



GENDER AND WOMEN IN POLITICS PROGRAMME FOR SADC PARLIAMENTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2007



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2008

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The SADC Parliamentary Forum thanks the following for supporting the Gender and Women in Politics Programme and this publication:
Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA) Regional Democratic Governance Programme
United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

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Secretary General and Members of Parliament from Parliamentary Committees responsible for Gender Equality and National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses from Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

FOREWORD

It is widely accepted that women's empowerment and gender equality is one of the major challenges facing the SADC region and the world in the 21st century. Since the adoption of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development by the Heads of State and Government in September 1997 in Blantyre Malawi, a new impetus for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in the SADC region was demonstrated. While the adoption of the Declaration was an important development and achievement in itself, the practical implementation of measures to achieve the commitments and objectives of the Declaration should point to important areas of progress and achievements.

Notwithstanding the positive actions and efforts taken by Member States to initiate the necessary improvements, the pace of implementation of programmes and initiatives on gender equality and the empowerment of women is slow and uneven across the SADC countries. Political will and efforts have, however, too often not been systematic and not developed with a deep understanding of how critical gender equality is for democratic governance and development. Adequate funding and resources for the effective implementation of commitments is often still sadly lacking. Member States' attention should also be drawn to the creation of enabling environments needed for the realization of women's human rights. Where this basic ground work has not been established, efforts to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality encounter obstacles.

As the regional body of Parliaments in the SADC region, the SADC Parliamentary Forum is motivated by the Heads of State and Government's endorsement of the process to come up with a SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. A Protocol as opposed to a Declaration would move the SADC region from the realm of commitment to that of implementation as well as placing this region at the forefront and cutting edge on the achievement of one of the frontiers of democracy and human rights, namely, gender equality. It is also a recognition of going beyond numbers in order to transform societies. By pointing out to what has been achieved it also demonstrates how much remains to be done and that success is still possible in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Parliamentarians have a primary role of monitoring the implementation of agreements and policies which have been agreed to by the Executive. This can only be effective when Parliamentarians are committed to performing their oversight function on the implementation of the Protocol on Gender at national and regional levels. The Forum catalyses parliamentary actions that contribute to the attainment of a conducive environment for peace, gender equality and equity, human rights and democratic governance. Gender equality is achievable if political leaders act now and there is a clear need for political leaders to take urgent and concerted action or many millions of people will not realize the basic promises of development. This will require inclusive sound governance by both women and men, good policies and practical strategies and budgets for investing in gender equality and women's empowerment. If all concerned live up to the commitments already made more could be accomplished.

In addition, the Forum realizes that attention to the participation of women in positions of power and decision making is essential to achieving gender equality and sound democratic governance in the region. The present ideal of participatory democracy implies the participation and contribution of all parts of the population without regard to class, sex, gender, ethnic or religious background. Including women, who constitute half of the populations of SADC countries will necessarily imply an important democratic advance.

Since the development and implementation of the Engendering SADC Parliaments initiative, the SADC Parliamentary Forum has been in the forefront of facilitating reliable and timely information on gender equality and women's empowerment in the SADC region to Parliaments. Such information is key to the lawmaking, representation and oversight mandates of Parliamentarians and make gender equality achievable. This report assesses what can be achieved in the area of gender and women's political participation and help to show how much still needs to be done.

KASUKA SIMWINJI MUTUKWA
SECRETARY GENERAL

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INTRODUCTION

In response to the SADC Parliamentary Forum's Strategic Plan (2006-2010) and the regional SADC Strategic Implementation Framework on Gender and Development (2006-2010), the Programme goal is to promote and contribute to improved parliamentary advocacy on gender equality and women's political participation and representation in the SADC region.

From January 2007 to March 2008 the work in the area of gender and women's political participation builds on work carried out in the period between 2000 through to 2006. The initial efforts focused on placing gender issues on the agenda of SADC parliaments to institutionalize the gender mainstreaming in parliamentarians' work. There was also a focus on placing the gender agenda at the level of the SADC Parliamentary Forum and ensuring that the gender perspective is an integral part of all Forum strategies, tools and programmes areas.

The specific objectives are to:

- *Improve performance on the application of gender equality approaches and strategies within the institution of Parliament and parliamentary committees;*
- *Strengthen and support methodologies for effective mainstreaming of gender within the Forum programmes;*
- *Contribute to reforms of electoral frameworks and laws that facilitate women's political participation and gender balanced representation;*
- *Promote transformative leadership strategies for women's inter-parties parliamentary caucuses and women's units in political parties;*
- *Promote and support the mainstreaming of gender equality in HIV and AIDS programmatic initiatives;*
- *Contribute to the strengthening of regional, continental and international processes that support gender and democracy and women's participation and representation in positions of power and decision making.*

The programme uses a gender mainstreaming approach which is a strategy of assessing the implications for men and women of any planned action, including legislation,

policies and programmes in all areas at all levels. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The Standing Committee on Democracy, Governance and Gender Equality is the Forum's institutional mechanism responsible for gender equality initiatives.

The Programme pioneered systemic and sustained work on gender analysis and knowledge development for Parliamentarians in their lawmaking, representation and oversight mandates. The how to do gender analysis in parliamentary committees' work? The strategy is premised in the cross cutting nature of gender in parliamentary mandates across portfolio/parliamentary committees for example Justice, Constitutional and Legal Rights, Health, Education and Training, HIV/AIDS, Democracy and Governance, Budgets, Defense, Finance, Public Accounts, Gender and Human Rights.

