

Election Watch X

Produced by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)

Issue No. 4 2013

READY FOR 50/50?

The importance of equal and/or fair representation for democracy-building cannot be understated. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) notes that “the development of any political agenda that does not include the perspectives, views and experiences of those who will be affected is not credible.” The Institute further states that the inclusion of women in governance is a key element of any democracy, as “the essential tenet of any democratic framework is the principal of human rights, including the granting and exercise of the political rights of both men and women.”

Theoretically, Namibia has been very good at stating its support for women's equality in governance, through the various pieces of legislation and regional/international instruments it has signed. Practically, however, Namibian women continue to be represented predominantly by men – be it in the traditional, local, or national councils and in the National Assembly.

In 2008, Namibia ratified the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which sets a 2015 deadline for the achievement of equal representation of women in governance and decision-making positions. With the deadline looming, the 2014 elections will essentially define how well Namibia fares in coming closer to 50/50 representation.

The SADC Protocol combines a number of existing gender-related instruments to which its member states (including Namibia) are signatory, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA); The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1997) and its Optional Protocol; and The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With respect to governance, Article 12 of the Protocol calls for “at least 50 percent of decision-making positions in the public and private sectors are held by women”, including the use of affirmative action measures as provided for in Article 5”. It also urges Member states to make Constitutional and legislative provisions to ensure compliance (including within electoral systems and at the party level), and calls for these measures to be accompanied by public awareness campaigns that “demonstrate the vital link between the equal representation and participation of women in decision making positions, and democracy, good governance and citizen participation.”



Although the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) is optimistic that Namibia will meet the Protocol's 2015 deadline, aside from efforts made at the Local Authority level to increase women's representation, there is little indication that Namibia is prepped to meet the target.

At the National Council and National Assembly levels, Namibia's gender perform-

The only level at which the representation of women has been promising is within the local authorities, where the Local Authorities Act stipulates that “where there are 12 councillors, at least 5 should be women, and where there are 7 councillors, 3 should be women.” This quota essentially ensures 42 per cent women's representation at the local government level.

Women Office Holders at various levels of public office in Namibia			
OFFICE	Members/Councillors	Number of Women	Percentage of women
Cabinet	26	5	19%
National Assembly MPs	78	19	24%
National Council MPs	26	7	27%
Regional Council	107	13	12%
Regional Governors	13	3	23%
Local Authority	323	135	42%
Mayors	30	8	27%

Source: Gender Links, 2011

ance leaves much to be desired. Despite a national gender distribution of 51% females and 49% males, and policies that set an example for other countries in the region and the world at large, Namibia still has not surpassed the 30 per cent mark at the National Assembly or at the National Council levels. In fact, it has been disconcerting that Namibia has slipped in its representation of women. Currently, only 22 per cent of voting MPs in the National Assembly are women – down from 30 per cent in the 3rd and 4th National Assemblies. In the National Council, only 7 of the 26 (i.e. 27%) Regional Councillors are female; and in Cabinet, only 5 of the 26 (19%) members of Cabinet are female.

To a large extent, Namibia's ability to meet the targets set by the Protocol will depend on how well the various political parties embody the ideals set out in the Protocol. To date, only two parties (Congress of Democrats and the National Democratic Party of Namibia) use a zebra list to ensure equal gender representation. However, their impact on the national scale has been limited due to their poor performances in the 2009 elections (CoD only won one seat, while NDPN did not win any). In other parties, even where women form a relatively high percentage of the party list, these women are often found lower down on the list – where their chances of entering governance positions

are slim. With many of the opposition parties winning only one or two seats in parliament, as is evident in the current National Assembly, these seats almost always go to men. This essentially means that the ‘ruling party’ and the main opposition parties should ultimately take the lead in pressing for a more equal gender representation. If Swapo and the RDP, for example, implemented the zebra system – all things being equal – gender representation of voting MPs would be at 43 percent instead of the current 24 per cent.

Against this background, proponents of equal women's representation agree that in order to ensure that political parties come to the party in realising 50/50 representation, reforms to the electoral act that stipulate specific quotas and regulations need to be made, to bring about the necessary change. The African Union Commission and its partners, for example, note that “affirmative actions and explicit constitutional provisions for dealing with gender-based discrimination have advanced women's positions in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.” However, they also agree that these measures are only a means to achieving gender equality, not an end. Beyond raising the numbers of women in Parliament, capacitating both men and women to be more able representatives of the Namibian people, ensuring gender sensitisation amongst men and women elected to office, mainstreaming gender, and engaging in cross-party discourse through the activation of Women's Parliamentary Caucuses are all important elements to ensuring quality governance in the context of equal representation.

