy the lives of many South Africans. It seems as though that when we gained our rights, we had also been taken for a ride. We are going to have to find new ways of solving these problems.

The population of the Free State is 2.6 million. Voters are 1.6 million. You can imagine my shock when somebody told me that the illiteracy level in the Free State was very high. Recently South Africa was identified as the country with the highest incidence of rape of women and children in the world. Unless we do something against violence against women, we would not have succeeded. We welcome the existence of a law that protects women. We have worked tirelessly with women to bring about change. The freedom of health was an initiation fought for and pushed by the Minister of Health. The Termination of Pregnancy Bill was an initiation of women. The need

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to be able to educate women about issues is still there to enable them to make informed choices. Women have suffered in relationships. The customary law that has been passed through Parliament is much appreciated. How can we change the conditions of polygamous relationships? The Maintenance Bill was passed to make men and women more responsible.

When we look ahead, we realise that the road is still long. There is a saying that “The road ahead, you construct and pave as you go along.” South African women can say, We were travellers: we shaped the road; and we looked at people’s experiences. We paved the road, but we still need to struggle uphill, blow up the rock and make way. We have the confidence that where we stop, there are others that will take the struggle further. We are told today that access to knowledge is important. The New World is changing paradigms. It is in this continent in particular, especially the southern countries, where knowledge is situated. It is the knowledge of nature; the knowledge of plants being studied. These will be misappropriated if we do not take care of them. We must educate our people on how to access and use information. We would never have achieved as much had it not been for the presence of women ministers like Dr. Zuma

We have been able to fight the existence of many ghost beneficiaries in the Free State. We had teachers who had been accessing their salaries for more than ten years without having been to the classroom.

I do not only dream; I do have a vision and I do have hope.

Let us work for the realisation of our dreams for men, women and children in the continent. Until the continent survives, we as a country will never survive.

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### **3. EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE**

#### **3.1 Ms Tersia Wessels MPL, National Party: Gauteng**

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Chairperson, I thank you for the opportunity to be part of this panel and discussions. I am a member of the Women's Action for my party in Gauteng. The aim of this discussion this morning is that every representative should share her experiences of women in governance in this new democracy - still a young democracy - but definitely vibrant and strong. And I immediately want to add that women played a major role to achieve it. For most National Party women, a very special experience has occurred. In the past four and a half years we have become part of the new dispensation. We were previously part of the so-called privileged, now I realise that we were largely disempowered by apartheid. We were not in touch with gender issues and we were not part of the global political scene.

Women in my party were in a male dominated environment, not at all in contact with other women and their sufferings and their struggle for freedom. We thought we were emancipated, but not really. In many years of Apartheid rule, there have only been two or three women in Parliament. As a National Party politician, I have learnt a lot in the past four and a half years, I have been greatly enriched by the contact with ANC, IFP and DP women in the Gauteng Legislature.

I have personally experienced that without gender playing a role in politics, there is no democracy, it cannot claim to be a government for people by the people. The concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political parties and national legislation are decided upon jointly by the men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population.

Women's presence in government indeed broadens the agenda of politics. If we look at Africa, we see that more than three-quarters of women are involved in food production. In our country, many women are in the same situation. We need active involvement of women when policy decisions in agriculture are made. The broader representation of women in our parliament, legislatures and local government has broadened the issues under debate such as abortion, domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, single parenthood and women's health.

This opening of debates on women's issues brought about the legislation on abortion. Our party is not supportive of abortion, but within the party, the input of women contributed a more democratic approach, members were allowed a free vote on the matter.

For the very first time, a policy report on violence against women and children was developed in our party. In the past, family violence was seen as something out there that might be in existence but was never discussed. The Maintenance Bill and the Bill on Family Violence recently propagated at national level, I regard as the direct result of women's presence in parliament. For the very first time, there is at least some hope that maintenance dodgers can be legally penalised when not paying maintenance.

The Skills Development legislation and the Equity Employment Bill reflect that sensitivity towards women. However, we realise that the most effective implementation of the legislation affecting women's lives takes place when women themselves are part of the implementation process. Our responsibility as women is to see that all these things happen. Women indeed bring

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important skills and a different style into politics. The background document to the Beijing Conference says that women's exclusion from the public arena is a sharp contrast to their ability to make crucial decisions relating to the survival of families. Concrete examples of the effects of women's involvement in governance are the Maintenance Bill, Family Violence Bill and Child Support Grants.



*Symposium participants*

By excluding women from decision-making, political parties are depriving themselves of a reservoir of talent and wisdom, as well as a different style of decision making. Some American surveys suggest that even the presence of a few women in the corridors of power lead to a participatory, less autocratic style of government. We passed three bills this week in the Gauteng Legislature on Social Welfare. We started with the process in June. These different pieces of legislation focus on shelters for street children, powers to new Social Welfare regions and delegating powers to local government. All these bills focus on levelling the playing fields in terms of equal funding and services for the previously marginalised communities of our province.

Women play a positive role in bringing about peace. It would be simplistic to assume that women can bring peace overnight, however. They can definitely do it over a period of time. Studies show that men exhibit 10 - 15% greater preferences for the use of military force than women do. Examples of situations in Somalia, Bosnia show that women have crossed borders across lines of conflict that men have set up and that men were unwilling and unable to cross. Increasing the participation of women in conflict resolution has the potential of moving conflicting systems closer to peace. One often thinks that women could solve the KwaZulu-Natal conflict situation that has devastated so many lives. I believe that women bring a range of particular strengths to public office that is different from those of men. Women do bring leadership styles that are different from those of their male colleagues. My experience is that women are more co-operative, better at teamwork, more responsive to constituencies, less hierarchical, better prepared, more organised, more skilled in compromising and more inclined to show compassion.

Women bring a range of political and managerial skills into the political arena. Women do have the ability to build consensus, to work for the common good, to prevent egos from getting in the way of finding solutions to problems and to maintain flexibility. These are skills that ensure good governance. Women have the willingness to listen to other ideas without having to top them, and the ability to change their minds without losing face.

Women that serve in government want to bring change in the political process and in the content of public policy. Women put tremendous emphasis on how these things are done. They want the political process to change and be more congruent with their approach of governing, that is, to be more humane, more open, more responsive and more civil.

We indeed have done much more to empower women in decision-making positions. I want to give recognition for the super role played by the organisers of this workshop in ensuring the empowerment of women. I also want to mention the IEC for providing a series of workshops to ensure equal participation for all women in the coming elections. The Women's Empowerment Unit in Gauteng is also contributing to women's empowerment by assessing the training needs of women and designing appropriate programmes to that effect.

Our co-operation with the women of other parties has been a major empowerment exercise for the National Party, because we have since developed a policy for women.

We are all involved in finalising our party lists. For instance, a decision was taken at a high level meeting which could have a negative impact on women's positions. With the privilege of insight, we could recognise that a male-dominated group took this decision. We managed to topple the decision and establish a commission that is more representative of women to re-look the matter.

In the final instance, we will soon be entering the new millennium. The attitudes and actions of women will be of crucial importance in future efforts to build a truly prosperous nation committed to reconciliation. Our country has many socio-economic problems, let me rather say, challenges. Our country, which is still a developing country, is placed in a post-modern world. In order for it not only to survive, but thrive, there is a need for it to develop the infrastructure, technology and a vision to propel it forward.

Are we as women equipped for this challenge?

I am personally very excited about women's potential to adapt and move in there and change circumstances for the better. Women have the ability and commitment to pull the country out of poverty because they are creative and enthusiastic.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my experiences with you this morning. I want to pay homage to all women in South Africa that are committed to ensuring good governance for this young democracy through personal participation in decision-making positions.