The Programme works to retain gender equality objectives in all SADC Parliamentary Forum programmes, policies, structures, processes and practices. Advocacy on the implementation of landmark regional, continental and international governmental commitments and instruments on gender equality and women's empowerment for example the envisaged SADC Protocol on Gender and Development is sustained through the Programme. In order to maximise impact and optimise the use of limited resources, the Gender Programme works in collaboration with a wide range of strategic partners including the SADC Secretariat-Gender Unit, regional, continental and international agencies and civil society organisations.

Work on women's political participation and representation has adopted wide ranging approaches that seek to lobby and promote women's participation and representation in positions of power and decision making in SADC member States, particularly through the advocacy of the minimum 30 percent target for women's participation and representation. The Standing Committee on the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) is the Forum's institutional mechanism responsible for women's political participation and representation initiatives.

The strategy is to engage and work with political parties which are the real gate keepers on who can be nominated into elective positions. This in turn has required strategies to strengthen women's organizations/departments in political parties to function as conduits for preparing and presenting women candidates for nomination on to party lists. The interventions focus on political parties represented in each Parliament in order to institutionalize the women's empowerment perspective across political parties. These interventions are sustained in the non election periods to prevent the erosion of gains due to the high turnover among women Parliamentarians after every election.

The impact of political parties' intra democracy processes cannot be divorced from the participation and representation of women in decision making positions. Consequently, the Programme unpacks political parties' constitutions/policies and electoral systems from a gender perspective. The aim is to provide policy measures/legal frameworks that can be adapted to increase women's representation in decision making to at least 30percent at all levels.

In addition, initiatives to provide Additional Empowerment Strategies for women Parliamentarians to be effective in their parliamentary mandates are facilitated. Through the establishment and organization of women Parliamentarians in National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses (NWPC) the programme facilitates mechanisms for women in parliaments to collaborate on matters of mutual interest to women irrespective of political parties' ideologies. It also creates a formal network for women Parliamentarians to strategise on political positions before they make contributions into the mainstream along with motivating and supporting each other to carry on.

In order to take the implementation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum's Strategic Plan priorities (2006-2010) forward, the programme used a gender mainstreaming approach and focused its activities on three critical areas:

- *Gender equality advocacy*
- *Women's political participation and representation*
- *Strategic Partnerships and alliances strengthening*

GENDER EQUALITY ADVOCACY

Objective

- Improve performance on the application of gender equality approaches and strategies within the institution of Parliament and parliamentary committees;
- Strengthen and support methodologies for effective mainstreaming of gender within the Forum programmes;

Advocacy on gender equality has sought to consolidate previous work on awareness raising on parliamentary mandates and the intersection with gender equality and pioneered institutional driven parliamentarians' engagement in the development of regional instruments and frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment, namely the draft SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. The involvement of parliamentarians in the development of the Protocol reinforced the critical importance of how Parliaments and Parliamentarians can ensure that national laws, policies, actions, programmes and budgets reflect the principles and obligations in landmark regional, continental and international governmental agreements and instruments on gender equality.

Knowledge development and application

Activities to consolidate efforts made included the **Roundtable on Regional and International Instruments on Gender Equality for Parliamentarians in the SADC Region in Lusaka, Zambia, April 2007.**

The Roundtable provided the framework for addressing the

obligations in the 1978 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004).

The Roundtable focused on the areas of involvement, requirements and possible actions for MPs and Parliaments to bridge the gap between commitments (policy) and the implementation of these instruments. In addition, this initiative raised awareness and facilitated parliamentary contributions into the draft SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. 38 parliamentarians from Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe who are Chairpersons/Vice Chairpersons of parliamentary Committees responsible for Gender, Chairpersons/Vice Chairpersons of National Women's Inter-Party Parliamentary Caucuses, and the SADC Parliamentary Forum's Standing Committee on Democratisation, Governance and Gender Equality, including the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Botswana participated in the Roundtable.

Through the extensive analysis and deliberations on strengthening parliamentary advocacy on gender equality, parliamentarians identified the following critical areas for action on lawmaking, representation and oversight responsibilities to fulfill commitments in the relevant regional, continental and international instruments.



From left: Deputy Speaker of Botswana Parliament, Secretary General of SADC Parliamentary Forum, Deputy Speaker of Zambia Parliament and the then Minister for Gender Development and Women in Development in Zambia.

SADC PARLIAMENTS TEMPLATE ON THE APPLICATION OF REGIONAL, CONTINENTAL AND INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

Areas of involvement	Requirements	Possible actions for MPs and Parliaments for realization of commitments in the instruments
Development of Regional Instruments	Parliaments must be involved in all stages and processes in the development of regional instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Concerned ministry must involve responsible parliamentary committees in the development of regional instruments •MPs from relevant Portfolio Committees must be part of delegations to regional negotiations / discussions on proposed instruments •Parliament to ensure consultations of the public •Draft instruments to be appraised by relevant Parliamentary Committee before Executive adopts and/or signs regional and international instruments •SADC PF to advise parliaments about RII being developed relevant to SADC •SADC PF to be engaged in the development of SADC regional instruments
Signing	Governments to embrace the principles in regional and international instruments for the benefit of the peoples of SADC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Consultative mechanisms for MPs and Executive in appropriating Regional and International Instruments(RII) •Co-ordination and sharing of information between the Executive and the Legislature on all matters concerning Regional and International Instruments
Ratification	To set principles and standards that can apply to national laws and policies in line with commitments in Regional and International Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Parliaments to engage relevant ministries to table signed RII for ratification
Domestication	To facilitate citizens assess to commitments under Regional and International Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Parliaments to develop laws in line with principles and commitments in the RII
Operationalising	To ensure implementation of commitments in the Regional and International Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Speakers to facilitate structured parliamentary and executive engagement on the development and progress of RII •Parliamentary language should be informed by the principles of the regional and international instruments •Mainstreaming of gender in all parliamentary roles and responsibilities •Parliaments to influence adequate resources are allocated to attain regional standards and commitments •SADC PF to advocate for the implementation of the RII in Member States at national level
Lawmaking	Making sure that laws are aligned to RII commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •In the passage of laws - MPs and relevant portfolio committees must assess and align bills to relevant regional and international instruments •Law review/reforms to upgrade national laws to regional and international standards •Constitutional reforms where clauses that contravene RII exist
Oversight	Keeping government accountable on RII	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Communication mechanisms to enable regular information updates between ministry and relevant portfolio committee(s) •Portfolio Committees to call relevant ministers every quarter to give updates on implementation of ministry plan of action and the fulfillment of regional and international commitments
Representation	Interests of the electorate to be advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •MPs to advance regional commitments during parliamentary debates •MPs to disseminate and raise awareness to constituencies on the instruments
Reporting	Enable evaluation, information sharing and knowledge building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reports on the implementation of regional and international instruments to be tabled to parliamentary committees before submission •Recommendations and resolutions from the bodies reported to, to be reported back to Parliamentary committees