In assessing Namibia's readiness to meet the 2015 SADC protocol deadline, it is clear that without prescriptive mechanisms to ensure that the electoral law and other pieces of legislation guide political parties towards becoming engendered, Namibia will not reach the 50% women's representation target. To this end, in its recommendations for reforms to the Electoral Act, the Law Reform and Development Commission (LRDC) in the Töttemeyer Report, urges consideration of the 50/50 Bill commission by the Namibian Women's Manifesto Network, the legalisation of the ‘zebra’ method of nomination on party lists, and abiding by the terms of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

ABOUT ELECTION WATCH

Election Watch is a bulletin containing electoral analysis and voter education, which will appear regularly in the run up to the 2014 National Assembly and Presidential Elections. It is produced as a PDF download and as a printed newspaper insert. Election Watch is a project of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). It is produced with the support of the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) and *The Namibian* newspaper. The content of this edition of Election Watch was written and compiled by IPPR Research Associate Nangula Shejvali.

The content of Election Watch is the sole responsibility of the IPPR.

Comments and feedback should be sent to the IPPR, PO Box 6566, Windhoek, Namibia.

Tel: (061) 240514; fax: (061) 240516; email: info@ippr.org.na. For more on Election Watch check <http://www.electionwatch.org.na>

LAW REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS.

- “Gender equity should be pursued in all positions relating to electoral tasks, from the lowest to the highest level” and in all contexts.
- Consideration by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural of the 50/50 Bill proposal related to Regional Government, National Council and Local Authority representation, as this is outside the scope of the Electoral Act.
- Consideration of the 50/50 Bill commissioned by the Namibian Women’s Manifesto Network and compiled by the Legal Assistance Centre for possible implementation when it relates to particular issues as contained in the Electoral Act.
- Legalisation of the ‘zebra’ method of nomination when candidates are nominated for elections at national and local level – wherein if the first candidate on the list is a male person, then the next candidate should be a female person and vice versa.
- Abide “by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, article 12, which emphasises fair gender representation in all electoral bodies and the goal of achieving a 50/50 per cent representation by the year 2015,” with quality being the first criterion in the selection of candidates.
- Compel political parties to fair gender representation as an obligation upon Namibia, given its signing and ratification of regional and international instruments on gender representation, as per Article 144 of the Namibian Constitution.

Margaret Mensah-Williams’ 6 steps for meeting the SADC Gender Protocol’s 2015 deadline

1. To amend the Constitution of the Swapo Party;
2. To amend the electoral law;
3. To have civil society organisations involved in building the capacity of women throughout the country, including religious institutions;
4. To create employment and more funding for women to be financially independent and build their capacity so that they will be able to start participating and the legal framework will be ready, and they themselves will be ready;
5. To give women opportunities to exhibit their leadership skills so that they may become known. To market them, so to speak; and
6. To entice young women. We should make politics and leadership positions attractive for younger people, by changing our methods also.

READY OR NOT?

The numbers show that Namibia still has some way to go to achieving 50 per cent women’s representation in governance. IPPR caught up with various political leaders and civil society activists to get their assessments and views on Namibia’s readiness to meet the SADC Protocol’s 2015 deadline for gender parity in governance and decision-making bodies.



ROSALIA NGHIDINWA
Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare

“Namibia – through the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, and

other stakeholders in Namibia – is preparing itself to meet the 2015 SADC Protocol deadline. Even though there are some challenges along our roadmap. The MGEW is preparing a submission to Cabinet for open discussion on how we are going to go about this preparation. At this point in time, we are consulting with line ministries such as MRGLDH, which are the custodians of the election legislation – such as the election of regional councillors, elections of town councillors, management, and so forth. We’ve made proposals of how we want women to participate in the election. For example, the regional councillors of one region has maybe nine or twelve regional councillors, we want to prescribe how many of these councillors should be women; as with town councillors, management in the councils, and all along the chain. At educational institutions, for example, if the chairperson is a male, then the deputy should be a female, or vice versa. That is the type of consultation that is ongoing.

