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OCCASIONAL PAPER

13

Gendered Spaces in Party Politics in Southern Africa: Progress and Regress Since Beijing 1995

by Onalenna Doo Selolwane





UNITED NATIONS RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



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February 2006

UNITED NATIONS RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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contents

Acronyms ..... **iii**

Summary/Résumé/Resumen ..... **iv**

Summary iv
Résumé vi
Resumen viii

I. Introduction **1**
II. The Politics of Presence: Political Parties and Women's Representation **4**
II.A The general background 4
II.B The experience of southern Africa's oldest democracy 5
II.C Lessons of southern Africa's newest democracies 11
II.D The uncertain gait: From one-party state to plural politics 13
II.E One foot forward and three steps back: Regressing states 20
II.F Presence in retrospect 25
III. Climbing Mountains: Women and the Politics of Voice **27**
III.A Negotiating with patriarchy in the legislatures and cabinetss 27
III.B Meeting the challenges of gendering political parties 30
III.C Strengthening oppositional politics and party institutions 33

Bibliography **35**

Tables

1. Countries that gained independence in the 1960s 3
2. Countries that gained independence or majority rule after 1970 3
3. Trends in women's representation in Botswana's parliament and cabinet since independence 10
4. Women's representation in southern Africa's new democracies 11
5. Women's representation in the former one-party states 17
6. Women's representation in uncertain legislatures and cabinets 22
7. Comparative figures for women in SADC cabinets, parliaments and ruling party central committees, 2004 25

acronyms

AFORD	Alliance for Democracy (Malawi)
ANC	African National Congress (South Africa)
BWL	Bantu Women's League
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Revolutionary State Party of Tanzania)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EISA	Electoral Institute of Southern Africa
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
Frelimo	Liberation Front of Mozambique
HIVOS	Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Netherlands)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INM	Imbokodvo National Movement (Swaziland)
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change (Zimbabwe)
MMD	Movement for Multiparty Democracy (Zambia)
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MPR	Popular Movement of Revolution (Democratic Republic of the Congo)
NAC	Nyasaland African Congress
NGO	non-governmental organization
NNLC	Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (Swaziland)
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PF-ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
Renamo	Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana (Mozambican National Resistance)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDP	Swaziland Democratic Party
SPP	Swaziland Progressive Party
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
UNDFW	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UDF	United Democratic Front (Malawi)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIP	United National Independence Party (Zambia)
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

summary
résumé
resumen

SUMMARY

This paper was written as a contribution to the review of progress toward gender equality since the 1995 Beijing Conference with specific reference to the southern African region. It recognizes that in the African context, a review of this nature is necessarily also an assessment of how far institutions and processes of accountable governance, reestablished in the 1990s in most African states, are taking sufficient root to enable the realization of declared commitments to enhance the quality of life for any segment of the citizenry. The stocktaking focuses on political parties both as possible instruments and as sites of negotiated power, against a historical background where they have also been instruments of coercion and exclusion. They have thus embodied tension, as on the one hand products of repression, and on the other, symbols of a breakthrough to a future promising the African citizenry liberties and democratic rights coupled with improvements in material well-being.

Therefore, a review of southern Africa's performance regarding progress towards gender equality cannot just be about the degree to which women are now represented in decision-making. Rather, the process of enhancing women's status is inseparable from the process of rebuilding democratic institutions and practices. This paper starts from the premise that the outcome of that institution-building is informed interactively by the nature of the struggles of the people or groups involved, in character, form and content. The question then is how the history of the southern African countries and the struggles waged therein have defined, and continue to shape, the type of institutions and the manner of political power-sharing and women's representation.

Specifically, the paper examines what women's struggle for political space has added to the democratization process and the rebuilding of political parties in southern Africa. The southern African countries have been divided into groups that share certain historical similarities in order to examine how that history provided a context, and the obstacles that had to be overcome by women and other agencies in the process of building political institutions and negotiating political power. The groups are:

- those countries that have maintained multiparty politics from the 1960s (Botswana and Mauritius)
- those countries that replaced multiparty systems with single-party politics soon after independence and only reinstated them in the 1990s (Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, the Seychelles, the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) and Zambia)
- those countries that were the last to extend universal suffrage to all racial groups (Namibia and South Africa)
- those countries that have regressed either right from independence or since, and have not yet embraced peaceful multiparty political systems (Angola, Swaziland, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe).

Onalenna Selolwane is a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of Botswana.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce document, écrit à titre de contribution à l'examen des progrès accomplis sur la voie de l'égalité des sexes depuis la Conférence de Beijing de 1995, se rapporte spécifiquement à l'Afrique australe. L'auteur reconnaît que, dans le contexte africain, un examen de cette nature amène nécessairement à se demander si les institutions et procédures de responsabilisation du gouvernement, rétablies dans les années 90 dans la plupart des pays d'Afrique, prennent suffisamment racine pour que les engagements officiels d'améliorer la qualité de la vie de l'une ou l'autre catégorie de citoyens puissent être effectivement honorés. Pour dresser ce bilan, elle s'intéresse surtout aux partis politiques, à la fois comme instruments possibles et comme lieux de négociation du pouvoir, dans un contexte historique où ils ont aussi été des instruments de coercition et d'exclusion. Ils ont ainsi incarné la tension, comme produits de la répression d'une part, et, d'autre part, comme symboles d'une percée vers un avenir porteur, pour les citoyens africains, de la promesse de libertés et de droits démocratiques et d'une amélioration de leur condition matérielle.

L'examen des progrès accomplis en Afrique australe sur la voie de l'égalité des sexes ne peut donc pas porter uniquement sur le degré actuel de représentation des femmes dans la prise de décision. L'amélioration du statut de la femme est inséparable du processus de reconstruction des institutions et du rétablissement des pratiques démocratiques. Le document part du postulat que la nature, la forme et le contenu des institutions mises en place portent la marque directe des luttes du peuple ou des groupes en présence. La question est alors de savoir comment l'histoire des pays de l'Afrique australe et les luttes qui y ont été menées ont défini et continuent à façonner les institutions, les modes du partage du pouvoir politique et la représentation des femmes.

L'auteur étudie plus précisément ici ce que la lutte des femmes pour la conquête de leur espace politique a ajouté au processus de démocratisation et à la reconstitution des partis politiques en Afrique australe. Elle a regroupé les pays de l'Afrique australe en diverses catégories selon certaines similitudes historiques, afin d'examiner l'influence de l'histoire et les obstacles que les femmes et d'autres organisations ont dû surmonter lors du choix des institutions politiques et de la négociation du pouvoir politique. Elle a ainsi distingué:

- les pays qui ont conservé le multipartisme après les années 60 (le Botswana et Maurice),
- les pays qui ont remplacé un système multipartite par un régime à parti unique peu après l'indépendance et n'ont rétabli le multipartisme que dans les années 90 (le Lesotho, le Malawi, le Mozambique, les Seychelles, la République-Unie de Tanzanie et la Zambie),
- les pays qui ont été les derniers à étendre le suffrage universel à tous les groupes raciaux (la Namibie et l'Afrique du Sud),
- les pays qui ont régressé dès l'indépendance ou dans l'intervalle et n'ont pas encore adopté des systèmes politiques multipartites pacifiques (l'Angola, le Swaziland, la République démocratique du Congo (RDC) et le Zimbabwe).