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### **3. EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE continued**

#### *3.2 Councillor Pat Richards: Democratic Party, Northern Metropolitan Local Council (Randburg)*

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My party is very pleased to be invited to a forum such as this.

Good Morning everyone!

Thanks to the organisers for inviting the DP. I am a Local Government Councillor and will be speaking from that angle. I am a nurse trained in community health and intensive care. For the pre-interim session, although parliament was in place, local government structures were still struggling to find their feet. For me, the pre-interim period was a time to learn and to adjust to being a councillor. Local Government at that time had very few powers and functions. After the local elections I was on the proportional list and was elected. At that time, I still tried to do both nursing and politics. Women always try to do too much, which is in line with the saying "Give a busy woman a job to do if you want to get it done." We drive ourselves to prove that we are not just equal, but are in fact better than men. Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri stated that she is tired we all are and are becoming burnt out.

We should start to become more focussed and delegate more work and not try to do everything. We are human beings and not human doings. I have found that we all need a "wife": someone to run the home to take care of the crises that arise every day. Extended families are becoming something of the past. However, we all need to have a strong support base. We should also be mentoring women at the grass-roots level. One way of doing this is by having them serve as "shadow councillors," observing what councillors do. This will help reduce the need for training new councillors in future and will help them come to grips with their political jobs.

My field is health because of my background. I feel very frustrated and feel that we have achieved very little at local level. Budget constraints and by-laws passed at local level have very little to do with gender issues or health. At national level on the question of abortion, the DP gave our MPs and everyone else the freedom of choice. Before abortion was legalised, forty-four-thousand women had abortions done at back streets, leading to complications, and at least 500 women a year died of these.

I have tried to combat crime pro-actively by introducing a "Blockwatch" system in my area. I have also helped establish a "Victim Support Group". This is a volunteer group working through community police forums.

Despite the difference we are making in our communities, however, we still need training in some areas. A lot of our time is spent attending meetings. Some of that time could be used to help us acquire the skills we need to be more effective. I for one seem to be going from meeting to meeting. I know we would benefit greatly from training and support in the fields of finance and research, for example.

One other factor we should remember is that it is high time we stopped apologising for the colour of our skin, for our sex or religion; we are who we are, and we should not let that stand in the way of what we can become.

Lastly, I do feel that we must focus and not try to do everything. Let's do what we can do and do it well. Further, let's accept a person for what they are, or what they have achieved and will achieve.

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#### 4. ACCESS, PARTICIPATION AND TRANSFORMATION

*Ms. Thenjiwe Mtintso, Deputy Secretary-General: African National Congress*

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##### 4.1. ACCESS

Access to parliament, and indeed all decision-making structures in this society, has always been a problem for women. But the problem does not begin and end with quantitative representation. The question that arises is whether women do act as a group with similar and shared 'women's interests.' Women are not a homogeneous entity with common interests deriving from their biological defined difference of 'sex.' Therefore, while women may access parliament in big numbers, they may be thoroughly unrepresentative in terms of their class, race, education and other differentiating constructs. Women may also not have a shared perspective on many of the issues globally termed "women's issues." However, this is not to say women's access to parliament should be undermined. The number of women present in parliament should equal the number of men. As the resolutions of the Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) put it, "The concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political programmes and national legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population" (IPU, 1992, p.2).

Access to parliament does not necessarily translate into effective participation. Even where women are present, there remain serious constraints to their effective participation. Patriarchy, the ideology, system and practice of domination of women by men, permeate parliament. These characteristics manifest themselves in the power attitude, culture and practices - indeed in the structure and content of that institution. How do women, products and victims of that very system overcome these constraints to make effective input in the day to day activities of parliament?

Access and participation may not necessarily translate into gender perspectives in policies and legislation that come out of parliament. It may not be the interest or the role of women parliamentarians to ensure that outcome. Another question that arises is *how does society actually measure gender transformation processes and policies?*

The relationship between women's access to parliament and gender transformation is a complex and difficult issue. The problem of access, mechanisms, representation, participation and transformation within a democratic and yet patriarchal institution are the vexed questions that we as gender activists, feminists and women should try to address.

The question that still remains relates to the capacity, commitment and willingness on the part of women parliamentarians to bear the responsibility of spearheading the changing of gender relations. Related to this is what the transformation of gender relations is and should there be an agenda for all women and women alone? Above all, how does patriarchy, manifesting itself in dominant culture, practices, and indeed in the very environment of parliament, assist or constrain any attempts to change gender relations? We also have to confront the relationship amongst all gender activists, feminists and women in and outside parliament. There has in the past four years tended to be a gap between and amongst these sections.

Inherent would be a tension between these sections but that does not have to be isolating tension, it has to be a healthy one created invariably by the interests that we represent in those sections.

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Although institutions for gender equality seem to have been well thought through, gaps exist in the mechanisms to ensure effective co-ordination of these institutions. As a result, effective co-ordination and efficient use of resources, human and otherwise, has not been as good as is required. We have managed to work together but rather in an ad hoc fashion and, in most instances, depending on our own individual networks. There is no seriously considered approach to that relationship at ideological, programmatic and structural level. We need some form of a structured relationship. The WNC was supposed to be one such instrument. It is a well known fact that most of us have not given it the necessary support it needs to co-ordinate our voices even if not speak on our behalf. The idea of a Broad Women's Movement as envisaged in the overall approach to the National Machinery has remained at the level of "the debate" and has progressed no further. The status of the Women's Charter and the mandate women received from that has also not been seriously taken into consideration. We have tended to rely on women in parliament with an underlying assumption that they would automatically know and articulate the demands outlined in the Charter. How do we monitor progress in that respect, if that assumption is correct? Lacking is a debate on what mechanisms and indicators could be used to measure shifts and changes in gender relations. The work that is being done by the OSW and the CGE on both policy framework and indicators will go a long way in facilitating our capacity to measure the work done especially quantitatively. Qualitative changes are, understandably, more complex and difficult to measure, but they can be experienced. As one woman puts it "once we move from making history and begin to make policy, we would know that we have moved a long way in the gender equality struggle!"

The main question we need to answer is: "is increasing the number of women in parliament sufficient to contribute to the articulation of gender concerns as well as formulate or change policies to address these concerns?" This question raises other related questions, such as:

- Is there a link between women's access to, representation and participation in parliament and gender transformation?
- Does quantitative representation necessarily translate into qualitative changes?
- Are there universal women's interests, and if so, what are they, and do women in parliament represent such interests?
- Are there any other factors that promote or inhibit the effective participation of women in parliament?
- Are there any other factors that constrain the articulation of gender concerns in parliament and the formulation of gender sensitive policies?
- What are the perceptions and experiences of women in civil society with regard to the role of woman parliamentarians in representation?

I agree with international bodies like the Commonwealth, IPU and PA that there has to be a 30% women representation in state bodies if women are to begin to be seen and heard.

Of course, women would never have got into parliament if the 30% quota did not exist. However, while 30% is okay, it is not yet equitable since women are more than men in society and that should be reflected in parliament. The issue of representativity has to be addressed because women even in the ANC are not homogeneous - some are rural, others working class, etc.

Women also go the extra mile since there are no assumptions of power and authority. They tend

to work hard to prove themselves. They have actually, in many of the Portfolio Committees, made more impact than their male counterparts. Although at the beginning there was more of a condescending attitude from men in all parties, women have since won respect in their own rights as individuals but also have gone a long way in showing that women as a group are capable.

However, while numbers are crucial, representativity should not be pursued just for the sake of it. There is a need to ensure representativity even within the 30%. The political thrust and content of female parliamentarians need to be considered. Women have multiple identities. The majority of women in society are poor, rural and working class. The ANC, therefore, has to find a way of ensuring that these are the women who are directly represented rather than those who can speak on their behalf. A balance has to be struck between direct representation and skills requirement. Skills can be learnt. Women need exposure and assistance to acquire the necessary skills.