The identified areas assert the importance role of Parliaments as institutions supporting developmental democracy. As a way forward the follow up activities at both national and regional levels place emphasis on formalized mechanisms to facilitate parliamentary work in relation to the implementation of regional, continental and international instruments on gender equality.

Development of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development

The development of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development presented opportunities for complementary approaches to be implemented in taking forward the parliamentary perspectives on gender equality in the SADC region. As members of the Taskforce established by SADC Secretariat-Gender Unit on the development of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, the Secretariat participated in Regional Consultative initiatives organised by the SADC Secretariat-Gender Unit between April to August 2007. These activities included meetings for Ministers responsible for Gender, Justice and Attorneys General in SADC member States, Council of Ministers and Senior Officials. Focusing on the Draft SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the Draft Regional Gender Policy, the regional consultative initiatives synchronized issues from the national consultations and incorporated these into the Draft Protocol which was considered by the Council of Ministers and Summit in August 2007.

The involvement of both the Secretariat and Parliamentarians in the regional consultations asserted parliaments' positioning in the implementation of the Protocol. While every effort was made to mainstream parliamentary contributions in the development of the Protocol, emphasis was placed on post adoption implementation to domesticate the Protocol. To leverage change, the role of Committees responsible for Gender and national women's parliamentary caucuses in the domestication of the Protocol is to be supported.

The main achievement of the consultative initiatives was to facilitate stakeholder investment in both the Protocol and the Regional Gender Policy. While the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development provides one benchmark and target for women's political participation and representation in positions of power and decision making, the Protocol provides benchmarks and targeted timeframes across sectors such as constitutional and legislation, accessing justice, governance, education, gender based violence, peace building and conflict resolution, media, information

and communication. The Protocol is a defining framework for actions by SADC countries and SADC institutions for implementing the commitments and obligations on gender equality.

The momentum gained in developing the Protocol and its subsequent consideration by the SADC Summit of August 2007 was expected to culminate in the adoption of the Protocol. However, national contexts and experiences required that member States commitments are harmonized before the August 2008 Summit. Under the coordination of the SADC Secretariat-Gender Unit, the convening of a strategy meeting of senior officials responsible for Gender in December 2007, asserted the Roadmap for the consultative processes to fine tune the Protocol in preparation for its submission to the 2008 Summit.

Speakers of Parliaments/Presiding Officers on Gender Equality

The Gender Programme stresses the critical importance of maximizing the use of institutions and individuals that can influence the delivery of commitments and obligations on gender equality. Sessions on Gender in Parliaments were facilitated for Speakers of Parliaments during the Conference of the Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers (Africa Region), August 2007. From the SADC region the participants were Presiding Officers and Representatives from Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia.

Firstly, the placing of gender issues on the Speakers' conference agenda illustrated an essential recognition of how Parliaments remain a vital institution in achieving commitments on gender equality in the SADC region and beyond. With the overarching objective to assess Parliament as an institution supporting democracy, the focus on positioning parliaments in promoting gender equality analysed the pre-conditions for greater parliamentary effectiveness and benchmarks for a democratic parliament. Beyond that, effective mechanisms to promote the participation of the minority number of women who gain access into Parliaments were explored. Issues on parliamentary culture for instance language, values, rules and procedures, leadership of committees and support services for research and information dissemination were identified as conduits for meaningful participation if these are modified to be facilitative and user friendly to women in parliaments too.

Institutional mainstreaming

In taking the Strategic Plan (2006-2010) gender equality objectives, the Programme focused on inter-programme collaboration that embodies operational measures on gender mainstreaming within the institutional structures and each Programme area. This is mirrored in the leadership structures of the organisation, namely that the Chairpersonship and Vice Chairperson are male and female respectively. The same principle has been upheld in the election of the leadership for the policy structures constituted as Standing Committees.

Achieving inter-programme collaboration on gender mainstreaming in HIV/AIDS, Democracy and Governance, Parliamentary Leadership Training, Regional Cooperation and Integration and ICTs facilitated the retention of gender equality objectives in the different areas of strategic choices and work. The internal support for gender mainstreaming within the Secretariat and programme areas has contributed to the exchange of good practices on ways of working that promote gender equality objectives.

HIV/AIDS Objective

- *Promote and support the mainstreaming of gender equality in HIV and AIDS programmatic initiatives;*

With respect to HIV/AIDS the focus was on gender and policy dimensions of HIV/AIDS, revealing the linkage between gender and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Operational measures included co-support to the SADC Parliamentary Forum's Standing Committee on HIV/AIDS, knowledge development on addressing gender concerns in multisectoral responses to HIV/AIDS for the Standing Committee on the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus and national women's parliamentary caucuses in collaboration with the HIV/AIDS Programme.