Along that line, we are also thinking that we can’t just pull women into decision-making bodies without coaching them or empowering them. But in line with the SADC Protocol, we also have important steps to take in terms of women’s empowerment beyond governance. The MGEW believes that during the course of the next two years, we need to make sure that gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming should be implemented in the government line ministries and other organisations, to see the impact of the budget on women – what percentages of women are benefitting before 2015; so that we can make sure that by 2015, those who are capable to stand are already empowered. We also want to start consulting with the Ministry of Finance and Cabinet colleagues to sensitise them on gender budgeting and mainstreaming. For example, we want to hear that the Ministry of Land has certain percentage of land being allocated to women; or that the Ministry of Fisheries has a certain percentage of fishing quotas allocated to women – and with other ministries – Mines and Energy, Agriculture, Trade and Industry, and so forth. We would also like to see directorates within ministries ensure the implementation of this type of empowerment. Importantly, through these efforts, alongside the initiative of women themselves, this overall empowerment of women will eventually lead women to grow into decision-making bodies.”



SELMA SHILONGO
Rally for Democracy and Progress – Women’s League

“At the national level, in order to meet the

SADC Protocol’s 2015 deadline, first we have to educate women as well as men to understand the political situation and the important role of women in politics. We sometimes see

our fellow men at the leadership level are the only ones active, and they leave their spouses at home, outside of politics. Everything starts at home. If we can educate them, women will come up and participate politically. You find women only active at the grassroots level, but we want them to come up to bring about stronger women’s representation in political parties and in the country as a whole.

In RDP, we (the women’s league) are trying to put it to our leadership to make people aware of either implementing a zebra system or 50/50 representation, but this is still in the pipeline. At the moment, we have eight people in parliament, of which only one is a woman. We don’t want this to happen anymore. At least if it’s eight people in parliament, it should be four men and four women. And this is what we want to be incorporated into our Constitution – to say that it should reflect what the Protocol – as our Government is signatory to this – is saying.”



IGNATIUS SHIXWAMENI
All People’s Party (APP)

“I’m sure you know that we will not be able to [meet the SADC deadline for

50 per cent women representation]. It would be a very big miracle, unless legislation is passed which would force political parties to do a zebra list for the National Assembly. There have been consultations of course with the former Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, but I don’t know at this particular stage as to how far the legal drafters have gone in terms of preparing that piece of legislation. But most of the parties that were consulted were in favour – including ourselves. Actually, we have made it part of our political programme and our manifesto. It is also articulated as one of the objectives that we need to attain as a party – that 50/50 should not be compromised. We should all aim and move towards attaining it.”



McHENRY VENAANI
Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA)

“I think the country cannot reach its target on time. But I think there will be a significant improve-

ment because a lot of political discourse in political parties now is to really make sure that we reach the target. You need to bring in candidates that are going to deliver a service to people, and there is a need to really train people. But it does not diminish the fact that we also have men – and I must be very bold and candid – we also have men that have no training, but that are standing as Regional Councillors. So I think from my party’s perspective, we might not reach the 50/50 percent at 2015, but I think I would give a personal effort to reach at least 46 per cent as a target. I always contend in my party that even if you put six women out of ten in the party, and you put them at the last numbers, and they don’t make the seats in parliament, then you have not addressed the problem. Because you must make sure that gender representation means actual representation – not nomination processes. Political parties comply with the nomination process saying

that ‘Out of a list of 72, I have put 36’, but all of them you’ve put behind where your party could not achieve. In the four top positions of the party you need strong women’s representation. And not lip service. There are women who have skills, that could even be leaders of parties, that are being deliberately left behind. There is a definite need to see more women in the National Executive – the top jobs of the party, using a zebra listing.”