Onalenna Selolwane est maître de conférences au Département de sociologie de l'Université du Botswana.

RESUMEN

El presente documento es un aporte a la revisión de los avances registrados en pos de la meta de la equidad de género desde la Conferencia de Beijing de 1995, y se refiere específicamente a la región del sur de África. En este trabajo se reconoce que, en el contexto africano, una revisión de esta naturaleza es también, y necesariamente, una evaluación del grado en que las instituciones y los procesos de gobernabilidad responsable y transparente, reestablecidos en los años 90 en la mayoría de los estados africanos, se encuentran suficientemente arraigados para permitir la realización de los compromisos declarados de mejorar la calidad de vida de todos los segmentos de la ciudadanía. El análisis se centra en los partidos políticos como posibles instrumentos y sitios de poder negociado, ante un telón de fondo histórico en el cual esos mismos partidos han sido también instrumentos de coerción y exclusión. De allí que hayan generado tensión como, por una parte, productos de represión y, por la otra, símbolos de progreso hacia un futuro promisorio de libertades ciudadanas y derechos democráticos y de mejoramiento del bienestar material en África.

Por lo tanto, el análisis del desempeño del sur del África en materia de progreso hacia la equidad de género no puede tratarse solamente del grado en el cual las mujeres están ahora representadas en la toma de decisiones; el proceso de mejoramiento de la situación de la mujer va indefectiblemente de la mano con el proceso de reconstrucción de las instituciones y prácticas democráticas. El documento parte de la premisa de que el resultado de esa reconstrucción institucional se alimenta de forma interactiva de la naturaleza de las luchas de las personas o grupos afectados, en su carácter, forma y contenido. La pregunta que surge entonces es cómo la historia de los países del sur del África y sus luchas han definido y continúan definiendo el tipo de instituciones, la manera de compartir el poder y la representación de la mujer.

En el documento se examina específicamente lo qué la lucha de las mujeres por un espacio político ha agregado al proceso de democratización y a la reconstrucción de los partidos políticos en los países del sur de África. Estos países han sido divididos en grupos que comparten ciertas similitudes históricas, a fin de poder analizar la manera en que la historia definió un contexto, y los obstáculos que las mujeres y otras instituciones debieron superar en el proceso de la construcción de instituciones políticas y la negociación del poder político. Estos grupos son:

- los países que han mantenido un sistema político pluripartidista desde los años 60 (Botswana y Mauricio)
- los países que sustituyeron los sistemas pluripartidistas con un sistema de partido único poco después de su independencia y que sólo reinstauraron el sistema pluripartidista en los años 90 (Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, las Seychelles, República Unida de Tanzania y Zambia)
- los países que fueron los últimos en conferir el derecho al sufragio universal a todos los grupos raciales (Namibia y Sudáfrica)
- los países que han retrocedido, ya sea inmediatamente después o desde la independencia y que no han instaurado sistemas políticos pluripartidistas pacíficos (Angola, Swazilandia, República Democrática del Congo y Zimbabwe).

Onalenna Selolwane es profesora titular del Departamento de Sociología de la Universidad de Botswana.



I.

introduction

This paper was written as a contribution to the review of progress toward gender equality since the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women and the commitments by Member States of the United Nations to enhance the status of women and ensure at least 30 per cent female representation in the top echelons of all decision-making loci of power by 2005. A review of this nature is necessarily a stocktaking exercise to assess how far the goals set have been met and to identify impediments that may have undermined progress. But in the context of Africa, where the postcolonial state has an established history of disregard for the human rights of its populace as well as the basic principles of accountable governance, a review of this nature is necessarily also an assessment of how far institutions and processes of accountable governance, reestablished in the 1990s in most African states, are taking sufficient root to enable the realization of declared commitments to enhance the quality of life for any segment of the citizenry. That is, to what extent have African governments reestablished institutions that allow for plural politics and accountable governance? And to what extent has the citizenry also risen to the occasion of making demands on the state to build sustainable democratic institutions and culture?

The predatory nature, coercive tendencies and general lack of moral legitimacy of the postcolonial African state have been subject to much scholarly debate and scrutiny. Most scholars would thus concur with Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987:123) that at least up to the return of multiparty competition for government power in the 1990s, the typical postcolonial state was authoritarian and resorted "to arbitrary rule and violence in order to maintain law and order as well as the stability required for the realization of its economic functions". It was also believed that change towards a democratic dispensation where fundamental freedoms would be guaranteed required political struggles for liberation on the part of the populace (Barry 1997:165).

The current stocktaking focuses on political parties as instruments and sites of negotiated power in the southern African region. Political parties have had a chequered and violent history in southern Africa and Africa at large. In most cases they emerged towards the end of colonial rule primarily as instruments for formal transfer of power from the colonial rulers to African nationalists. They also came to be vehicles for consolidating anti-colonialist movements into political institutions demanding self-rule within the boundaries determined by colonial exigencies. Arguably, they emerged as new loci of negotiated power somewhat apart from the traditional institutions that had been compromised to serve colonial administrations, and from the structures of colonial administration themselves. In that sense they symbolized the break with colonialism and its power structures at the same time that they represented its continuity, in the consolidation of the power of protest and resistance movements which were themselves products of colonial rule. They thus embodied tension as on the one hand, products of a colonialism that had denied Africans democratic rights and liberties, and on the other, symbols of a breakthrough to a future which promised the citizenry liberties and democratic rights coupled with improvements in material well-being.

As symbols of the future aspirations of the majority, the most popular nationalist movements were generally ushered into government through broad-based popular support. This ensured that in most countries in Africa the first postcolonial government had legitimacy and moral authority deriving from a popular mandate. Angola represented an exception to the rule because sovereignty was not conferred on any particular party or transitional authority, but vaguely to the "Angolan people" without the mandate of popular elections. This was because the three liberation movements which had agreed to form a transitional government started fighting just months before the transfer of power in November 1975. As the one with a base nearest to the capital, Luanda, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) simply took over the reins of power.

For the rest of southern Africa, despite the popular mandate of most of the first governments, in one country after another the governing political parties soon turned against multiparty competition for government power, which they now deemed as divisive and capable of derailing the modernization and nation-building agendas they had taken upon themselves. Tanzania, which gained independence in 1961, led the way to constitutional one-party rule in 1965 when it banned all opposition parties and left the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) as the sole legitimate party. Malawi and Zambia followed suit after attaining independence in 1964. The ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP) set about systematically weeding out opposition, and officially turned the country into a one-party state in 1966. The president, Ngwazi Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, was made president for life in 1971.