It should be remembered that quotas can be vulgarised or can be limiting if organisations get stuck on a specific number and never go beyond.

## 4.2. **TRANSFORMATION**

### 4.2.1. **Multiple Identities**

It should not be assumed that women represent and want to represent interests of women because, as a group, women have multiple identities and interests. It is important, within the broader paradigm of gender, to integrate the notion of the most marginalised, the poor and the working women. Whilst it is essential that these categories of women should enter the spheres of power, we should also be sensitive to the other identities that they represent.

### 4.2.2. **Empowerment and Support**

Training or political skills development is imperative if women are to be effective in parliament. Being given meaningful responsibilities in parliament and having access to research and other information also help to broaden one's skills and experience.

Unfortunately women do not automatically support each other. Support, whether internal or external, goes a long way in facilitating participation and it is even more appreciated when it is from women. Women at first treat support from men with suspicion, but as their confidence grows, they learn to deal with it. Women should call for and accept support from male comrades. Even if there is no direct support from women, the very presence and participation of women motivates other women to participate and to challenge themselves to continue to work towards improving themselves.

### 4.2.3. **Civil Society and the Women's Movement**

The participation of women in civil society in governance is crucial. Representatives have to get a mandate from other women - even if it is not formal, they need to know what women are agitating for. Feedback from civil society is what makes a democracy a democracy.

Needless to say, women in politics need some sort of social back-up. Family-related obligations make particular demands on women. For example, raising children and child-care issues are problems women deal with on a daily basis. Because of women's unique challenges and responsibilities, gender discourse and gender activism become a necessary

component of a woman's life. When there is action out there, and one is involved in it, one can feel one is part of a whole women's network and that makes the pressures seem lighter. Therefore, as women, we need to keep our networks alive and flourishing.

#### 4.2.4. **Changing Parliament**

Coming back to parliament, fortunately, personalities and attitudes are changing. Women are grudgingly being given respect as individuals and as a group. Parliament, and how it is being run, is observably more women friendly than before. Society is also beginning to understand parliament while it is also getting closer to the people.



*WDF staff members*

Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement. For instance, a clear focus on issues is needed rather than devote all the attention to the debates in chamber. More debates and issue-based discussions should be held in committees. Also, the general approach should be less technical and less legalistic. Obviously, more women should be in leadership roles in parliament.

Institutional changes like the establishment of The Committee on the Improving the Status and Quality of Life of Women, CGE, OSW, Empowerment Unit, etc., are needed.

#### 4.2.5. **Personal**

Women empowerment is positive in that it gives women opportunities to achieve success in a variety of areas. If one can count some achievement and can see one's own contribution in it, one can actually own part of the success at a personal level. That in itself is extremely empowering.

### 4.3. **NEGATIVES**

However, women need to guard against some lurking evils that might derail the good work that has been done and stall the progress that has been made thus far. One of these is political alienation, the "them versus us" mentality.

Another problem is that of Femocrats, those who buy into the patriarchal agenda and get co-opted into the old guard networks.

Likewise, being linked to the ANC is very good but at times political organisations tend to constrain women's agenda. That is why we need to have the women's caucus in which one can engage with other women.

Attitudes can also be a stumbling block. Parliament itself and how it operates can be alienating.

There is also the problem of social alienation - alienation from friends and family and the guilt that goes with it.



**Dr Pat McFadden  
(Main Guest Speaker)**



**Participants including Disabled  
People of South Africa**



**Provincial Government**



**Entertainment: Tu Nokwe and  
her band**



**Ntombazana Botha,  
WDF Board Member**



**Political party member and local  
government councillors**

Finally, there is patriarchy and its web that binds the whole society.

What can still be done?

- As stated earlier, the way parliament is currently organised is still disempowering. It would result in more efficiency to work more in committees than in the chamber and only go to the chamber to present reports from committees.
- In addition, rhetorical speeches and point scoring, boxing and political wrestling alien to women should be eliminated. These are not a way of life for women, and should actually be discouraged in any civilised society. As part of the transformation process, there has to be a shift from this male approach to debates. Women have different patterns of working from men. Women tend to be more co-operative, not abrasive.
- The process of drafting bills and the final product should be simplified and made more accessible to the ordinary person in the street.
- There is, of course, still a need for more women in parliament. All political parties should play their role in ensuring representivity, and it should go beyond sex and include rural and lower socio-economic class individuals.
- It is imperative that all forms of support to all MPs, especially women MPs, be increased.
- Of course the Women's Movement is crucial ó that is where the women's agendas are set.
- Unless the Women's Machinery is well co-ordinated, efficiency and effectiveness may be compromised.
- Also essential is a need for an integration of gender in all committee work and an establishment of a way of monitoring what comes in. This should start from the moment of the draft bill from government.
- To achieve the above, cohesion amongst women in parliament, even across political parties, is a must.



*Political Party Panel with the WDF Director*

#### 4.4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, let me share with you something that was said by a woman parliamentarian in 1995. I quote: "I feel alienated, out of place and yet I came here sure that I would be able to represent and speak on behalf of the many women in the rural areas whose problems I knew very well. But now this place is not for me, I know the women rely on me but I just don't have the capacity. This is a place for men and educated people. I will never come back here, I even doubt if I can even finish this term".

#### **1998 - Same person**

"I used to feel alienated and overwhelmed by parliament. I was even bitter against the knowledgeable women because I felt they were selfish and not supportive. But now I have confidence, I can challenge and take up anyone, especially the opposition who think they know it all. If I were still young, I would make a very good MP - mainly because I am a woman, and I grew up and stay in rural areas. I REPRESENT the majority. I've achieved a lot for the people, myself, the ANC and my country".

## 5. THE ROLE OF THE OFFICE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

*Dr. Ellen Kornegay, Chief Executive Officer: OSW*

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### 5.1. PREMISE FOR ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Office on the Status of Women (OSW) was established to ensure that the constitutional imperatives underpinning gender equality and supporting political commitments are translated into real and meaningful government programmes thereby making a non-sexist society a reality.



Therefore, the OSW is that part of the National Machinery that is located in government for the sole purpose of ensuring that government itself lives up to its constitutional imperative of transforming itself into a non-sexist state. OSW is also charged with ascertaining that government complies with international norms promoting gender equality. Both national and international instruments addressing gender equality call for mainstreaming gender in such a manner as to bring about change in the management structure for empowering women

to have **equal access** to **opportunities** and **resources** that will enhance the quality of their lives.

Different country models of gender mainstreaming have been studied. Lengthy debates have been held on the merits and demerits of the international structures deployed to bring about gender equality. The overriding consensus is:

- A structure such as the Office on the Status of Women, as it obtains in Canada and Australia, is the best vehicle South Africa can adopt to promote gender equality;
- The Office must be situated within the highest level of government so that it can draw on its political clout. The Office of the Executive Deputy President is one with the necessary clout;
- The OSW needs this political base in order to effectively work with line ministries;
- In addition to political clout, OSW needs a cadre of highly skilled and seasoned professionals;
- Locating gender mainstreaming within a ministry of Women's Affairs would have resulted in the marginalisation of gender issues, rendering it ineffective, as has been the case elsewhere in Africa.

### 5.2. OVERARCHING GOALS OF OSW

The principle goal for the OSW stems from government's need to:

**Co-ordinate the conceptualisation of a national gender policy and provide guidance on its implementation.**

The OSW's ability and authority to accomplish this task is drawn from authority vested in the Office of the Executive Deputy President.

In view of the above, the principal functions of OSW become that of:

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- Providing guidance on National Policy; and
  - Giving direction on how the policy will be implemented and enforced.
- The implications of these principal functions require that OSW become the central focal point for gender in government. From this flows the following tasks described below.