MARGARET MENSAH-WILLIAMS
Vice-Chairperson – National Council

“I think we have made good strides. I was very disappointed that we

dropped from 32 per cent to come down to 24 per cent. But I also know that we are going to have – at least in the ruling party – an Extraordinary Congress. And during this Extraordinary Congress [in June 2013], we are going to do constitutional amendments. And those amendments are really focusing on gender issues. You can actually say the whole Extraordinary Congress is about the Swapo Constitution and gender equality, because we have made proposals for 50 per cent. We believe that if we start currently with the ruling party, I think the ruling party is not really ready. The leadership of the ruling party is ready – the President, the Vice President, the Secretary General, the Deputy SG, and a few members of the Central Committee who are not female. Very few! But the majority, in my opinion, if I gauge them, they are not really ready. But I don’t think they will have a choice when the party’s constitution changes, and they accept. Because I could hear the undertones of rivalry when those proposals were made. It’s a concern for their own positions, and then also the traditional and cultural values of a woman’s place; but I think they will not have a choice because fortunately in the Swapo Party Constitution, you have to go with the majority decision. And I believe that in the Extraordinary Congress, having people from all regions, we will get the majority decision from there. Because I think, overarchingly in the country, more people are ready. It’s only some of those who are in positions, who fear for their positions. ...But I think the President, being the head of the institution, has set the pace and the tone, and he is even the one who at previous occasions has set it publicly ... So we are happy that at least the right person in the right position is for this and is ready for this.

Once we get the Swapo Party Constitution ready, then we need to get the Electoral Act ready. Because currently its only the Local Authorities Act that makes provision [for women’s representation]. So once the Electoral Act is going to be amended – and I know the previous Minister of Gender was struggling to get political parties to commit themselves – but I also know she informed us unofficially that the President is going to call the presidents of the opposition parties and negotiate with them so that they can agree on the amendment in the Electoral Act. And then, you know, sometimes, even though you don’t want to, you have to force or coerce people into making it obligatory for them to implement what we have committed ourselves to. Because as the Head of State, the President also has the responsibility because we have committed ourselves in SADC.”



NGAMANE KARUAIHE-UPI
Gender Equality Practitioner

“Based on topical evidence and what is reported in the media, as well as from what we saw in the 2009 and the interim elections, even with Swapo’s congress in November (that touched on gender equality), Namibia is not close to being ready to implement the Protocol. The message for gender equality is still not internalised, or embraced. Africa in general, and Namibia in particular, are lip-servicing gender equality. To please donors, the government went out of its way to say yes to gender equality and to participating in meeting these objectives. But the reality on the ground says ‘no’. Namibia, South Africa, and other countries a few years ago had higher numbers (of women in governance), but these numbers have gone down. Gender equality is still looked at as if including women to appease them, and not looking at the quality and role in taking the country forward. Namibia and other countries are still window-dressing gender equality, and there is no real effort to implement. Namibia is still far from meeting and embracing the requirements of the SADC Protocol on Gender, and from meeting the deadline.”



VERONICA DE KLERK
Founder & Director, Women’s Action for Development(WAD)

“In terms of reaching the SADC 2015 deadline, first of all, I think that when our President signs these protocols, he must come back and make it known. We have to know what protocols have been signed, and not a year later. We need to know even before he goes, what is he going to do there, and what responsibility does that give to the Namibians to work towards honouring those protocols that he’s signed. I said already that we are not working together. We don’t trust one another’s abilities as women, and that needs to change dramatically. Currently, Namibia’s performance in terms of gender representation is disappointing. You know, in 2009 when we had the national elections, we dropped from 32 per cent to 22 per cent, or by about 10 per cent. It’s very very disappointing because men vote for men and women vote for men. And women still have this idea that women can’t do it as well as men can do it. And I think that’s not fair because I have a lot of confidence in women’s skills and their ability to multitask. I think that what needs to happen is that women should stop pulling other women down. You know, there is this PHD

syndrome - the ‘Pull Her Down’ syndrome – and it’s been there for generations, and still we have not really improved on that. So I think as soon as women stop this thing of being jealous of each other and pulling each other down, then we will get better representation in all levels of government. We have to vote for each other. And we must believe in one another. And we must stand together as a united force and act like a majority, and not like a minority that begs for favours all the time.”



CLARA GOWASES
MP, Republican Party

“Every political party had a visit in November last year by the SADC regional women’s Parliamentary Forum. And at that workshop, we were really educated on the importance of implementing the SADC Protocol, because our President, His Excellency President Hifikepuno Pohamba, already signed it, and the state party shall make sure that at least 50 per cent of decision-making positions in the public and private sectors are held by women, including through the use of affirmative action measures. So I think our party, the Republican Party of Namibia, is very serious about that and we

want to and will see that at least on our party list, there will be 50/50. There are 72 members, so there will be at least 36 women on that list. At the moment we have about 30 women on the list. (In terms of how this list is structured), I don’t believe in the zebra list ... but at least in the first ten, because the President in our (RP) Constitution, has the right to nominate the first ten.”