The following year, Zambia's United National Independence Party (UNIP) also turned that country into a one-party state following persistent splits in the ruling party. In 1973, Swaziland took the same path. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which gained independence in 1960, the leader of the Popular Movement of Revolution (MPR), Joseph Désiré Mobutu, first declared himself president in 1965 and then went on in 1970 to abolish opposition parties and declare his party the sole party and himself the sole presidential candidate.

In Mozambique and Angola, independence in 1975 was followed by continued ideologically driven war between the liberation movements that had formed a government and those that were opposed to the governing ideology. Right up to the 1990s, armed conflict ensured that no meaningful political contests could happen, as opposing factions preferred to settle differences through the barrel of the gun. As double insurance, Mozambique also legislated against multiparty politics, making the Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frelimo) the only legitimate political party. In the Seychelles, the leader of the Seychelles People's United Party staged a coup d'état a year following independence in 1976. Like the crop of countries that gained independence in the 1960s, the Seychelles also banned multiparty competition for government power. In Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, where entrenched settler colonial governments controlled the state and were determined to maintain a racially structured franchise and institutionalized racism, there were protracted wars of liberation intended to extend the franchise universally, to include black majorities.

In Zimbabwe, the conflict ended in 1980 with the transformation of the liberation movements into political parties, followed by general elections which saw the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) ushered to power. But ethnic conflicts continued to dog political practice, as national political parties also took on the characteristics of ethnic affiliation that had led to the banning of multiple parties in the other countries. Namibia and South Africa were the last countries in the region to end white minority rule, which also led to an end to the armed conflict that had been intended to bring about its demise. By the early 1990s, only Botswana and Mauritius had maintained an unbroken record of multiparty elections based on universal franchise since their independence in the 1960s.

The outlawing of opposition parties effectively meant that, by and large, the majority of governments in southern Africa commanded no moral authority or legitimacy. This state of affairs eventually led to their demise when their capacity to purchase coercive power or selective distribution of donor-financed development programmes was halted by structural adjustment and crippling indebtedness of the kind seen throughout the 1980s. These regimes were eventually forced to concede to demands for the reinstatement of multiparty political systems, beginning in the 1990s, under pressure from both national pro-democracy movements and financial arm-twisting by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

As a result of this history, when the governments of the world met in Beijing in September 1995 to deliberate how they could individually and collectively enhance the status of women within and across national boundaries, for most of southern Africa the issues involved much deeper reflection on how to rebuild links between governments and their people after such an extended history of marginalization of the citizenry. Therefore a review of southern Africa's performance regarding progress towards gender equality cannot just be about the

degree to which women are now represented in decision-making. After so many decades in which plural participation and responsive governance had been grossly undermined, the process of enhancing women's status is inseparable from the process of rebuilding democratic institutions and practices.

This paper starts from the premise that the outcome of that institution-building is informed interactively by the nature of the struggles of the people or groups involved, in character, form and content. The question then is how the history of the southern African countries and the struggles waged therein have defined, and continue to shape, the type of institutions and the manner of political power-sharing and women's representation. Equally, what specifically have women's struggles for political space added to the democratization process and the rebuilding of political parties as institutions and conduits into legislatures and other sites of public governance? To answer these questions, the southern African countries have been divided into groups that share certain historical similarities, in order to examine how that history provided a context, and the obstacles that had to be overcome by women and other agencies in the process of building political institutions and negotiating political power.

The groups are:

- those countries that have maintained multiparty politics from the 1960s (Botswana and Mauritius)
- those countries that replaced multiparty systems with single party politics soon after independence and only reinstated them in the 1990s (Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, the Seychelles, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia)
- those countries that were the last to extend universal suffrage to all racial groups (Namibia and South Africa)
- those countries that have regressed either right from independence or since, and have not yet embraced peaceful multiparty political systems (Angola, Swaziland, DRC and Zimbabwe).

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the countries' chronological experience with party systems.

TABLE 1
COUNTRIES THAT GAINED INDEPENDENCE IN THE 1960s

Country	Independence date	Banning of multiple parties	First multiparty elections after removal of ban	Election destabilizing factors
Botswana	1966	Never	Not applicable	None
DRC	1960	1970	1992	32 years of armed conflict
Lesotho	1966	1970	1993	Riots and uprisings
Malawi	1964	1966	1994	Intimidation
Mauritius	1968	Never	Not applicable	None
Swaziland	1968	1973	Ban still in place	Absolute monarchy
Tanzania	1961	1965	1992	Intimidation
Zambia	1964	1972	1991	Intimidation

TABLE 2
COUNTRIES THAT GAINED INDEPENDENCE OR MAJORITY RULE AFTER 1970

Country	Date of independence or majority rule	End of armed conflict	Restitution of multiparty or universal franchise	Current status
Angola	1975	Continuing	1992	War
Mozambique	1975	1992	1994	Stable
Namibia	1990	1988	1989	Stable
Seychelles	1976	Not applicable	1993	Stable
South Africa	1994	1990	1994	Stable
Zimbabwe	1980	1979	1980	Unstable

II.

the politics of presence: political parties and women's representation

II.A.

the general background

Most political parties in the region started their lives at the most a decade before independence (typically in the early to late 1950s) and at the least just three years before (for example, the DRC). For instance, the Tanzania's first ruling party, TANU, was formed in 1954 just seven years before independence. In Lesotho, the first party to agitate for self-government, the Basutoland African Congress (later named the Basutoland Congress Party), was established in 1952. Its splinter group, the Basutoland National Party, formed towards the end of the 1950s, led the country to independence in 1966.

Only in South Africa and Malawi was there a considerable lead period of party formation before the majority ruling party took over sovereignty. For instance, South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) came into existence in 1912 and had nearly 50 years of fairly free political canvassing and mobilization before it was banned in 1960. When it took over the reigns of government power in 1994, it had 72 years of political mobilization behind it. Malawi's ruling party came into existence in 1944, initially as the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC): a broad-based association embracing several independent churches and organizations for Africans. It was banned in 1959 following its campaign for civil disorder in protest against colonial domination. Undeterred, the members immediately regrouped as the MCP and continued pressure for independence from both colonial administration and an imposed federation with Rhodesia (now divided into Zimbabwe and Zambia). When it led the country to independence in 1964, it had 20 years of experience of political mobilization.

As a result, although most political parties that won a mandate to govern in fact had widely based popular support, the culture of party-politicking and oppositional contestation was still very superficially embedded in the African citizenry. This was to have far-reaching consequences for their relationship with political parties generally, and with Western-originated modes of political practice. Significantly, the new political power institutions tended to have the common characteristic of relegating women's political participation to ancillary organs, and reserving their executive committees for male participation. This started with South Africa's ANC, which began its life mainly as a male organization and only extended political recognition to women in 1931, when the Bantu Women's League (BWL) was recognized as its women's branch. This was followed in 1943 by women being formally admitted as ANC members, and in 1948 by the formation of the ANC Women's League. Parties that were formed later in the 1950s took on this position of establishing women's wings or leagues as the legitimate political space for women.