### **5.3. SPECIFIC OPERATING FUNCTIONS OF OSW**

The operating functions, are particular activities which OSW must execute in order to assure that the South African government lives up to its ultimate objective of gender equality. Inherent in this vision for gender equality are these tasks:

- Advance a National Women's Empowerment Policy;
  - Prioritise key concerns and initiate policy and action-oriented research relevant to gender mainstreaming;
  - Liaise between non-governmental organisations which deal with women's issues and the Office of the Executive Deputy President;
  - Liaise between international bodies (i.e. United Nations) and the Office of the Executive Deputy President;
  - Work with line ministries, provinces and all publicly funded bodies in mainstreaming gender into all policies and programmes;
  - Develop key indicators for measuring the national progression to gender equality;
  - Arrange for training in gender analysis and gender sensitisation;
  - Facilitate awareness raising and confidence building among women at all levels;
  - Act as catalyst for affirmative action with respect to gender;
  - Initiate and promote cross-sectoral action on cross-cutting issues such as violence against women;
  - Provide a co-ordinating mechanism for structures at the provincial level; and
  - Consult and liaise with civil society and Parliament.
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## 6. ENTRENCHING DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

*Dr. Patricia McFadden, Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies (SARIPS), Harare, Zimbabwe*

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I would like to begin my presentation by thanking the organisers of this very important initiative, and by wishing you all continuing courage and determination as you pursue an endeavour which is beautifully expressed by the statement “our journey has not ended.”

The subject of my talk, and of this three day seminar, is one which will preoccupy us all for the rest of our present lives, and for the many which I know we will all live again in future times. Issues of Democracy, Governance and Women’s Empowerment lie at the heart of our very existence as human beings, marking our journey through time as we have experienced it as Women, Africans and Human Beings.

We have come a long way towards our goal of living in better societies, i.e. societies which are women-friendly and women respecting; societies which celebrate the richness and gifts which women bring to human collectivities simply by being women - in our most essentialised identities (as mothers, sisters, daughters, lovers, partners and creators of some of what is best in the human condition); societies which benefit from and use our extensive wisdom and knowledge in all aspects of our existence - without being afraid or intimidated by our worth.

Yet we certainly cannot lean on our laurels, as the tasks and challenges remain multiple and sometimes seemingly impossible to overcome. But, we have very good reason to laugh and dance when we look back at where we have been, because it was not so long ago that we (those of us who are female and black in particular) could rightly be described as the “wretched of the earth”. Too many of us still occupy that tragic status in South Africa and across the continent and the world, and it is the urgency of this unfinished business which brings us together here today.

Nevertheless, we have moved; we are on the move and nothing can stop us now. “Wathinta Abafazi, Wathinta imbokodo!”

We have moved ourselves, most often through sheer courage and determination, and through an undefeatable belief in ourselves as the most beautiful human beings to have ever lived on this earth. We have come to a new and fragile place through a love of ourselves which is so deeply embedded in who we are and have been as women and as black people, that even the most vicious and dehumanising system of Apartheid could not dislodge us from our goal. We are African women, determined to be the very best that we can be.

However, in order for us to progress on this magnificent journey of reclamation and self-realisation, we need to step aside, and reflect on what it is that we have achieved and what

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*Dr. Patricia McFadden*

remains to be done. In so doing, I would like to share a few thoughts about what I think are some of the significant issues which have shaped our journey this far, and make some suggestions about how to respond to some of the outstanding issues which we will have to deal with in the immediate and long-term future as activists and women with an agency in the transformation process of this country.

I want to begin by interrogating the notions of democracy and governance (I shall hopefully succeed in making a distinction between good governance and what is otherwise in the course of this interrogation), and by showing how gendered and exclusionary these notions are in their historical and current conceptualisations. And given the racially specific history of South Africa, the exclusionary nature of these notions has been compounded by a supremacist ideology, which has made them seem even more unattainable for black women in particular, even after a liberation struggle which in many ways has partially bridged the divide between women and men as well as the instruments through which people can experience dignity and rights.

When one looks at the historical relationship between the notions of democracy, governance and women, one realises that there never really was one. Women were assumed, until very recent times, to have been recipients of democracy via the heterosexual, patriarchal family, i.e. via the adult male, who was assumed to know what was best for the woman. Men governed communities made up largely of women, children and older persons. They still do, because in most cases they believe that they only know how to. Note that belief is fundamentally different from knowing, but then, that is a moot question in situations of unequal power. Almost without exception, all the discourses about democracy and governance, globally, were, until recently, about what men thought in relation to the control, distribution and/or production of economic and political resources in their respective societies. Civil society excluded women and what they knew, confining most women to the narrow spaces of the family and household. Today African women operate at the heart of South African civil society. We have shaped and contoured the issues and parameters of civil society struggles, and have brought the private and the public closer through our activism. The social, political and cultural changes were obvious.

When African men make reference to African democracy and good governance (something which is clearly an invention, given the vastness and diversity of this continent even before the balkanisation by European colonisers), they still invariably refer to a memory which does not include the views of women and/or the notion of rights for us in the political and economic discourses of that time. If that were not the case, why is it that our knowledge and wisdom is literally absent from the narrative about democratic Renaissance not centred the rich heritage of our wisdom as reflected in the countless foremothers who created and shaped the African past - most often in productive and sustaining ways?

When we have searched for history, we have usually found it tucked away in the personalised and 'feminised' narratives of African women; in the stories, lullabies and legends which our foremothers have bequeathed us. Never in the public records which speak about who we are as Africans, until recently. Those women whose ideas were known in the historical heritage, were a few who happened to be privileged by class and circumstances. The continent has lost a vast reservoir of experience about the notions of democracy and fairness in human interaction in the oldest civilisation known.

Therefore, I think that the usefulness of reflecting on the notion of democracy in historical terms lies in that we can see just how exclusionary it has been, and how this exclusion

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continues to be reflected in the lives of women, particularly poor and rural women. The urban/rural divide expresses the dichotomy of exclusion and inclusion most graphically through the reality of becoming a citizen or remaining a subject. I owe the conceptualisation of this notion to Mamoud Mamdani, who may not yet have articulated it as closely to the lives of women in his work, but which I find most useful in terms of showing just how separated women have been from the central tenets of social discourse and policy across this continent. Struggle and independence are the means through which Africans, All Africans, should become citizens.

Yet, it is clear that most, if not all women (in South Africa white women were often the exception to the rule because they were and still are privileged by whiteness and supremacy), were and are still treated largely as subject (to be governed by men in the private and in public), then we can begin to understand just how deeply embedded our exclusion is in the manner in which political, economic and notions of power structures are conceptualised and articulated in our society.

When physical location is combined with traditions and cultural notions which ensure that women remain subjects, through limited access to social and political resources (like information about their rights and entitlements), the seriousness of re-conceptualising democracy and its translation into policy through governance mechanism becomes even more urgent.

This exclusion is often compounded by a fear on our part as women to demystify those very mechanisms through which African authenticity is claimed - given the cultural terror which colonisation and Apartheid unleashed upon us as Africans by denying our difference in relation to white culture and white values), and the threat of cultural ostracism and stigmatisation through claims that we are no longer African because we dare to criticise and reject those things which perpetuate our exclusion from sites of power.

Human beings have over the millennia created intricate rituals and procedures through which identity and status are accessed. These signify operation along hierarchies of power and control, and determine, in incredible ways, the manner in which we behave within our communities, in the workplace, in the home and in the political sphere. They are powerful mechanisms of control over women's agency, often reinforcing women's fears about being rejected, whilst promising 'belonging' even as they entrench our exclusion from the sites of real power and influence. We have become the custodians of the very mechanisms through which democracy and governance reproduce themselves as exclusionary notions in gendered terms.