ROSA NAMISES
Founder & Director, Women’s Solidarity Namibia

“We are not on track to meet the 2015 SADC Protocol deadline, although the President has signed (and ratified) it. The reason that we are not on track is the silence. I don’t see any systems in place to implement or educate those women and men about it. I am afraid that the time will come, and Namibia will try to rush it, and then we won’t get the necessary results because the political parties will not be ready to implement the Protocol. The representation of women in the National Assembly is already going down, and this will decline further because aside from the numbers, the voices of women are also declining, and nobody is raising the issues for women. If we don’t start now, the numbers (of women in governance) will continue to dwindle.”

CHANGE STARTS AT THE PARTY LEVEL: AN ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL PARTY TRACK RECORDS ON GENDER EQUALITY

With the 2014 National Assembly and Presidential Elections just around the corner, the way in which political parties deal with gender issues within their structures and in their manifestos will play a determining role in whether Namibia meets the SADC Protocol’s 2015 deadline for equal women’s representation. Many of the political parties are in the process of redefining their goals, leadership structures, manifestos, and so forth, but their track records in line with how they dealt with gender issues in 2009 and to date, may shed some light on what we can expect from the various parties:

Swapo

The ‘ruling party’ has had the most potential to equalise the gender structure of parliament, given the party’s sheer size and scope within the National Assembly. It is important to note Swapo has contributed the largest number of women to the overall National Assembly list. Of the 20 women currently in parliament, 19 hail from Swapo, and the party has held the greatest proportion of females in parliament since independence. However, in all, the percentage of MPs representing Swapo who are female, has always lingered between 8.5 per cent (1990-1995) and 30.6 per cent (2010-2015). As with the remaining parties, given the national goal to have 50 per cent female representation by 2015, these numbers do little to advance the cause of women in governance. Prior to Swapo’s 5th Congress, gender equality featured strongly at the party’s first and highly publicised National Policy Conference in September 2012. At the Congress two

months later, there was much talk about bringing about 50/50 representation in the party’s structures, but the actual discussion and implementation of such was postponed to an Extraordinary Congress set for June 2013, despite former President Sam Nujoma’s urging that “the Swapo party government must implement the 2002 and 2007 Swapo party congress resolutions for equal representation of women in influential positions.” (Windhoek Observer, 29-12-2012) In terms of reaching the national 50/50 goal, it is essentially the Swapo party that is best positioned to bring about the change that the Government (often referred to as “the ruling party Government” by Swapo itself) wishes to see. For example, if Swapo had 50 per cent women’s representation in its current structure, all things equal, the proportion of women in parliament today would be 38.5 per cent – a major shift from the current 24 per cent.

RDP

Beyond Swapo and the CoD, the remaining parties have failed to contribute much toward equality in the National Assembly. The Rally for Democracy and Progress, which won eight seats in the last election, only has one female MP in the post - 2010 National Assembly, and further, has only 15 women (20.8 per cent) in its 72-member Central Committee, and four women (19 per cent) in its 21-member National Executive Committee. This is despite the party manifesto’s declaration under the subheading “women’s empowerment”, to “strive to achieve at least 50 per cent representation of women, both in government and public service, as well as within our own party’s political and organisational activities.” In an interview with IPPR, RDP’s Selma Shilongo noted that the party recently held a workshop to discuss alternative policies with regards to women’s representation in the party’s structures, and stated that the party is considering amending its constitution to reflect a commitment to 50/50 representation, possibly using the zebra system or an alternative method. In the party’s Alternative Policies document, references made by the RDP on gender remain the same, with the addition that the party will “work with NGOs to promote training for women and girl-child issues and focus on educating women for active participation in socio-economic and political affairs, and nurture them for leadership roles”.