With the demise of oppositional politics, women's wings of political parties came to be seen primarily as ancillary organs to provide women with space to organize support for male politicians through fundraising, canvassing the female vote, and generally providing entertainment for the male dignitaries during party congresses and other gatherings. Thus, by and large, the women's wings of political parties have historically been social clubs, usually led by spouses of male politicians, and tending to promote male interests. However, in the context of increasing

political awareness as well as the impetus from the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and various other programmes supporting women's emancipation in all UN Member States, some women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began to see these ancillary wings as potential targets for intra-party reform.[1] At the same time, however, much of the caucusing and political mobilization was initiated outside the existing structures of parties, and here women could claim their own space and set their own agendas, with the prime goal of launching women into the legislatures where key national decision-making ideally took place.

To gauge the character and content of progress, we can now examine how the different experiences with party politics affected the process of women's inclusion in representational politics from independence up to the Beijing conference and since. We begin this assessment with the case of Botswana, which has had the longest unbroken history of multiparty elections based on universal franchise.

II.B.

the experience of southern africa's oldest democracy

In the first two decades after independence, the government of Botswana, like most postcolonial governments on the African continent, tended to be very suspicious of sectional interests and their potential to divide a nation which was still in its infancy. The government tended to see itself as the only legitimate authority to determine what was in the best interests of the nation. Throughout the continent, a fear of being derailed from the lofty agenda of unifying formerly disparate peoples into nations and engendering modernization resulted in the banning of oppositional politics and a gradual slide towards repression and authoritarianism. Botswana never resorted to such tactics, but rather utilized both the state's increasing capacity to distribute development resources across the citizenry and a number of undemocratic actions to silence dissent (Selolwane 2001). In the early years, such undemocratic behaviour was not frowned upon or censored because the large majority of the citizenry at the time was still traditional in orientation, and had a high degree of respect for legitimate authority and tolerance for "minor" indiscretions. The citizenry still had to be transformed from respectful tribal subjects into citizens of a republic, with an appreciation of the critical importance of civic responsibility in accountable governance.

But after two decades of rapid economic growth and management of redistributive development, the education system had produced a critical mass of educated and youthful citizens among whom modernity, urban life and the principles of liberal rights and freedoms were taken for granted. This generation was therefore much more demanding of their liberal rights and freedoms, and much more prone to questioning authority, than older generations. Further, the environment for interrogating the actions of government and the efficacy of its decisions was assisted by the fact that by the mid-1980s, Botswana's historically rapid economic growth had peaked, and the state had increasing difficulty in trying to reduce unemployment and achieve its goals of economic diversification.

1 For example in Botswana, the Emang Basadi political education programme targeted the women's wings of political parties as internal sites for party reform, and thus initiated training workshops for the leaders which included exposure to international conventions on women's rights and the role of parties in applying such conventions and monitoring national compliance.

In that atmosphere, a number of sectional interests began to manifest themselves more overtly and to mobilize in NGOs in order to make an impact on policy direction and content. Their activities would test the extent to which the formal institutions and procedures laid down at independence for democratic governance did in fact guarantee and protect plural politics and allow for a separation of powers that would check abuse of state power. Thus, for instance, in the mid- to late 1980s and early 1990s gender inequalities became focal points around which women's organizations sought to mobilize the female electorate to negotiate concessions for justice in institutions of public governance, and to instigate related processes and policies that affected women in their private and public lives. One of the issues women began to mobilize around was the fact that Botswana's unbroken record of free and fair elections had never raised the level of female representation in the legislature to more than 5 per cent. It was felt that this probably explained why women's issues and concerns were not adequately addressed in the legislature and executive policy making.

A radical women's organization, Emang Basadi,[2] emerged in 1986 to challenge political parties to make concessions and actively promote women's representation in institutions of public governance. Against the background of the UN Conference on Women in Nairobi 1985 and the preparations preceding it, the Emang Basadi Women's Association started its life as a law reform movement, seeking only to lobby the establishment to amend laws that discriminated against women and reduced their citizenship status to less than that of males. In particular, the organization sought to bring attention to how discriminatory laws that gave men sovereignty over women in private lives also undermined the liberal freedoms and rights that were the bedrock of the integrity of free and fair elections in the public space, where men and women were supposed to be equal.

The specific enactment that triggered the birth of Emang Basadi was the 1982 Citizenship Amendment Act, which took away the rights of women married to non-citizens to pass their citizenship to their offspring. That amendment did not apply to male citizens married to non-citizens. Lobbying against this specific law was done particularly through programmes aimed at raising the awareness of a broad section of the female population, so they could participate in calls for reform. In the process, other discriminatory laws were also scrutinized and interrogated, thus widening the remit of the legal reform lobby. The mobilization workshops that Emang Basadi sponsored brought together women from various organizations, ensuring wider national ownership of the issues identified and the remedies recommended for a programme of action. This opened a platform to voice issues and concerns which for generations had been held as confidential to the private sphere of family life and therefore not for public exposure.

The most far-reaching of the laws that women came to see as targets for reform was the law that conferred marital power on husbands, giving them inordinate capacity to interfere with and restrict women's rights and freedoms across a wide section of their lives. For instance, it affected the control and ownership of family property, and put restrictions on women's capacity to make legal contracts and engage in financial transactions. Marital power also gave husbands power over women's personal security, in so far as it gave them the right to chastise their wives or to use coercion in the exercise of their right to sex.[3]

2 This is Setswana for "Stand up, women!" which was a call for women to stand up and fight for their rights. The mid-1980s saw the emergence of a number of civil society organizations as an indication of Botswana's diversifying interests and the rise of a critical mass of educated urbanized citizens.

3 In 2003, the women's lobby attempted to test the limits of a husband's sexual rights and powers in relation to a wife's rights to security and protection from violence, by bringing to court a marital rape case in which the husband had repeatedly used violence to force his estranged wife to submit to his demands for conjugal rights. The case was thrown out without trial by a female magistrate, who argued that Botswana law does not recognize marital rape. Violence against women is the most frequently cited example of women's human rights violations in virtually all countries in this region.

It was in the context of the law establishment's resistance to legal reform that in 1993 Emang Basadi changed its strategy from lobbying for reform, to a political mobilization campaign aimed at increasing women's presence in the legislature, to represent these and other concerns relating to the status of female citizens (Selolwane 2001). This new strategy was adopted a year before the 1994 general elections[4] and well in advance of the commencement of parties' campaign programmes and publication of their election manifestos. The strategy was informed by certain key issues which it is important to highlight here because of the lessons they held for other countries in the region that had just reintroduced multiparty politics.