The challenge is to be able to have the courage to reject those things which are supposed to give us identity, when we know that it is only a temporal and flitting sense of belonging, and to be able to construct new sources of identity for ourselves, which will strengthen the new democratic values for which so many Africans have given their lives over the past five hundred years.

As an integral part of the continent, South Africa is harvesting the heritage of a long struggle for dignity and rights, for personhood and integrity, which has been waged across the continent by millions of African women and men. The challenge now is to transit to a place where that brave and painful heritage becomes the foundation of a new notion of democracy; a new definition of governance which includes all who bring their gifts of human creativity to the political, social, economic and cultural sites of the society, so that newness will prevail.

I know that our brothers have been deeply wounded in the struggle against white patriarchy over

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the domination of this continent, and African women know how important it is for us to reclaim this continent for Africa to be African. However, that cannot and never will be good enough reason to deny and/or simply ignore the fact that African women know about the issues of democracy; that we have lived in the very societies which lay claim to a notion of democracy which remains fundamentally exclusionary of us, and that we will challenge such exclusion until the notion is redefined to include us in the most comprehensive ways. There is no doubt about that in the minds of us all, without exception.

It is this struggle for inclusion into the democratic discourse of African societies and the search for good governance and empowerment which finds expression in women's participation in the wars which raged over the past century in this region. Women joined the struggle for independence for many reasons, all of which we know very well. However, when we come to this subject from the issues of democratisation and governance, we can see clearly that the anti-colonial resistance speaks to certain commonly held aspirations and goals which bring us together as women, cutting across class, age, status, physical location and other social indicators which tend to set us apart.

#### **6.1. BORN OF THE LOVE FOR FREEDOM**

Nationalism becomes the vehicle through which African women enter the political spaces of their societies, expressing views about politics and policy, and crafting a vision of the future which serves as a bridge across which all Africans hope to cross into a better life. Albeit narrow and androcentric, nationalism opened new paths along which we could run, in search of new identities and possibilities, and it promised us much even as we gave our all in many instances. And so, to those Sisters (and brothers) who made the ultimate sacrifice to free this land, I bow my head in admiration and utmost respect.

Through Nationalist struggles, South African women entered the public as aspiring citizens, coming from communities and a society which had marginalised us in countless ways. We fought with a ferocity never before imagined, against a system which had robbed us of our wealth, our heritage, our names, languages, music and stories; a system which defined us as 'superfluous appendages', which denied us the opportunity and the right to be humane towards each other. And we won. But even in that winning, we faced the BLACKLASH - the fears and insecurities of our comrades who often violated our trust by imposing misogynist anger upon our bodies and our spirits. We faced the backlash in the prisons and dungeons of the oppressor who raped and pillaged our bodies in the hope that by desecrating our womanhood he (and sometimes she) would put out the light of freedom which burnt-out so fiercely in our breasts.

We suffered the indignities of going without food and often-times of wearing second- hand (may be third- or fourth-hand) clothes, and made jokes about 'mpando' so as to lessen the itch of someone else's smell on the jacket, blouse or skirt. We sang the songs of freedom, our freedom from what our mothers, aunts and grandmothers seemed so unable to free themselves from. We saw new lives ahead of us even as we covered up the pain and the loss of friendships destroyed by physical and sexual violation by male comrades who should have been our friends. And today, five years after the new flag was raised, and we saw for the first time black women in the parliament of South Africa, we are still faced with the ugly face of fear from those who do not know us. We, the very ones who bear children with them; who nurture and care for them; who listen patiently to their woes and celebrate their glory; still, the majority of us are killed by the men who should be returning our love and gifts of life. We are brutalised and silenced by the very ones with whom we share the most wonderous human bond - intimacy and the creation of new lives.

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For me, as a woman who has moved her identity from that of the nation to the region of Southern Africa, the crux of the matter lies in the fact that we have not begun to reconstruct a political ideology of our own as women. Here I am not alluding to separatism, nor am I arguing for exclusion. We have been victims of exclusion for as long as we can remember. What I know we need is a new politics, which comes out of the specific realities of women's lives. A politics which is part of the larger whole, inclusive of the many struggles and interests which criss-cross our society, but a politics which breaks away from the constraints that an androcentric nationalism imposes upon our consciousness as women and activists. Why do I think so? Because of some of the things I have said above, but also because:

African women in South Africa and across the region have coexisted in an uneasy relationship with nationalism to the present time. It is a question of loyalty which often expresses itself in the reluctance to embrace a more radical stance on issues affecting women; because then we will have to confront men with whom we share old ties of lineage and kinship.

We shy away from raising critical political issues that require that we cross the line of familiarity and become foe to those with whom we shared difficult and trying times just a few years ago. How can we question the judgement of someone who has been proclaimed infallible even as we know that he needs the political schooling which will make him realise his sexism and paternalism towards women?

We feel trapped in a difficult place, between what is so easily called disrespect and making a demand for a right which we know we have earned just as legitimately as our male colleagues. Yet the ties that bind us keep us silent and 'tactical' as we traffic through the corridors of power.

I would like to make reference to Victoria Wolf's concept of 'a room of ones own' - that process of earning the right to access and enjoy the privileges which liberated societies make possible, as a woman and as a citizen. But we cannot enjoy the pleasure of a room of our own - which we have a right to, until we cross the boundaries which keep us loyal and compromised on the most critical issues of our time.

We know what needs to be done to redress the imbalances in the distribution of wealth in this nation. What we need is to keep up the courage, the patience and the indomitable resolve to insist upon the economic rights of women, using all the instruments at our disposal to achieve our goal.

We understand the historical and institutional constraints that keep millions of poor black women out of the health delivery system. We survived them. What we need to do is to cross the line over and over again, by translating our knowledge into immediate and long-term strategies, regardless of whose so-called right it is to poison us to death.

We are familiar with the tragic consequences of growing up as girls in over-crowded accommodation, the violations and the prices so many women have paid for the lack of privacy. Now we are preparing for the second wave of women's empowerment - of moving the great stone that has kept us outside those essential sites of power.

## **6.2. CONSTRUCTING SISTERHOOD AND FEMINIST SOLIDARITY**

As I have tried to establish above, the fundamental issues underpinning women's empowerment

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are those of the democratisation of material and social resources in the society, through practices and procedures of good governance, which center the interests and rights of women side by side with those of others at every level of existence. But facilitating for the empowerment of women through structural and political change is only one side of the coin. The other side entails that women themselves create the platforms through which such empowerment will ensure the sustainability and maintenance of democratic politics in South Africa.

This can only be done through the united action of women across all those things which continue to divide us and have successfully kept us apart. We need to create solidarity among us and to use the notion of solidarity to counter sexism, racism, ageism, classism, and ableism. The issues of choice lie at the heart of sustainable democracy, and the rights and entitlements which women have fought for and secured in the law, the economic and political spheres, in personal relationships and in domestic cites must be jealously guarded and never be lost.

To ensure this, we need solidarity. By solidarity I do not mean only the extensions of support or being paternalistic. I mean the acceptance of our difference, and that it is through difference that we have been divided by sexism, which uses us to ensure that men enjoy the privileges which they have come to assume are natural to males;

I mean, understanding that being white is still very much about being privileged and pampered, and it is this privilege which perpetuates racist supremacy and separateness, through vicious myths and stereotypes which white women have internalised so deeply they cannot recognise them even when you shove them into their faces.

Loving a black man or woman is one thing. Dismantling racism is quite another, and the latter requires tons of courage and an acceptance that for as long as whiteness is perceived and used to access privileged and other material and social resources, the divide between Black and White women will widen. Racism has to go, and it can only go through the concerted political action of white women, with the support of black women who have been waging anti-racist struggles for as long as this ugliness has been with us.