CoD, RP, APP and SWANU (1-seat parties)

CoD, RP, APP and SWANU each won only one seat in the 2010-2015 National Assembly, and each fielded a man to these seats. The Congress of Democrats is notably the most progressive party in parliament terms of gender equality, as it makes use of the ‘zebra system’ that ensures 50/50 gender representation on an alternating scale. (The National Democratic Party of Namibia also makes use of a zebra list, but this party failed to secure any seats in the 2009 elections). However, while this is clearly an important way of ensuring equal representation in the National Assembly, the impact of this system cannot be fully felt with only the CoD’s implementation, as the party has only managed 7, 5, and 1 candidate(s) to the last three parliaments respectively. Its contribution of women to the 3rd (3 women) and 4th (2 women) National Assemblies was important, relatively speaking, but with only one candidate in the 5th National Assembly, and seemingly waning popularity since it came to the fore in 1999, the party’s future – and it’s hope for raising the bar with regards to gender equality – remains bleak. Following the resignation of the party’s president, Henk Mudge, from parliament, Clara Gowases – a woman – filled the RP’s vacancy in the National Assembly. Neither RP nor SWANU make mention of gender and/or women’s representation in their 2009 Manifestos. APP’s 2009 Manifesto states that the party supports “total gender equality”, noting that “50/50 in decision making structures must become a reality in our lifetime”.

DTA, UDF and NUDO (2-seat parties)

Despite Manifestos that state a commitment to heightening the recognition of women in governance, DTA, UDF and NUDO each won two seats in the 2010-2015 National Assembly, but none of them fielded a woman to parliament. If they a zebra-style was made compulsory, each of these parties would’ve had to ensure the presence of one woman and one man in Parliament.

Parties that did not win any seats in the 2009 Election

Among the parties that did not win any seats in the 2009 elections, gender representation within their lists of 72 and on the top 10 spots have been mixed. The Communist Party was the only party with more women than men on both the party list and the top 10 spots. The NDPN employs a zebra list, and therefore had 50% representation through an alternating list. DPN had 38% women on the party list, with 50 per cent representation in their top ten. MAG and NDMC show the poorest levels of women’s representation in the party list, with 0 per cent and 10 per cent of women in the top ten positions respectively. (IPPR, 2009)



SHOULD QUOTAS BE IMPLEMENTED?

In order to balance the numbers, several countries have adopted quota systems within their governance bodies.

In fact, Rwanda, which currently leads globally in terms of women's representation in governance at 56 per cent, achieved this feat by introducing quotas that ensured at least 30 percent female representation in the Senate and through reserved seats for women in the lower chamber of Parliament (where women-only elections are held for 24 of the 80 seats).

According to International IDEA, quotas aim at increasing the representation of women in governance by ensuring that women "constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee or a government." The Institute adds that "Gender quotas draw legitimacy from the discourse of exclusion, according to which the main reasons for women's under-representation are the exclusionary practices of the political parties and the political institutions at large. Quotas place the burden of candidate recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process, first and foremost the political parties. Quotas force those who nominate and select to start recruiting women and

give women a chance which they do not have today in most parts of the world."

Reactions to these quota systems have been mixed, but the major theme emanating from both sides of the argument is that while quotas may boost women's representation in politics, they are not enough alone to empower women on a global scale. Tackling the barriers that keep women on the fringes of politics – as opposed to simply shooing them into parliaments for window-dressing – is imperative to ensure the meaningful and active participation of women in governance, as well as to ensure that their male counterparts respect and value their contributions.

The Quota Project reports that while it is difficult to place an exact figure on how many countries are using quotas, "as of 2006, around 40 countries have introduced gender quotas in elections to national parliaments, either by means of constitutional amendment or by changing the electoral laws (legal quotas). In more than 50 countries major political parties have voluntarily set out quota provisions in their own statutes (party quotas)."

The table on the right highlights the pros and cons of the use of quota systems.

Pros and Cons of Quota Systems

PROS

- Quotas for women do not discriminate, but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats.
- Quotas imply that there are several women together in a committee or assembly, thus minimizing the stress often experienced by the token women.
- Women have the right as citizens to equal representation.
- Women's experience is needed in political life.
- Men cannot represent the interest of women. Only many women can represent the diversity of women.
- Election is about representation, not educational qualifications.
- Women are just as qualified as men, but women's qualifications are downgraded and minimised in a male-dominated political system.
- Quotas do not discriminate against individual men. Rather quota rules limit the tendency of political parties to nominate only men. For the voters, the opportunities are expanded, since it now becomes possible to vote for women candidates.
- Conflicts that may be caused by the introduction of quotas are only temporary.
- Several internationally recognized conventions on gender equality have set targets for women's political representation, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which 179 countries are now party to, as well as the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.
- How can it be justified that men occupy more than 80 percent of the parliamentary seats in the world?
- Quotas can contribute to a process of democratisation by making the nomination process more transparent and formalised.