The first concerned the recognition that where the rule of law formed the foundation of political practice, and individual liberties and rights were indeed guaranteed and protected, the vote conferred enormous power on the electorate. This could be harnessed by interest groups such as women, to demand accountability to them from those seeking the mandate to rule. Emang Basadi therefore set out to mould female votes into a powerful tool around which to tie a coherent set of women's demands for accountability. A Women's Manifesto was developed, the first of its kind on the African continent, clearly setting out what the status of women in Botswana was economically, politically, legally, educationally and in terms of security, rights and freedoms. The manifesto also spelled out demands for redress from political parties and government, thus setting out an agenda for negotiation during the coming political campaigns. The manifesto was also intended to be used by women's organizations to monitor delivery after the elections, and onwards for all future elections.[5]

The second issue was the recognition that although women accounted for the majority of voters and had indeed participated in all general elections in larger numbers than their natural demographic share of the population, they were generally ignorant of the potential power that the vote conferred on them. They had no idea that they could also use this power to change their status and increase their life opportunities in the context of the post-independence modernization agenda and planned development. Despite participating regularly in fairly free elections since 1965, most of Botswana's voters were still essentially tribal subjects who did not appreciate the significance of the link between the vote and the decisions made by those on whom their votes conferred the mandate to rule.

The notion of demanding accountability from mandated rulers was still regarded as being disrespectful and undermining legitimate authority. Thus, a critical strategy adopted by the women's movement was to educate the electorate on the imperative of demanding accountability as a means of enhancing the quality and legitimacy of modern democratic rule. By developing a Women's Manifesto and mobilizing women to support it, the strategy aimed to make the female electorate appreciate and accept the need to hold politicians accountable to their voters, and thus confer meaning to the process of the popular mandate. Therefore, where the manifesto itself was a statement of women's situation as well as a catalogue of demands, the training workshops prepared the political mobilization cadre and women voters to use it as a reference during and after cam-

4 In the run-up to the 1995 Beijing Conference, Botswana's women's groups finally accepted a strategy of division of labour, whereby individual NGOs would focus their activity in particular areas to avoid the overlaps of previous years and at the same time ensure wider coverage of the many issues of concern. Although the political empowerment programme was initiated by Emang Basadi, the organization was recognized by others as the focal point in the political mobilization of all women. This greatly enhanced inter-organizational networking and reduced competition for turf and sponsorship.

5 It has been revised several times, as the government conceded to some demands and women become aware of others. In that way it continues to be a living manifesto. Other countries in the region that have developed similar manifestos are Namibia and Tanzania. The idea has also been replicated in French-speaking west Africa. South Africa developed a Women's Charter in 1994.

paign meetings of political parties, as well as within parties to demand accountability from the leaders. One of the issues identified, which has never been translated into a formal demand, was the need for a gender-sensitive national budget.[6]

The third issue was related to perceptions held by members of political parties, especially the ruling Botswana Democratic Party, about the role of political parties generally in a modern democracy, and the significance of multiparty competition in legitimizing the electoral process and its outcomes. There had been a widely held perception that opposition parties, principally the Botswana National Front (currently the main opposition) and the Botswana People's Party (which was initially the main opposition), were somehow illegitimate and were bent on undermining the legitimate authority of the ruling party.[7] Criticisms levelled at the ruling party were interpreted in the same light, as unwarranted attacks on the state itself and therefore out of order. And most tellingly, the female members of political parties tended to accept the *status quo* which relegated them to women's wings, which were seen mainly as sources of support, but largely apolitical. A critical aspect of the women's political mobilization agenda thus became raising awareness among the general membership and the leadership of women's wings of political parties that the raison d'être of any political party is to contest for the mandate to rule, and that that is what sets political parties apart from other social organizations.

The programme also sought to make women aware that within the broad remit of party competition for the popular mandate, the legitimate business of the women's wings was to enable women to mobilize within their own parties for greater representation of the interests of the female electorate, and greater participation of women in the contest for political power, including entry into the legislature and other levels of the governing structure. This was in addition to canvassing for electoral support for their parties by being both the voice of all women in their party and the voice of their party to female voters. The ultimate goal of this awareness-raising programme was to transform women's wings of all political parties into effective organs for transformative politics and better representation of women's interests.

But enhanced knowledge and awareness alone were recognized as insufficient to increase women's representation in government, given that years of socialization had imbued women with self-doubt about their capacity for, and legitimacy in aspiring to, leadership. Therefore, another critical aspect in the women's strategy included programmes to impart various practical skills to enhance confidence and encourage potential women candidates to run for elections.[8] These included campaigning skills, identification of issues, and strategies for fundraising, as well as dealing with hostile environments. One of those hostile environments was the non-acceptance of female leaders by female voters. Thus a third aspect of this strategy was to deal directly with female voters, to emphasize both the legitimacy and capacity of women to effectively represent issues that directly impacted on women. This strategy was to be replicated to varying degrees in the countries coming out of effective one-party rule.

6 Although most development programmes in Botswana make provision for women, it is not clear just how much of the total national budget in fact accrues to women.

7 In part, this was encouraged by the fact that in its policy documents, the Botswana National Front did not rule out armed warfare as an option in the face of failure at the elections.

8 These were sponsored mainly by the Dutch Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (HIVOS) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The British Government was initially suspicious of the intentions of the organization and its potential to undermine the ruling party in favour of the opposition.

In Botswana, the impact of the strategy, which was initially put together rather hastily in the run-up to the 1994 elections, was to force political parties to take women more seriously than they had done in the preceding six rounds of elections. The ruling party was for the first time made conscious of the fact that it could no longer take women's votes for granted, but rather had to win the confidence of a now politically aware female electorate or lose their support.[9] The opposition, on the other hand, was similarly sent a signal that it could in fact increase its mandate by convincing women voters it had something to offer them in exchange. Being better positioned than the opposition parties, the ruling party put more effort into ensuring that some women passed safely through the rites of party primaries and into the legislature.

The party also used the privilege of special elections by parliament (that is, nominations of additional members) to further increase the number of women joining the legislature.[10] By national standards, the resulting increase of women's representation in parliament from a previous maximum of 5 per cent to 11 per cent was dramatic. It rose further to 18 per cent in the 1999 elections. At cabinet level, women increased from the previous average of 6 per cent to 13 per cent in 1994, and 24 per cent in 1999.[11] But the representation was all of members of the ruling party, despite the fact that the main opposition party benefited greatly from the women's political education programme and increased its share of parliamentary seats to a historical high of 45 per cent of the votes and 33 per cent of the elected seats.