Work with the women parliamentarians in relation to HIV/AIDS has facilitated the distilling of issues such as gender based violence which impedes access to essential AIDS services and is one of the key drivers of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. This is due to the fact that violence or fear of violence makes it difficult for women and girls to disclose their HIV status or to access essential AIDS services. In addition, the issue of multiple partnerships remains a key driver of the epidemic. While there are a number of responses to HIV/AIDS, the recognition that the lack of political will to tackle gender inequalities has a direct effect

on the will to tackle HIV/AIDS cannot be overlooked. Hence, responses to HIV/AIDS must deal with empowerment, not just "HIV/AIDS education" as education by itself has proved not effective to combat the pandemic.

Democracy and Governance Objective

- *Contribute to the strengthening of regional, continental and international processes that support gender and democracy and women's participation and representation in positions of power and decision making.*

The importance of ensuring approaches that facilitate the understanding of democracy and its intersection with gender equality in SADC countries is a strategic area for the Gender Programme. The programme strategy is to formalize the assessment of electoral processes and elections to conform to member States obligations and commitments on gender equality. This approach has served as a key criterion for the Democracy and Governance Programme initiatives on elections.

Though elections on their own are not tantamount to democracy, but constitute an important ingredient of democracy, gender equality can be assessed through women's participation in elections and electoral processes, their representation in key institutions of governance as well as the power relations between women and men at various layers of societal life. The terms of reference for elections observation, pre election and post election assessments stipulate the centrality of gender equality as a criterion for assessing electoral processes. This is illustrated in the Forum's mission statements on the Lesotho's Parliamentary elections (February), post election assessment in Zambia (March) and pre election mission on the voter registration in Angola (March). The composition of the Forum's observation teams is based on the principle on the equal participation of women and men in elections. Consequently, women constitute at least 30percent of each initiative undertaken under the Democracy and Governance Programme.

The Democracy and Governance Programme assessment of electoral processes is based on the criteria defined in the Norms and Standards for Elections in the SADC Region. A Checklist on Gender Mainstreaming in electoral processes is incorporated in the Norms and Standards for Elections in the SADC Region. The review of the norms and standards

in response to the experiences and lessons learnt from the observation of the 21 elections in 12 SADC countries since 1999 incorporates the gender perspective. This is a useful approach to evaluate an election's constituent parts such as election campaigns, voter education, electoral systems, political parties' nominations and leveling of the playing field from a gender perspective.

Parliamentary Leadership Training

The Gender Programme continues to provide knowledge development on mainstreaming gender under the PLC National parliamentary leadership and professional performance development initiatives. The centrality of knowledge development on gender under the PLC programme is adequately articulated during the national parliaments' leadership development on the lawmaking, representation and oversight mandates.

The national leadership development initiative held in September for Members of Parliament in the National Assembly of Mauritius underscored the cross cutting nature of gender in parliamentary mandates across portfolio/parliamentary committees. The knowledge development and leadership training on how to do gender analysis in parliamentary committees' work puts into practice the strategies outlined in the MPs Orientation Handbook which points to the need for professional performance of Parliamentarians on gender as a cross cutting issue in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring.

Regional Cooperation and Integration

A useful approach to gender mainstreaming in Regional Cooperation and Integration seeks to enhance an understanding of the gender dimensions in national, regional and international trade fora. The principal focus was on the practical ways to make Trade gender responsive and using trade as an empowering strategy from a gender perspective.

The role of Parliamentarians in national trade policy formulation and implementation in line with the SADC Protocol on Trade underscored the need for gender impact assessments of trade policies and agreements whether at the multilateral, regional, national or bilateral level. In the context of EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and linking trade to poverty alleviation and development the conference on 'Enhancing the Role of Parliamentarians and Civil Society in Trade and Regional Integration' coordinated under the Regional Cooperation and Integration programme in October strengthened inter-

programme strategy on gender mainstreaming.

ICTs

The use of tools such as ICTs to facilitate women parliamentarians in their leadership roles has been a highlight in 2007. In order to keep abreast with the use of ICTs, sessions on ICTs were conducted for the Standing Committee on the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus during the Plenary Assembly sessions. Women parliamentarians successfully created individual email addresses and a rwpc@sadccitizen.net link for the Committee.

Transformative leadership development sessions on ICTs for leaders or Chairpersons of National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses at the workshop on "Progress Towards Gender Equality:- The Role Of National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses" organized in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat provided the knowledge for using ICTs for effective advocacy and advocated for the use of ICTs to accelerate women's empowerment and bridge the gender digital divide in SADC Parliaments.



Women Members of Parliament during an ICT training session with the ICT Officer

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

Objectives

- *Contribute to reforms of electoral frameworks and laws that facilitate women's political participation and gender balanced representation;*
- *Promote transformative leadership strategies for women's inter-parties parliamentary caucuses and women's units in political parties;*

Widening and addressing the challenge of women's political participation and representation has become an integral element of each country in the SADC region. During the year 2007 the Programme has been successful on implementing lobbying and advocacy initiatives to promote women's participation and representation in positions of power and decision making in SADC member States.

With particular focus on the minimum 30 percent target for women's participation and representation, the strategy is to engage the leadership of political parties as the real gate keepers on who can be nominated into elective positions. While the 50-50 advocacy is gaining momentum, the minimum 30percent is regarded as the "critical mass" for women Parliamentarians to make any effective or meaningful impact in Parliament.