What of the young? Where do they derive their identities from, and how do they envision a future, which is wholesome and inclusive? How do we deal with the impact of globalisation and cultural hegemony by the North, and its consequences for the identities of young women in particular? Are there any battles which young women will have to fight on their own behalf, and what is it that we as older women are doing to facilitate their participation in the wider struggles for women-friendly, women-respecting societies? We need to discuss the relationship between older women and younger women. I know that it is a difficult and vexed relationship, from which many of us shy away. But, we have to face up to the challenges of ageism and autocratic behaviour among those of us who occupy positions of power in the state and within the women's movement. We need to recognise that many older women reproduce the hierarchies of age and difference amongst us, and that these only serve to separate and undermine us as women and as activists. The tendency towards undemocratic behaviour, especially when it affects younger women, must be treated with the political contempt that it deserves and dealt with swiftly and without compromise. We have struggled long and hard in order to create democratic communities and families. The women's movement must be the safest place for all women. We all must take responsibility for that imperative.

I am talking about competition among and between women - a competitiveness that transforms

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us into greedy, vicious and unrecognisable people who end up leading sterile and lonely lives. In this rich and wonderful country, there is more than enough for all of us. We have the obligation to teach those men and women in our communities to teach this practical lesson. But, how can we teach solidarity if we perceive each other as competitors instead of collaborators. I know that I sound like a preacher - and maybe that is what I am right now. We need to remind ourselves of the wonderfulness that women bring into human society through our abilities to nurture, to share, to care, to protect. We make life possible, no matter how poor we are and how isolated we become. But for us to be able to use these great gifts of womenkind, we must consciously formulate a politics which is ours, which will undergird our strategies and our programmes, and which will enable us to leave behind us the terrible legacies of sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism and class arrogance.

I do not live in South Africa, not yet, but it is my home in many more ways than one. I know the pain of struggle; the joy of achievement, that exhilarating feeling in the depth of one's soul when freedom has become such a real possibility. We have many of the structural and political mechanisms to make this a different society - the possibilities are immense. Nevertheless, the challenges remain even more awesome. Most of the women in this country remain un-free. Therefore, none of us will be free until each one of us can exercise her rights to the fullest. Democracy and Governance can only be a reality when all women are empowered.

I have not raised many other important issues: issues of the relationship between women, militarism and how this translates into the violence women experience in their daily lives in both the private sector and public; between women and new technologies, especially those which have changed the very character of the media in particular, and offer possibilities of new types of violation (through the accessing of pornography and paedophilia on the internet for example); the relationships women have with the men who control the political parties through which many of us function politically, etc.

I am not sure how we will get to the goal of a feminist platform built on a notion of sisterhood, which is political and honest. However, I know that that is something we will have to start working on if we have not begun to, and/or to strengthen if we have begun that part of our journey. Without a feminist sisterhood, which is built on the best parts of all of us, we cannot go to those new and refreshing places where we can exercise power in new ways.

We have come a long way in our journey, but this is only a bend in the road. When we turn the corner into the new millennium, the unfinished work will still await us. We all freely and lovingly embrace a labour of love. Let us do it together, so that we can have more time to celebrate and dance. Thank you.

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## **7. THE ROLE OF SALGA WITH REGARD TO GENDER TRANSFORMATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

*Councillor Alice Coetzee, Chairperson: SALGA Gender Working Group*

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### **7.1. BACKGROUND**

- Local Government is the sphere of democratic government closest to the people. Its effect on the daily lives of people, and particularly women who are the main consumers of local services is critical.
  - The number of women who are voted onto local government councils in the year 2000 will be the most telling indicator of how successful we have been in the past four years in advancing gender equity. It will also be the measure of South Africa's political maturity and its ongoing commitment to participative democracy.
  - Our first democratic local government elections in 1995 saw women making up 19.4% of councillors. Although this meant that more women were present in local councils than at any other time, that figure is substantially below the critical mass of 30%, and is even more unsatisfactory when one considers that women constitute 52% of the population.
  - It is also important to remember that in the decision-making positions, i.e. executive committee members and chairpersons of executive committees the representation of women is even lower, at 14.4%.
  - Women are also not equitably spread throughout local government. Women's presence in council varies from council to council. In some councils it can be as high as 50%, in others there may be only one woman or no woman at all, especially in the rural councils.
  - The inequity between councils and their differing capacity to address development also affects the way they address gender issues. There are some 850 local councils throughout South Africa. They vary from large, well-resourced metros with sub-structures through to financially strapped rural councils with virtually non-existent tax bases.
  - With many councils now facing financial difficulties, the issue of gender equity is predictably low on their list of priorities. Addressing gender is seen as unnecessary when survival is at stake. There is no understanding that targeted effective development needs the inputs of both women and men into the policy planning and resource allocations of the individual councils.
  - The autonomy of local councils also has an impact on the inclusion of gender in their structures and policies. Although councils operate within the framework of the white paper on local government, each council still makes its own policy, decides on its delegation of powers, establishes its own standing committees and drafts its own budgets.
  - Without gender structures councils are not able to deal systematically with gender issues, both internally and in creating women-friendly councils and externally in terms of development and delivery.
  - The implication of this is that while the battle to transform local government in terms of gender equity can be fought collectively, and provincial and national positions can be adopted, the implementation has to happen at each local council and is dependent on the political will and administrative capacity of that council.
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## **7.2. THE ROLE OF SALGA**

Although local government operates as a sphere of government in its own right, it still needs to relate to provincial and national government. In terms of the constitution, any legislation which affects local government, has to be consulted with local government. With some 850 local councils to consult, a mechanism was needed.

To facilitate this, the constitution makes provision for municipalities to form municipal associations. Flowing out of this, a national association, SALGA and nine provincial associations have been established.

In terms of its objectives, SALGA is the recognised 'voice' of local government, charged with representing, promoting and protecting the interests of local government in all matters with the national and provincial governments. It is also the national employers' organisation. SALGA is committed to transforming local government to enable local councils to fulfil their development role. In addition, very importantly, the constitution of SALGA states that it must ensure the full participation of women in local government.

There is often confusion about how organised local government is structured and functions. Starting from the bottom each municipality within a province may be a member of the provincial association. That provincial association has its own executive committee and working groups looking at policy issues.

Each provincial association is a member of the national body and has representation on its national executive committee. SALGA has five working groups, including a gender working group.

Each working group consists of a representative from the provincial association, usually the chairperson of the counterpart working group in the province. The role of the working groups is to review proposed legislation affecting local government, develop a national position, address training and capacity needs, develop policy guidelines and make their recommendations to the SALGA executive.

The intention is that national positions are developed through a process whereby municipalities discuss issues in their provincial working groups and their position is then discussed at the national working group meeting. Through discussion and consensus building, the national position for local government emerges.

In terms of co-operative governance, the platforms where local government can engage with their provincial and national government is through Slag's representation on the National Council of Provinces, the Financial and Fiscal affairs commission, the local government MINMEC and provincial intergovernmental forums (GIGFs).

I have dealt with SALGA at some length because it is important to know the context within which SALGA operates.

As the SALGA gender working group, we have set our own specific objectives, which are:

**7.2.1. To develop training and capacity building programmes.**

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- 7.2.2. To develop gender policies.
- 7.2.3. To facilitate the formation of gender working groups in provincial associations and at urban and rural councils, with supporting administrative machinery.
- 7.2.4. To ensure consultation and communication between provincial and national gender working groups in organised local government.
- 7.2.5. To represent, promote and protect the interests of women in local government in relation to national and provincial gender machinery, initiatives, etc.
- 7.2.6. Promote networking on gender issues.