The main opposition party, the Botswana National Front, also made greater efforts to increase women's share by implementing a quota system, to ensure that within the party structures after the 1994 general elections, at least 30 per cent of positions in all party committees would be held by women. This was in fact achieved in 1998, but the party then suffered major reversals when it split up (with some members going on to form the Botswana Congress Party). This put paid to its historic achievement of reaching the 30 per cent UN target for women's representation, since the women's agenda was pushed off the agenda of priorities. Recent primary elections indicate that the Botswana National Front and its splinter groups are still experiencing serious internal difficulties in their basic struggle for survival, so they have yet to offer a credible opposition and a viable alternative that would make women's bargaining with their votes meaningful in their fight for greater representation. The opposition's historical proneness to factional splits consistently undermines its capacity to grow and thus consolidate its support, a characteristic it shares with many of Africa's political parties (before the advent of single-party rule and since the reinstatement of multiparty systems in the 1990s).

The obstacles within the opposition, and those posed by its ineffectiveness, thus have serious consequences for women's capacity to enhance their share of political power through judicious bargaining with their votes. The fact that in 1994 and 1999 the opposition accounted for 45 per cent of the votes but only 33 per cent and 18 per cent (in the respective years) of the elected seats means that in the context of Botswana's electoral system, government power is not adequately sensitive to signals in voter trends and therefore to demands for accountability. Thus, for the 2004 general elections in all political parties in Botswana there was a reversal in the gains women made in 1999. For instance, in the ruling Botswana Democratic Party, women accounted for

9 Women not only formed a natural majority of voters, they were more electorally active.

10 The Botswana constitution entitles the president to nominate up to four candidates and present them to parliament for endorsement as specially elected candidates. Such candidates are in principle supposed to possess rare skills which the popular mandate may not be able to recognize. In reality, the ruling party often reinstates candidates who lost in the general elections. Lately it has also brought in women and men from the civil service bureaucracy in equal proportion.

11 The first time a woman entered parliament and the cabinet in Botswana was in 1974, with the special election of Dr Gaositwe Chiepe, who had also been one of the first citizens to hold a senior post in the public service bureaucracy.

just 12 per cent of those who made it past the party primary elections. Of these, only half were contesting safe seats and were therefore virtually guaranteed successful passage to the legislature.

In the Botswana National Front, only 7 per cent of the candidates were female, and most contested the general elections in constituencies where their parties did not have strong support. Overall, women did not exceed 12 per cent of the 2004 parliament even with the presidential use of special elections/nominations. By contrast, in the party structures themselves, there was slightly better progress towards wider representation of women beyond the historical positions of leadership of women's wings. For instance, although the ruling party still has no women in its executive, it has 25 per cent female representation on its central committee. The Botswana National Front has done even better, as it has now achieved 26 per cent female representation in its central committee, and 14 per cent in its executive committee of seven members. But since the problems of 1998 it has failed to follow the example of other leftist parties in the region and to effectively use a quota system to achieve greater gender parity in the selection of parliamentary candidatures.

Part of the reason that Botswana's political parties seem to do so poorly in the selection of women parliamentary candidates is that the electoral system used across all parties since the introduction of primary elections in the 1980s is the same as the one used in the general elections: first past the post. Until the women's political empowerment campaign, primary elections were tightly controlled by the party executives through electoral colleges whose decision could be overridden if they produced candidates not favoured by those in senior command. At the start of the Emang Basadi political empowerment programmes, women complained that electoral colleges were open to abuse and patronage, and that this disadvantaged women as they neither had the wherewithal to finance patronage nor believed that this was the democratic way forward. One of the successes of the women's lobby was in ending the practice of electoral colleges, introducing more open contests for positions, and involving all party members in primary elections.[12] This has had the effect of dramatically opening up spaces for women to contest party primary elections, though with very modest impact on the outcomes.

Table 3 summarizes trends in women's representation in Botswana under an uninterrupted system of multiparty elections since independence. As can be seen, there were no women in either parliament or cabinet in the first decade of independence. Significantly, since the first representation in the 1970s their presence has consistently been better in cabinet where the real decision-making takes place. We shall come back to examine the impact of this on their political voice, but for now it is important to highlight the fact that in most Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, cabinets are appointed by the leaders of winning parties, and are mostly drawn from directly elected members of parliament.

TABLE 3
TRENDS IN WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN BOTSWANA'S PARLIAMENT AND CABINET SINCE INDEPENDENCE

	Women's representation in Botswana's uninterrupted multiparty system since independence (percentage)				
	1966	**1976**	**1986**	**1996**	**2004**
Cabinet	0	7	6	13	24
Parliament	0	3	5	9	17

Source: Botswana Hansard of Parliamentary Debates.

12 In the ruling party, the programme for fully opening up primary elections to unfettered competition has been called "bulela ditswa", which literally means, open the gates and let them get out. (It uses the metaphor of cattle penned in a kraal, whose gates are then opened so that they can go out to graze.)

II.C.

lessons of southern africa's newest democracies

Botswana's experience has salutary lessons for the rest of the region where multiple parties have been reintroduced,[13] but in terms of impact on women's representation it is in stark contrast to southern Africa's newest democracy of South Africa. As table 4 demonstrates, the introduction of multiparty elections in South Africa based on a universal franchise gave women more than a quarter of the national legislature in the first elections in 1994. This share rose to 30 per cent in 1999 and 33 per cent in 2004, with the nearest competitors in the region being Namibia, Mozambique and the Seychelles. As in Botswana, women's political space had been located primarily in the ancillary wing of the parties, but it has also gravitated to the central organs.

Women's initiatives in political activism were historically instrumental in determining the extent to which the male membership of the ANC would gradually open up space for them in the core decision-making structures of the party. Following their acceptance formally as members and then the creation of the Women's League, South African women continued to play an active role in the affairs of the party, and in the liberation struggle which led to the eventual end of the ban on the party, and the start of the reconstitution of the state into a democracy in 1990. In 1984, women were instrumental in getting the party to adopt non-sexism as a guiding principle in decision-making, the processing of power and the formulation of both party policies and rules of governance. Thus, when the ban on the party was removed in 1990, female members continued with their historical tradition of taking initiatives in mobilizing among themselves, with other women in other parties and outside political parties, as well as within the main structures of their party.

TABLE 4
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA'S NEW DEMOCRACIES

A. Parliament				
Country	**Percentage of female legislators before majority rule**	**Percentage of female legislators after 1994 elections**	**Percentage of female legislators after 1999 elections**	**Percentage of female legislators after 2004 elections**
Namibia	7	18	26	27
South Africa	3	27	30	33
B. Cabinet				
Country	**Percentage of women in cabinet before majority rule**	**Percentage of women in 1994 cabinet**	**Percentage of women in 1999 cabinet**	**Percentage of women in cabinet after 2004 elections**
Namibia	not available	8	13	19
South Africa	4	15	30	44

Sources: www.odci.gov/cia/publications/chiefs; www.ipu.org; www.gov.za/contacts/parliament.php; www.elections.org.za/elections2004_static.asp; www.circaworld.com, accessed on 15 April 2004 and 19 January 2006.

13 Party primary elections have been a feature of elections in Botswana since the 1980s. However, until the women's lobby, they tended to be based on electoral colleges whose decisions were sometimes overturned by the executive. In most southern African countries since the return of multiparty systems, primary elections have not been introduced.