CONS

- Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference.
- Political representation should be a choice between ideas and party platforms, not between social categories.
- Quotas are undemocratic, because voters should be able to decide who is elected.
- Quotas imply that politicians are elected because of their gender, not because of their qualifications, and that better-qualified candidates are pushed aside.
- Many women do not want to get elected just because they are women.
- Introducing quotas creates significant conflicts within the party organisation.
- Quotas for women will be followed by demands for quotas for other groups, which will result in a politics of sheer group-interest representation.

Source: International IDEA and QuotaProject.com

GENDER-RELATED LEGISLATION

Since Independence, the Government has repeatedly stated its support for women's rights and representation, and has enacted, signed and ratified a plethora of laws, conventions and protocols to this effect.

In fact, the Constitution sets the tone for women's empowerment. Article 10 of the Namibian Constitution states that all persons shall be equal before the law and prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sex. Article 23 goes further in this regard, to make provision for affirmative action for women. In this regard, it states that "In the enactment of legislation and the application of any policies and practices contemplated by Sub-Article (2) hereof, it shall be permissible to have regard to the fact that women in Namibia have traditionally suffered special discrimination and that they need to be encouraged and enabled to play a full, equal and effective role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the nation".

Policies such as the National Gender Policy and the National Gender Plan of Action, as well as the ratification of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, are all testimony

to Namibia's theoretical commitment to equal and equitable women's representation in leadership and governance, as well as in other social contexts. Practically, however, the country has a long way to go to reach the requirements and deadlines to which it has committed itself in the said legislation. Namibia's National Gender Policy and National Gender Plan of Action also seek to tie the country's national goals with the objectives set out in the SADC Protocol. In line with NDP3 and Vision 2030, they aim to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of both women and men in the socio-economic, cultural and political development of Namibia. With respect to women's representation in governance and political decision-making, the Policy states that its major objective is to "Increase women's participation at all levels of decision-making, and provide support for women in governance and decision-making positions".

Below is a table of many of the instruments created, ratified or signed by the Government, in the interest of leveling the playing field for women.

Overview of policies and regulations related to gender and politics

National policies linked to gender	Year signed/ratified	Major guiding legislation/policy	Key elements with respect to gender representation in politics and decision-making	International conventions/protocols related to gender to which Namibia is signatory
Vision 2030 and the National Development Plans	2010	(Revised) National Gender Policy (2010-2020)	Increase women's participation at all levels of decision-making, and provide support for women in governance and decision-making positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and its Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children • The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) • The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1997), and its Optional Protocol • The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) • The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) • The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) • The UN Convention against Transnational Crime, 2000 (UNTOC) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, known as the Palermo Protocol • The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) • The International Conference on Population and Development (1994) • The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) • International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) • International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
Married Persons Equality Act (1996)	2011	National Gender Plan of Action	Capacity building, skills development, mentorship and confidence building for women in parliament and other areas of public sector; Representation in all spheres of public life	
Combating of Domestic Violence Act (2003)				
Traditional Authorities Act (1995)	2008	SADC Protocol on Gender and Development	50% of decision-making positions in the public and private sectors, the cabinet, parliament, judiciary, all tribunals and commissions, including human rights bodies, civil society, traditional structures, trade unions, political parties and the media to be held by women by 2015	
Local Authorities Act (1992)				

WHAT IS THE IPPR?

The Institute for Public Policy Research was established in 2001 as a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to deliver, independent, analytical, critical yet constructive research on social, political and economic issues which affect development Namibia. The IPPR was established in the belief that development is best promoted through free and critical debate informed by quality research. The IPPR is independent of government, political parties, business, trade unions and other interest groups and is governed by a board of seven directors. Anyone can receive the IPPR's research free of charge by contacting the organisation at 14 Nachtigal Street, Windhoek; PO Box 6566, Windhoek; tel: (061) 240514; fax (061) 240516;

email: info@ippr.org.na. All IPPR research is available at <http://www.ippr.org.na>. Material related to Election Watch is available at <http://www.electionwatch.org.na>