Every effort was made to also target and strengthen women's organizations/departments in political parties to function as conduits for preparing and presenting women candidates for nomination on to party lists. In order to institutionalize the women's empowerment perspective across political parties, the interventions focused on political parties represented in Parliaments. One of the lessons learnt is that sustaining the advocacy and lobbying during the non election periods to prevent the erosion of gains due to the high turnover among women Parliamentarians after every election, has not been recognized uniformly across countries.

Due to the fact that the impact of political parties' intra democracy processes cannot be divorced from the participation and representation of women in decision making positions, work on political parties' constitutions/policies and electoral systems from a gender perspective was initiated. The aim is to provide measures/legal frameworks that can be adapted to increase women's representation in decision making to at least 30 percent at all levels.

Advocacy and lobbying

During the period of reporting highlights of achievements include; the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus Advocacy and Lobbying campaigns to countries with less than at least 30% participation and representation of women in parliament. The "critical minority" of at least thirty percent (30%) is commonly considered necessary for women to have a significant impact in positions of power and decision making as conduits for democratic governance.

Kingdom of Swaziland, September 2007

Through in-country advocacy and campaigns and constituency based interventions and strong partnerships as well as constitutional guarantees the RWPC is motivated by the unstoppable "opening up of spaces" in the democratic arena.

There are a number of factors at play in determining women's political participation and representation in Swaziland. One of the most encouraging factors is the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland promulgated on 26 July 2005. The new Constitution provides a fundamental framework for women's empowerment and of particular note is Section 28 (1-3) on the Rights and freedoms of women and Section 84 (2) on the Right to representation. The proposed National Gender Policy is a useful policy framework to translate the constitutional guarantees into implemented objectives.

These Constitutional guarantees are in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the African Charter on Human and People Rights on the Rights of Women and the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development. However, though the Constitution stipulates these fundamental guarantees the entrenched socio-cultural customs and traditions mitigate against the empowerment of women in all spheres of life-public and private.

The advocacy and lobbying in Swaziland targeted Government, traditional institutional structures and mechanisms and civil society organizations. Successes in bringing the challenge on women's political participation and representation to members of the King's Advisory Council, Constituency Committees(each Constituency Committee is made up of 10 Chiefdoms), Parliamentarians

and Chiefs demonstrates that progress towards at least 30 percent representation of women in positions of power and decision making is feasible. The in-roads to one of the Chiefdoms in a constituency which is about two hours drive from the city of Mbabane suggests that breakthroughs are possible in more constituencies of the country. However, this requires strong government leadership and comprehensive programmes backed up by adequate financing. This is a key element which was pointed out to the Ministry responsible for Gender in Swaziland.

By making women's political participation and representation a regional issue, the RWPC targeted Chiefs in a Constituency with a woman Parliamentarian to garner support for more to gain entry into positions of power and decision making. A strategy to ask the Chiefs to showcase to other Chiefs in constituencies with male MPs the need and importance for women in decision making and the difference that the woman MP has made to the constituency building and representation was utilized. A further element that has been integral to the advocacy and lobbying in Swaziland is the strategy to merge the semi-autonomous social fields (cultural practices and traditions) and the constitutional, legal and policy frameworks.

In Swaziland one of the most decisive factor is determined by the extent to which the traditional and constitutional powers of the Queen Mother could be mirrored at all levels in relation to the importance of women's leadership role. If that ground breaking paradigm is supported, Swaziland has the potential to surpass the 50-50 participation and representation of women and men in positions of power and decision making at all levels. In general, this points out to how much remains to be done and the clear need for scaling up strategies to ensure progress on women's participation and representation in decision making.

The following are key issues emerging from the advocacy findings provide strategic areas for interventions;

- *General awareness on the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development is evident;*
- *The development of the Swaziland National Gender Policy a fundamental innovation;*
- *The expressed cultural "recognition and importance" of women not translating into substantive gains for women to take up positions of power and decision making;*
- *Media reporting and coverage on gender issues has contributed towards perpetuating negative attitudes towards women;*

- *The National Gender Machinery can be strengthened if it is positioned strategically, for example if its located in the office of the Prime Minister or Ministry of Economic Planning as proposed in the draft National Gender Policy.*

The Kingdom of Swaziland uses a non political party based system known as Tinkhundla which entails that Parliamentarians are directly nominated from the community. However, this is strewn with obstacles in that women who are in the majority of people living in the rural areas are not nominated for positions in higher offices due to traditional biases in favour of male leadership, despite women's significant leadership at community level. Currently out of the 4 regions (Hhontho, Lubombo, Manzini and Shiselweni) with 55 Tinkhundla constituencies of 360 chiefdoms, out of the 55 Tinkhundla constituencies only 5 women were elected for the House of Assembly. The House of Assembly has 65 seats been 55 Tinkhundla constituencies and 10 appointed by the King. Two women appointed by the King and the House of Assembly has a total of 7 women and 58 men. The Senate which constitutes of 30 Senators has 12 women and 18 men. To sustain the interventions in Swaziland, constituency based strategies directed towards motivating women in cooperation with the national gender machinery campaign on "Vote for a Woman" and Chiefdoms and voters to nominate women in their local communities.

Republic of Zimbabwe, November 2007

In Zimbabwe, the interventions undertaken demonstrated that while the road and entry into positions of power and decision making is strewn with obstacles against women, women are still "standing" and engaging politically to secure their democratic participation and representation. The interventions were directed towards the leadership of political parties, women's organizations in the political parties, women parliamentarians as members of the National Women's Inter-Party Parliamentary Caucus, the National Gender and Women's Machinery (Minister and Senior Officials), Senior Officials in the Ministry for Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Electoral Management Body (EMB), NGOs and Civil Society Organisations working on women in politics and women's empowerment. Putting pressure on political parties to address the key barriers to women's participation and representation which emanate from within the political parties proved strategic in terms of exposing the bottlenecks in political parties' intra-party democracy processes and entrenched patriarchal value systems that are not women friendly.