To that end, in 1992 the ANC Women's League was instrumental in setting up the Women's National Coalition, which would play a critical role in mobilizing women across the South African political spectrum. Through workshops, they identified key needs and aspirations which were turned into a coherent agenda for bargaining during the process of rebuilding the nation and the state into a genuine democracy.[14] This social mobilization programme culminated in a new National Women's Charter, whose content the women wanted to integrate into new policies and programmes for a free South Africa. The charter was formally adopted by a coalition of 92 women's NGOs in 1994, following extensive consultations across the country. Both the charter and the coalition played a key role in gendering the framing of South Africa's new constitution between 1994 and 1998. This in turn ensured that the women would firmly secure their rights in the foundation of the nation and the instruments of democratic governance.

As a result of this proactive activism and vigilant social mobilization on the part women, the ANC committed itself as a party and a government to using a quota system to ensure that women would in fact gain significant access to decision-making positions and processes in the party as well as in government. Not only was this commitment demonstrated in a dramatic increase in women's presence in the legislature, but in the ANC national executive women's share increased from 20 per cent in the early post-apartheid years to 33 per cent in April 2004. At the pinnacle of the party governing structure, the ANC is 14 per cent female. Women account for 47 per cent of the directly elected members of the executive committee. They also account for 50 per cent of ex-officio members, including the president of the Women's League.

In the ANC's party list for the 2004 general elections, women made up 36 per cent of the top 50 candidates, 37 per cent of the top 100 and 35 per cent of the top 150. This ensured that after the general elections in April 2004, women held 38 per cent of the ANC parliamentary seats. South Africa's two largest opposition parties, the Democratic Alliance and the Inkatha Freedom Party, however, do not contribute as robustly as the ANC and some of the smaller parties to women's representation in parliament. For instance, in the latest round of elections, the two main opposition parties, which together account for almost 20 per cent of South Africa's parliament, had less than a fifth of their seats held by women. Thus, where the ANC now accounts for 81 per cent of women in parliament against a 70 per cent overall share of parliamentary seats, the top two opposition parties account for just 11 per cent of the women in parliament against their 20 per cent share of seats. In contrast, smaller parties, such as the United Democratic Party, the Independent Democrats, the New National Party and the African Christian Democratic Party, account for 6 per cent of all women parliamentarians and hold a total of 7 per cent of all parliamentary seats. This is largely because, on average, 30 per cent of the candidates they sent to parliament were women.

Overall, South Africa's delivery of enhanced female representation has been very impressive. There are a number of reasons why in this country, women's political mobilization programmes were able to yield fruit so significantly in terms of their share of political space in the ruling party and in government. The two most important of these were the profound changes that South Africa was going through and the electoral system the country adopted to facilitate that transformation. Following the removal of the ban on majority political parties in 1990, the nation underwent profound reconstruction and reconstitution of the state and processes of public gover-

14 In 1954, they had also been instrumental in developing a Women's Charter, addressed generally to all progressive organizations and demanding, among other things, equality between women and men. It stated that "We shall teach men that they cannot hope to liberate themselves from the evils of discrimination and prejudice as long as they fail to extend to women complete and unqualified equality in law and practice" (Women's Charter Adopted at the Founding Conference of the Federation of South African Women, Johannesburg, 17 April 1954).

nance. This coincided with the UN programme of practical actions towards women's emancipation. So both the women of South Africa and the emerging governing agencies were able to integrate the women's agenda into the broader nation-building agenda and institutional reconstruction for inclusive democracy.

This point is worth emphasizing because in virtually all the region's former one-party states that will be discussed later, that process of negotiation was curtailed and not allowed to be fully participatory. The added advantage in South Africa was that both the ANC as a party and the women activists generally had had a much longer history of political mobilization and organization, and thus had several structures through which to reach various interest groups to ensure wider participation. The South African political parties have been able to draw heavily on women's organizations and their enhanced women's league leadership to place women in positions of power in both the main party structures and government.

In contrast, much of the political mobilization that occurred elsewhere in the region around the removal of bans on opposition parties happened very quickly, and it was often deliberately hijacked to prevent the process from maturing and thus effectively avoiding wider participation and ownership. The situation was also exacerbated by the fact that most of the political parties that were mobilizing to contest elections and negotiate reform had mushroomed overnight and did not have substantive roots. Similarly, most of the women's NGOs that advocated wider participation were themselves as new and as numerous as the political parties, which dissipated energy in all directions within that inchoate environment. I come back to this point later.

In South Africa, another important factor that helped the women's cause was that the ANC as a party, and its partners in the transitional government of national unity, adopted an electoral system in which voters elected parties and not candidates.[15] This therefore put the onus of ensuring greater representation of women on the political parties themselves, and not on the whims of an electorate still enamoured of value systems that privilege men.

II.D.

the uncertain gait: from one-party state to plural politics

In southern Africa's former one-party states of Zambia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Malawi, political reform was effectively imposed by the conditionalities attached to IMF/World Bank loans and structural adjustment programmes. Mozambique similarly had to abandon its one-party legislation adopted at independence as part of an ambitious plan to establish Africa's first communist nation. However, persistent armed conflict with a former rival liberation movement of a different ideological persuasion, combined with grinding poverty resulting from both this war and concerted Western efforts to destabilize the country and its Marxist agenda, soon convinced Mozambique to reinstate a multiparty system. Likewise, Lesotho was forced to reinstate multiparty elections after a turbulent political history which started with the incumbent party failing to hand over the reins of power when the popular mandate switched in 1970. The Seychelles similarly abandoned single-party rule in favour of multiparty contestation.

15 Murray Faure and Albert Venter (2001) have noted that during this debate, there was remarkable consensus that the old system over-represented large parties and that the new system should have proportional representation.

Most of the ruling parties in SADC's former one-party states thus tended to adopt change with gritted teeth, and dispensed with much of the national reconstruction programme of consultation and negotiation that gave the South African reform moral authority, legitimacy and depth. This has had negative consequences both for women's quest for fairer representation in the parties and government, and for the national capacity to rebuild trust and anchor democratic culture and institutions on firmer ground than prevailed in the decades of one-party rule. Unlike in South Africa, where the ANC had a lead period of almost 50 years of political mobilization before it was banned, in these other SADC countries there was a much shorter period between the formation of political parties and the installation of an independent government, which was immediately followed by the banning of opposition parties. Political development was curtailed and institutional capacity-building for oppositional politics was grossly undermined by the imposition of one-party rule and repressive policies which silenced all forms of dissent.

The situation was worst in Malawi, where any pretence at democracy or collective rule was abandoned very early into independence and replaced by an absolute dictatorship based on the rule of one man. Problems in the ruling MCP began soon after full sovereignty, when President Banda tried to impose his will on the cabinet, causing considerable dissatisfaction and eventually a revolt which led to large-scale cabinet resignations. Undeterred by the collapsed cabinet structure, Banda simply reached out to traditional rulers in the countryside, who became agents of his personal rule as he concentrated power on himself. He then systematically purged all dissenting voices and established a cabinet which was reconstituted annually to ensure that the members did not develop any power base to challenge his authority.