### **7.3. SALGA WORKING GROUP'S PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

Since the gender-working group was formed at the end of 1996, there has been progress in a number of areas:

Gender working groups have been formed in eight of the nine provincial associations.

Working relationships have been established with the Commission for gender Equality, the Office on the Status of Women, and the parliamentary women's caucus. Additionally, links have been developed with individuals and organisations involved with gender research and development issues.

The first national strategic planning meeting held for provincial representatives in 1997 set three priority areas:

- Intervention in the budget and the integrated development programme;
- Making councils to be more women-friendly;
- Training.

Underpinning these priority areas, it was resolved that gender structures be established in local councils and that provincial gender working groups would facilitate the process.

Of the three priority areas, our immediate goal was to impact on the budget for the 1998/99 year.

A gender and development handbook for councillors and officials was developed and some 900 councillors have been trained through provincial training workshops since the beginning of this year. We are now into our third phase of training, which will be focusing on the 1999/2000 budget as an election's budget. The training will also focus on developing lobbying, caucusing and communication skills of the women councillors.

The budget training was also used to promote the establishment of gender structures in local councils.

The provincial working groups are reporting progress in the establishment of gender structures in district councils who either do not see the need or lack the financial and administrative capacity.

SALGA is in the process of receiving funding from the Norwegian organised local government association for a gender programme that will research and develop, in conjunction with targeted municipalities and provincial associations, gender policies for local government.

With SALGA there has been limited progress. The human resource development director is gender sensitive and through working with her, we are ensuring that the content councillor training is reviewed from a gender perspective. Training needs on gender awareness have been incorporated into the councillor-training programme.

The increased awareness of gender equity within organised local government can be seen in the directives from SALGA which stipulate delegations for training, study tours, etc. should be gender sensitive.

In looking at what has been achieved so far, it is important to look at the obstacles that have hindered gender advancement in local government.

The lack of technical support has been one of the major obstacles. SALGA does not have a full-time gender co-ordinator and this is echoed in the provincial associations. Co-ordination is done in a part-time capacity by already overburdened local council officials.

This lack of full-time staff has hampered research and policy development, the implementation of programmes, and communication between SALGA and provincial association. This is further exacerbated by provincial associations' unwillingness to give attention to gender issues.

This lack of implementing capacity has created the danger of both national and provincial gender working committees being little more of talk shops and open to criticism by other better resourced working groups.

Although the national and provincial gender working groups have created an awareness of gender issues within local government, negative attitudes and a limited understanding of gender equity persist in local councils, provincial associations and at national level.

The lack of gender structures in local councils remains the core gap/weakness in our attempts to effect gender transformation in local government. At local level, it hampers any systematic implementation of gender programmes while at provincial association level it renders the provincial gender working groups weak in terms of co-ordination, technical capacity and administration.

#### **7.4. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

Over the past years much has been achieved in terms of establishing gender machinery, networking around gender, building our own understanding of gender equity issues and in the processes of creating an awareness - limited as it may be - within the South African society.

In the learning process each sector has grappled with its own problems, its own challenges specific to that environment. The networking has been limited and the result has been scattered initiatives.

This conference indicates that we are ready to enter a new phase - one where we can come

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together, identify national issues and then as partners see what roles we can collectively and individually play in taking the gender struggle forward.

This co-ordinated approach will surely lead to incremental gains as the synergies of the role players are channelled into focused programmes and campaigns.

The challenge facing us is to develop ways to sytematise this intergovernmental and inter-sectoral co-ordination and collaboration that enables us to deliver.

At the beginning of this speech I referred to the elections as a testing time for us. One of the outcomes of this conference should surely be a common commitment to involve our organisations in a programme to return women to parliament, provincial legislatures and local councils in greater numbers, with 50% as our target.

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## **8. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF LEGISLATIVE INSTITUTIONS**

*Ms. Lindiwe Zulu, Deputy Speaker: Gauteng Provincial Legislature Head of the Women's Empowerment Unit*

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### **8.1. INTRODUCTION**

I wish to thank the organisers for inviting me to give input in this conference. This conference takes place at a crucial phase in the history of women's struggle for emancipation, empowerment, and representation in political structures. Furthermore, the conference takes place at the close of the first democratic elections and this compels us to take stock of both our achievements during the past four-and-a-half years of our participation in our first democratic Parliament and provincial legislatures. As we are about to embark in the next elections, it is important that we call on all political parties to ensure that a greater number of women are returned to parliament. This will enable us to evaluate what has been done and how. It also enables us to develop effective mechanisms for transforming our institutions; and fosters greater representation of equal participation of women in the legislative institutions.

Generally, transformation of institutions is a difficult phenomenon, as it requires a paradigm shift, both within the institutions themselves and within society as a whole. In addition, transformation of institutions requires adequate resources to implement as well as sustain this transformation. However, having adequate resources on their own without commitment will not bring about the required transformation. In other words, commitment goes hand in hand with availability of resources.

It is imperative to stress that the Constitution of South Africa is one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. It is also gender sensitive and provides for state institutions supporting constitutional democracy. Essentially, the Commission on Gender Equality is a product of women and men united with a purpose, women and men committed to changing the lives of the majority of women in South Africa and changing the attitudes of the South African society with regard to women's issues.

State Institutions Supporting Democracy, as reflected in chapter nine of our constitution, lays the basis for institutional transformation. Herein, all the commissions that were necessary for enabling societal and interpersonal change are mentioned, and amongst these is the commission on gender equality. Therefore, it is obvious that the government is committed to this transformation

### **8.2. GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Good governance demands efficient and effective institutions that will allow equal participation of those who operate within them. Therefore, we should not forget that institutions of governance like other institutions originate from a patriarchal system of unequal gender relations. Further, these unequal relations determined the gender of those who should operate within them. I have already mentioned that transformation requires a paradigm shift, and remember that we are talking about human beings who have internalised their gendered social relations. For example, despite all good intentions and government's commitment to set up the Commission on Gender Equality, it took time to allocate the necessary resources. To an extent,

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the same scenario prevails in the transformation of our Legislative institutions. In the sense that there are good intentions, but human failure and fear stalls these. Moreover, much as women may want to transform the environment within which they work, traditional and cultural values plays a part.

Whilst our focus is on women's entry into parliament and decision-making we do not need to re-invent the wheel, because women have started to influence the transformation of these institutions. For example, when we first came into parliament, there were no child-care facilities, and this made it difficult for women with children to be members of parliament, but in some instances, women have changed that. In addition, the National Assembly did not have toilets for women members and today they have them. I am using these examples because they may seem as petty things, but in reality, they allow human beings to function. Having realised that our institutions are shaped by male patterns as well as male perceptions that say 'women cannot cope', we have, through discussions, workshops, seminars and conferences, developed mechanisms to address these difficulties, as well as to ensure that there is understanding that the times for sittings and committees has to be changed.

During these, we recognised that the process of transforming legislative institutions needed to be part of a holistic, integrated process to ensure that women's issues are not 'ghettoised'. What we meant here was that gender and women's issues per se have to be part of, for example, human resources development. There should be gender sensitivity in all policies developed for running the institutions. This should be consciously done, as they are developed not afterwards because then it would be difficult to change.

Specific structures are now in place to address women's needs. In the national Assembly there is a Parliamentary Women's Group, and in the provinces we have women's Caucuses. These formations afford women space to come together irrespective of political affiliation to discuss issues that affect them. These structures, although informal in formation in the sense that apart from kwaZulu-Natal most do not have the resources, support and recognition from their legislative institutions, concentrate on gender sensitising legislation but only where this function is not impeded by party political differences. In addition, these structures liaise with other women's organisations nationally, locally and internationally on issues that affect women. However, this formation has not been without controversy where males have questioned the need for their existence and provision of resources. Progress to the existence of these formations should also be attributed to the very presence of women in these institutions. Most importantly, another contributory factor is that both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly are women who are very much involved in women issues. Their commitment to the emancipation and empowerment of women brought about the existence of the Women's Empowerment Unit, a project of the speaker's forum.