A number of well calculated ploys ranging from undermining pronounced affirmative action measures for women, massive cultural ridicule and criticisms against women on purely personal basis with little relevance to their political activity, violence (intra party and inter party), intimidation and domination are some of the issues unpacked with the stakeholders as some of the main strategies used by political parties to prevent women's participation and representation in positions of power and decision making. In addition, the nature of the electoral framework/system (First-Past-The-System), security and media laws, the negative portrayal of women in the media and the weak economic status of women in relation to access, ownership and control of financial resources in view of how male aspirants generally use the dollar power to garner support for their candidature for elective positions were critical issues of concern distilled with the stakeholders. Consequently, good practices, strategies and policy options that can be adapted to enhance women's opportunities to participate and be represented in politics were highlighted.

The intervention proved successful by bringing these issues to the agenda of political parties in particular the leadership such as Vice Presidents, National Organising Secretaries, Secretaries General, Directors of Elections in the political parties, Government, civil society and women's organizations. Making women's political participation and representation in Zimbabwe a regional issue as well as the timeliness before political parties' criteria for primary nominations and selection of candidates and delimitation of constituencies is undertaken carved inroads on increasing the numbers of women in decision making.

It is worthy to note that undertaking the interventions in the context of negotiations between the ruling and opposition parties placed greater emphasis on the importance of a holistic approach to address the protection and participation of women from political violence, terror and intimidation. This reinforced the repeated concern by all stakeholders on the political violence that manifested in elections conducted since 2000 and reportedly characterized by abductions, destruction of property, beatings which pushed women away from standing for elective positions. Therefore, the decrease in the number of women in Parliament from the 2005 elections was attributed to the fear of violence amongst women. Women from all parties voiced their united demand to end gender based violence in electoral and political activities.

Republic of Angola, March 2008

As the country prepares to conduct parliamentary elections in September 2008 it is also grappling with the challenge of increasing women's participation and representation in politics and decision making to a "critical minority" of at least 30 percent. This is in view of the fact that parliamentary elections were last held in 1992.

Advocacy and lobbying in the Republic of Angola focused on political parties' measures to implement the provision in the Political Parties Law of 2005 on the target of at least 30% representation of women on the party lists. This is a significant milestone and achievement from the review and reform of Angola's electoral laws in relation to the responsibilities of political parties on the participation and representation of women in decision making. The placing of women on the party lists is critical hence the need for political parties' mechanisms to facilitate the achievement of the set target.

Angola has a comparative advantage in terms of the electoral system (Proportional Representation) and the legislated quota on at least 30percent women on political parties' lists. However, though the PR electoral system is considered to be user friendly in facilitating the representation of women, it has to be coupled with political parties' measures to achieve the set target.

Additional Empowerment Strategies for the National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses

National Women's Inter-Party Parliamentary Caucus in Zambia, July, 2007The engagement of 22 out of the 24 women Parliamentarians including the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia and the Minister of Gender and Women in Development distilled the trends and factors that are at play in determining women's political participation, increasing representation and effectiveness of women in political life. More importantly, however was the collective determination of the women Parliamentarians to position the national women's inter-party parliamentary caucus as a conduit for identifying women candidates for political parties' nominations on party lists for both parliamentary seats and local government positions along with the advocacy for electoral systems reforms which are underpinned by affirmative action measures.

The driving force for the national women's inter-party parliamentary caucus is the key lesson from the last parliamentary elections held in 2006. The reality that out of the 24 women Parliamentarians only 5 were reelected in September 2006 from the previous parliament has become a critical issue of concern to the NWPC.



Women Members of Parliament in Zambia, three Members of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus who are Chairpersons of National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses in Angola, Namibia and Swaziland and the Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum at the back .

Such a high turn over is a clear demonstration that if women Parliamentarians are not supported and encouraged to carry on by other women across political party lines, the gains towards inclusive sound governance will continue to be eroded.



Women Parliamentarians in the Parliament of Zambia at the Additional Empowerment Strategies Roundtable

The Additional Empowerment Strategies initiative equipped women parliamentarians with tools and resources that can be used to inform and support efforts to increase the numbers of women in decision making. Regional experiential learning and informational sharing was also facilitated through the inputs of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus from Angola, Namibia and Swaziland. The initiative was applauded as strategic in bringing women together from the different political parties after about seven months in Parliament since elections of 2006. Establishing the space for women to strategise on matters of mutual interest to women across political parties reaffirmed the need to for strategic contributions that women make in decision making. The Zambia national's inter-party women's parliamentary caucus defined the following interventions for the way forward:

- Positioning the national women's parliamentary caucus as a principal vehicle in advancing women's participation and representation across political party lines;
- Identifying measures and strategies to promote at least 30% representation of women in decision making at all levels
- Developing Additional Empowerment strategies for women in politics

Establishment of the National Women's Parliamentary Caucus in Mauritius, July 2007

As the number of women gaining entry into the National Assembly of Mauritius is growing albeit slowly, the Parliament needs a fundamental institutional shift in response to the prevailing developments and gains. The previous Parliament had only 5 women Parliamentarians mostly from the ruling party and the women's parliamentary caucus was not regarded to be relevant. In the current Parliament, there are 12 Parliamentarians, 4 from the ruling party and 8 from the opposition parties.



Chairperson of the SADC Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (December 2005-October 2007) Hon Maggie Mbaakanyi, MP Botswana

Consultations with the Speaker, Deputy Chief Government Whip, Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly and the Minister for Women's Rights created understanding on the facilitative role of a women's parliamentary caucus in the work of parliament.

The highlight in facilitating the establishment of a women's parliamentary caucus in the National Assembly of Mauritius was on the essential need for women politicians to receive the support of other women across party lines if they are to be motivated to carry on. Demonstrating how caucuses provide mechanisms for women Parliamentarians to strategise and collaborate on matters of mutual interest to women across political party lines before bringing their contributions into the mainstream for parliamentary debates explored the intricate barriers that women face in politics.

Concerns on managing ruling or opposition parties' dominance in the caucus were addressed along with the measures that the parliament can adapt to manage the leadership in the caucus were explored. Currently, support to the women MPs and the office of the Speaker through sharing good practices on from other women's parliamentary caucuses and their terms of reference is being facilitated.

The Leadership Role of National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses in the Southern African Development Community:- Towards Gender Equality and Women's Participation and Representation in Decision Making, December 2007

This initiative was a collaborative activity organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADCPF) hosted by the Parliament of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

Building upon the advocacy and lobbying initiatives, the Transformative Leadership Development Workshop for Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons or Members of National Women's Parliamentary Caucus distilled the following issues to contribute to sustainable efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment:

- I. *Regional and international commitments and frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment, with particular attention on the role of national women parliamentary caucuses in the SADC region;*
- II. *An analysis of the tenets of democratic governance and the intricate connection between gender and democracy;*
- III. *Transformative leadership in politics as a strategy for women parliamentarians' leadership roles,*
- IV. *Practical strategies to increase women's participation and representation in government and decision-making processes and positions and the financing of gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives.*

National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses resolved to pursue the following objectives for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment to accelerate the equitable participation and representation of women and men in the SADC region.



Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons/Members of National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses from Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe with the Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum seated next to the Deputy Prime Minister of Swaziland, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Swaziland and a representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Ms Elsie.

Transformation: Encourage governments, all citizens, including members of civil society to promote transformative leadership and governance in all spheres by providing equal opportunities for men and women; respect for human rights; participatory and inclusive processes; transparent and accountable leadership; rule of law; criminalization of gender based violence and violence against women; and promotion of peace and sustainable development.

Reforms: Promote constitutional, legislative and electoral reforms in SADC countries to ensure the achievement of balanced representation and in particular, to provide for the minimum target of thirty per cent (30%) adopted by the Heads of State or Government. Furthermore, urge all SADC governments to repeal all laws, legislation, traditional and cultural practices discriminatory against women.

Special Measures: Urge governments to introduce special measures including through quotas, affirmative action and other mechanisms to increase women's representation and participation especially at leadership levels.

Resources: Urge governments to attain balanced representation by providing resources and funds required for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Equally important is the role of Parliaments and the institutional mechanisms within Parliaments such as Committees on Gender Equality and National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses to ensure that gender responsive budgets are passed by Parliaments.

ICT: In recognition of the importance of ICTs as a tool for transforming the institution of Parliament and governance, we call upon our governments to facilitate capacity building and training programmes for parliamentarians and in particular women parliamentarians.

Mentoring: Acknowledging the role as models, women parliamentarians committed to engage in mentoring programmes and initiatives to motivate young people into politics and governance.

Training, Advocacy and Awareness Raising: Call on governments to provide the assistance and support to enable women network, with other groups and strengthen the advocacy role of NWPCs and sensitisation of societies on the importance and need for women in leadership and decision making positions.

Analysis of Political Parties' Constitutions / Policy Documents / Manifestos in the SADC Region from a gender perspective

The number of political parties in each National Parliament ranges from at least two to six and documents from SADC National Parliaments were collated for the analysis. The overall purpose of the analysis of political parties' policy documents is to provide measures for political parties to implement commitments on achieving at least 30percent representation of women in positions of power and decision making starting from within the political parties, Local Government and Parliament.

Since the participation and representation of women in politics and electoral competition within the SADC region cannot be de-linked from the electoral system, an analysis of the electoral systems and impact of electoral systems on women's representation was included. The analysis is an outcome and response to the issues emerging from the advocacy and lobbying campaigns by the RWPC. In expressing the commitment to promote women's political participation and representation, a number of political parties have sought from the RWPC for defined mechanisms and measures to fulfil the commitments.



Chairperson of the SADC Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus, Hon Lourdes Veiga, MP Angola

The analysis focused on the following aspects of the political parties;

- I. *Policy frameworks:-namely constitutions, party manifestos, plans of action and other relevant policy documents in terms of the measures and provisions on promoting and achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in the party policy documents and manifestos;*
- II. *Party structures:-leadership, decision making structures and levels, positioning and role of Women's Wings / Units / Leagues in political parties in relation to other party structures;*
- III. *Party systems and procedures:-nomination and selection of candidates (intra-party democracy systems), party strategy/measures to promote and encourage women's participation and representation in decision making i.e affirmative action strategies.*

The analysis provides a launch pad for the development of a legislative framework/policy options on the political participation and representation of women. Pilot testing of the legislative framework/policy options with political parties in countries that held parliamentary elections between 2005-2008 will be conducted from February-May 2009.