### **8.3. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT UNIT**

The women's Empowerment Unit is a project of the Speakers Forum of South Africa. The Unit was established to promote gender equality in Parliament and the nine Provincial legislatures. Its objectives are to ensure that the transformation of the legislative processes considers women's needs.

In the sense that the unit identifies and addresses the specific factors that hinder women from fully participating in the law-making processes. It ensures that the processes of transforming the

institution of parliament and provincial legislatures programmes and culture are women-friendly, by providing them with the necessary skills.

The culture of these institutions was so male dominated that some of us found it difficult to function. We needed educational programmes not only to empower women but for the empowering of both genders. We still need programmes like gender analysis for all members of parliament. We also need to look at the working hours in parliament. There is a whole range of issues that still need to be transformed in the institutions of government. Nevertheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that we have a political leadership that recognises that women are needed to make the radical changes that are necessary. In turn the presence of women in these institutions will enable them to change the structures of power which they are part of, thus making it easier for those who follow.

When we look back over the two decades or even four years ago, we see the tremendous progress we have made. Looking forward to the next elections, we see how much further we still have to travel. However, we do so with confidence knowing that women have the ability and courage to govern and to change the male- female relationships in this country.

To conclude, I want to quote the words of Mr. Miguel Angel Martinez, MP, former President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. He said that ' One of the greatest weaknesses of democracy - perhaps the worst and most blatant - is the unacceptable insufficiency of the representation and participation of women in public, political and institutional life. Today, this dramatic deficit constitutes a variable insult to reason, a flaw in the democratic system, and above all, an unforgivable waste of human resources which humanity cannot afford'.

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## **WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION**

The Women's Development Foundation (WDF) is a non-racial, non-partisan organisation committed to promoting the political empowerment of women. WDF's focus is on disadvantaged women in leadership positions. WDF aims to promote and advocate women's interests and concerns at governmental level and in society in general; create forums for the articulation of women's needs in all sectors of South African society; as well as bring before government and the public matters of interest to women.

In order to achieve this WDF's programme consists of policy and advocacy; research and documentation; and training assistance.

## **THE OFFICE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

The Office on the Status of Women (OSW) was established to ensure that the constitutional imperatives underpinning equality and supporting political commitments are translated into real and meaningful government programmes, thereby making a non-sexist society a reality. The OSW is principally charged with providing guidance on the National Gender Policy as well as giving direction on how the policy is to be implemented. This includes, *inter alia*, to advise and brief the Executive Deputy President on all matters pertaining to the empowerment of women and liaising between non-governmental organisations which deal with women's issues and the Office of the Executive Deputy President.

## **NATIONAL WOMEN'S COALITION**

The National Women's Coalition was formed by women from all different spheres of life in South Africa to champion the interests of women. The principal aim of WNC is to ensure that women participate in the constitution-making process and to ensure effective equality in all spheres of women's lives. WNC acts as an effective gender equality organising forum that works towards the improvement of the quality of life of all South African women in a committed and flexible manner. Its objectives include *inter alia* to strengthen women's organisations, to promote the participation of South African women in national and international dialogue and related actions, to continue further research and dissemination of information.

## **THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT UNIT**

The Women's Empowerment Unit (WEU) is a project of the Speaker's Forum. The Speaker's Forum is comprised of all the Speakers and Deputy Speakers within the National Assembly and Provincial Legislatures. The Unit is an NGO within government and the Swedish government funds its activities, as a result the Speaker and Four Deputy Speakers across the political spectrum serve as the Unit's Board of Directors to protect the interests of the unit.

The main objectives of WEU include identifying and addressing specific factors that hinder women from participating fully in the law-making process; target male MP's and MPL's to encourage them to deal with ways in which they deliberately and inadvertently disempower women; establish mechanisms for networking and communicating with women's organisations locally, nationally and internationally as well as providing women with skills to both do their

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constituency work effectively, and lobbying.

### **SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) is a non-profit organisation and it unites local authorities at urban and rural sphere in South Africa under a single authoritative voice.

SALGA aims to, *inter alia*, represent, promote and protect the interests of local government; ensure the role and status of municipalities; transform local government to enable it to fulfil its developmental role; ensure the full participation of women in organised local government as well as to provide legal assistance to its members in connection with matters which affect employer/employee relations.

### **COMMISSION ON GENDER EQUALITY**

The Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) is an independent, statutory body established in terms of Section 187 of the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996.

The role of the CGE is to promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of Gender equality. The powers and functions of the CGE are detailed in the Commission on Gender Equality Act 39 of 1996. In terms of Section 11 (1), the CGE must, *inter alia*, evaluate any law proposed by Parliament, affecting or likely to affect gender equality or the status of women, and make recommendations to Parliament with regards hitherto.

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# P ROGRAMME OF EVENTS

## **FRIDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 1998**

### ***Madam of Ceremonies:***

*Ms. Phumelele Ntombela-Nzimande: Acting Chairperson of CGE*

### **Opening Speech**

*Dr. Brigalia Bam: President WDF*

### **Transforming Ministries and Institutions**

*Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburi: Premier of Free State*

### **Entrenching Democracy and Good Governance Through the Empowerment of Women**

*Dr. Pat McFadden: Director of the Feminist Studies Institute, Harare*

### **Entertainment:**

*Ms. Tu Nokwe*

## **SATURDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 1998**

### **CHAIRPERSON OF THE FIRST SESSION: MS. BARBARA WATSON (WDF)**

08:30 - 9:45 **Panel Discussion: The Experience of Women in Governance**

*Panelists:*

*Ms. Tersia Wessels (NP)*

*Prof. Harriet Ngubane (IFP)*

*Ms. Annalise van Wyk (UDM)*

*Ms. Thenjiwe Mthintso (ANC)*

*Ms. Pat Richards (DP)*

09:45 - 10:00 **Questions and Discussion**

10:30 - 11:00 **Tea**

### **CHAIRPERSON OF THE SECOND SESSION: MS. MATSHITHSI NDLOVU (NWC)**

11:00 - 11:15 **Women in Institutional Transformation**

*MP Ms. Lindiwe Zulu (WEU)*

11:15 - 11:30 **The Role of SALGA**

*Ms Alice Coetzee (SALGA)*

11:30 - 11:45 **Women in the Public Service**

*Dr. Ellen Kornegay (OSW)*

11:45 - 13:00 **Participatory Discussion and Feedback from Plenary**

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13:00 - 14:00     **Lunch in the Umgeni Dinning Hall**

**CHAIRPERSON OF THE THIRD SESSION: MS THOKO MPUMUL     WANA**

14:00 - 17:30     **Discussion in Commissions**

18:30 - 19:30     **Dinner in the Umgeni Dinning Hall**

20:00 - 21:00     **Report Back**

**SUNDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 1998**

**CHAIRPERSON OF SESSION: MS COLLEEN LOWE MORNA (CGE)**

08:00 - 09:00     **Overview**  
*Chairperson*

09:00 - 10:30     **Last Word - Implication of Symposium Recommendations**  
*NWC, CGE, WEU*

10:30 - 11:00     **Tea**

11:00 - 12:00     **Last Word - Implication of Symposium Recommendations**     *(Continued)*  
*SALGA, OSW and WDF*

12:00 - 12:30     **Vote of thanks**  
*Ms Barbara Watson (WDF)*

12:30 - 13:30     **Lunch**

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