Objective

- *Contribute to the strengthening of regional, continental and international processes that support gender and democracy and women's participation and representation in positions of power and decision making.*

In order to maximise impact and optimise the use of resources, the Gender programme has worked in collaboration with strategic partners, such as the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, European Parliament, Inter-Parliamentary Union, SADC Secretariat, Civil Society Organisations, Rwanda Women's Parliamentary Forum, UN Economic Commission for Africa, UNIFEM. Initiatives were also undertaken in partnership with national machineries for women, national women's parliamentary caucuses and women's organisations to provide substantive inputs and knowledge based information on the lived realities of women. For example, due to its strong advocacy role the Gender Programme has been served in the Gender Based Violence Task Force of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (Namibia).

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES

STRENGTHENING

The participation and membership of national, regional and international organisations on the Gender Advisory Team (GAT) of the SADC Parliamentary Forum has enhanced the Gender Programme's collaborative efforts. With representation from the Commonwealth Secretariat, SADC Secretariat-Gender Unit, UNIFEM, Women's Land and Water Rights in Southern Africa, Women in Development Southern Africa Awareness (SARDC-WIDSAA), Women In Law and Development in Africa(WILDAF), Women in Law in Southern Africa(WILSA), Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa(OSISA) the Gender Advisory Team is the "think tank" that advises the Secretary General on the implementation of the Gender programme.

The Women Parliamentarians International Conference on Gender, Nation Building and the Role of Parliaments held in Kigali, Rwanda, was a success in bringing together women parliamentarians from Africa and beyond to share experiences, information and celebrate the contributions of the women of Rwanda in nation building. A common conviction that created consensus among the diverse participants at the conference was the need to establish mechanisms designed to increase women's representation and participation in positions of power and decision making. In addition, the motivation to offer new dimensions to politics as experienced when the representation of women is significant was highlighted. The conference was organised on the occasion to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Rwanda Women's Parliamentary Forum (RWPF).

At the conference the President of the Republic of Rwanda affirmed that societies that recognize the real and untapped socioeconomic, cultural and political power of women thrive. On the other hand those that refuse to value and leverage women's talent, energies and unique perspectives remain developmental misfits. He pointed out that it is not difficult to demonstrate this with a growing body of evidence as it is painfully clear that gender inequalities constrain growth and poverty reduction. In this regard, he stated that Africa is missing out on the productive potential of more than half its population. He argued that Africa's success or failure hinges on the willingness to recognize and celebrate Africa's potential generally and the power of African women.

Despite the fact that Rwanda is a post genocide country in the politically troubled Great Lakes Region, there are a number of lessons and "good practices" to be drawn from the country. Like most African countries, Rwandan society is characterized by a patriarchal system which perpetuates inequalities between women and men. In the particular case of Rwanda, these inequalities have been exacerbated by the 1994 genocide which brought about unprecedented distortions in social relations among Rwandan people.

The 2003 Constitution of Rwanda stipulates the commitments to ensure equal rights between women and men and reaffirms Rwanda's adherence to the principles of landmark continental and international governmental agreements on gender equality and women's empowerment. Other significant constitutional provisions include equal rights and duties in marriage and on divorce, prohibition of sex discrimination which is punishable by law, a minimum quota of 30% representation of women in decision making positions, political organisations to put in place measures to ensure that women and men have equal access to elective positions and the establishment of institutional mechanisms on gender equality and women's empowerment such as a Gender Monitoring office and the National Council of Women.

Women constitute 48.8% of Members in the Chamber of Deputies, the highest representation of women in a single house of Parliament in the world. This is followed by the Parliament of Sweden with 47% representation of women. In the Senate women constitute 34.6% of the Members made up of 12 representatives of the provinces and city of Kigali, 8 appointed by the President, 4 appointed by the Forum of Political Organisations, and 2 from institutions of higher education (public and private). At local government level, women constitute 43% of the District Councils decision makers, as well as 42% of the High Court judges.

The Parliamentarians Forum on "Women and Leadership in a Democracy", was organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Parliament of Uganda. It was held as a satellite meeting to the 8th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM). With the theme "Financing Gender Equality for Development and Democracy", the meeting focused on the critical areas of concern which included the

following: Tracking the Money for Gender Equality, National Women's Machineries and Public Sector: Role in Financing Gender Equality, Financing HIV and AIDS Interventions-Implications for Gender Equality, Investing in Gender Equality-Promoting Peace and Democracy.

The meeting raised other priority issues of concern which hinder the full and equal participation of women and impede the socio-economic of Commonwealth countries. These included maternal mortality, educations of girls, violence against women and girls and partnerships with men to change attitudes and mindsets, working in partnership with men and boys as a critical approach for women's empowerment and supported the creation of a strong, unified, independent and properly resourced UN entity on gender equality and women's empowerment.

CONCLUSION

While there is commitment to promote gender equality by SADC Parliaments, gender mainstreaming has not taken place uniformly across all Parliaments. For greater impact throughout the SADC region and effective parliamentary interventions on gender, the ownership for delivery on gender equality objectives among Parliamentarians has to be enhanced and reinforced.

By making women's participation and representation in positions of power and decision-making a regional issue, the RWPC initiatives complement what is happening nationally on advocacy and lobbying for increased women's representation in parliaments and other areas of decision making.

The direct campaigns towards political parties focusing on the nomination of women candidates, the media and the general public on the importance of a large number of women in positions of power and decision-making increase awareness on women planning to stand for election into parliament. The widely publicized and media coverage of the RWPC advocacy and lobbying in SADC countries drew attention to the continued need to sustain the advocacy and lobbying on women's political participation and representation during the non election period.

Based on the feedback and engagement with stakeholders the long term impact on improved electorate awareness and playing field for electoral processes which enables women to participate as candidates for election was highlighted. Commitments for continuous awareness raising and review of intra-party nomination and democracy processes need to be followed through implemented strategies. The advocacy and lobbying garnered support for the on going interventions on women's political participation and representation by different stakeholders.