Between full independence in 1964 and 1977, Banda allowed no elections whatsoever to take place. Instead, lists of candidates were submitted to him by party branches, and from these he selected his cabinet and parliament. By 1978 he reintroduced elections exclusively for members of the MCP. Banda thus successfully turned the only party in the country from an institution of collective decision-making into a machinery of functionaries carrying out the dictates of a president who held unlimited power, and who was therefore the state itself. To ensure absolute compliance with the ruler and stamp out all forms of dissent, the MCP formed a Youth League and a paramilitary group, the Malawi Young Pioneers, who used violence and murder to harass and intimidate opponents.

Banda's reign of terror was eventually undermined by economic collapse and the burdens of structural adjustment which devastated most African economies in the 1980s. Like all governments caught in that situation, Malawi had to bow to the demands of the World Bank for not only economic but also political reform. This began with a referendum to ask Malawians if they still wanted to continue under one-party (effectively one-man) rule. Thus in 1993, for the first time since the 1961 elections which heralded the end of colonial rule, Malawians experienced elections based on a secret ballot. But in a manner typical of the reign of terror they had become accustomed to, the population voted amidst violent intimidation and political harassment from the MCP's Youth League and Malawi Young Pioneers.

The Malawi case represents an extreme case of dictatorship with no obligation for accountability. Nor was there respect for individual freedoms, guaranteed rights that would enable people to organize around group interests, or fair contestation for government power. Only in the dying days of the dictatorship did people start organizing within and outside the country for change. By December 1993, Malawi's terror machinery had been disarmed, and this allowed citizens a level of freedom to which they were not accustomed. After more than 30 years of terror, Malawians had just a few months to change the constitution, engage in electoral campaigning and then go to the polls in May 1994.

When Malawian women participated in the Beijing preparatory meetings and networking workshops, they were still under the shadow of a dictatorship. So unlike in other countries in the region where the preparatory meetings offered an opportunity for women to mobilize and demand greater accountability from their leaders, Malawian women did not in fact have established institutions for the accountable leadership to engage with meaningfully. The Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) only began to mobilize as a political pressure group in 1992. The United Democratic Front (UDF) also came into existence in 1992, and in the first multiparty elections it won power, with 47 per cent of the vote, which came mainly from the southern region of the country. Banda's party, the MCP, obtained 34 per cent of the vote, mainly from the central region from which Banda himself came. AFORD's support came almost entirely from northern Malawi, and translated into 19 per cent of the vote.

Before the advent of multiparty elections, Malawian women accounted for 10 per cent of Banda's parliament. Since Banda controlled nominations, this can be seen as his response to global trends towards women's political inclusion. In the first open elections this share dropped to 6 per cent, then it rose to 8 per cent in the 1999 elections. None of the parties made any special effort to enhance women's representation. In fact, the country has adopted the same candidate-based, first-past-the-post electoral system that saw women in Botswana remain marginalized during eight uninterrupted rounds of free elections, and in spite of individual liberties which were not only guaranteed but well protected.

When Malawi headed for the 2004 elections, nothing had changed substantively to enhance women's representation in the parties and government. One of Banda's prominent former victims of gross human rights violations, Violet Chirwa, indicated she would contest the presidential election and make history as the first women to do so in Malawi, but her bid was unsuccessful. Therefore, 10 years after the Beijing conference, Malawi still has to reach the halfway mark towards the target of 30 per cent women's representation. As in Botswana, the opposition parties are disorganized and characterized by continuous splitting, which renders them ineffectual contenders, a situation that makes vote bargaining by interest groups such as the women's lobby difficult.

In Zambia and Tanzania, the end of multiparty contests for power did not lead to the level of autocracy Malawi experienced. However, reforms were similarly an imposition from outside following economic decline and failure to maintain the modernization agenda.[16] With the constitutionalization of one-party rule, the political leadership in both countries took on the responsibility of being the sole legitimate voice of the people, and began to marginalize and silence civil society organizations that dissented from government views. Organizational life was expected to take place effectively under the guardianship of the state, not independently.[17] This was also true for women's organizations, whose survival depended on the patronage of the ruling party, and which therefore did not have an independent existence.

However, in both Tanzania and Zambia the mobilization activities associated with preparations for the Beijing conference gave an impetus to pressure for reform, particularly regarding the creation of independent spaces for political mobilization and other areas of civil society concern. In Tanzania this fed into wider ongoing debates

16 In their justification for removing multiparty competition, the ruling parties cited continual tendencies for parties to split along ethnic lines as a source of destabilization of the development agenda.

17 For the United Republic of Tanzania, see Peter (1999) and Baregu (2002). For Zambia, see Ndulo (2002).

on constitutional reform, and a return to multiparty politics which had started in the early 1980s. Civic associations, led by the Tanganyika Law Society, took the opportunity of government proposals to amend certain areas of the constitution to debate all weaknesses in the constitution beyond the recommendations of the ruling party (Peter 1999:7). This led to a call to incorporate a bill of rights in the constitution and to reintroduce multiparty contestation for the government mandate.

The pressure from public debate and the call for constitutional reform did not abate until, with additional pressure from the IMF, the government conceded in 1991 and set up a commission to inquire whether Tanzanians wished to change from one-party rule. The referendum opened up more opportunity for public debate, and considerable criticism was levelled at government handling of constitutional amendments. It was noted that since 1977, the state had made some 13 amendments without examining the whole constitution and allowing for wider debate. Notably, the government of Tanzania in one instance used its 1962 Preventive Detection Act to incarcerate a lawyer whose public views on the constitution were deemed disturbing (Peter 1999:9). When the government eventually acceded to the restitution of multiparty elections, this was done without any public or parliamentary debate of the commission report that had recommended change.[18] Typical of the behaviour that had characterized three decades of single-party dominance, the ruling party simply took the decision to change unilaterally. It thus lost the nation the opportunity to review its past, and negotiate terms of engagement that would form a firmer base for future government mandates. In 1995, Tanzania went to the polls under multiparty conditions for the first time in more than 30 years.

Out of respect for its Beijing commitments and in reaction to the women's lobby, Tanzania tagged onto its first-past-the-post electoral system a constitutional provision to reserve 20 per cent of parliamentary seats for female candidates, in proportion to the seats won by their parties. Before the Beijing conference and this constitutional provision, Tanzanian women had accounted for 11 per cent of the legislature (see table 5). In the 1995 elections, this share increased to 18 per cent, reaching 21 per cent only in the second round of multiparty elections in 2000. But the elections were marred by poor electoral management as well as reports of violence and political harassment of opposition party supporters. The 2000 elections in particular led to protests which culminated in the death of 35 people.[19] At cabinet level, where real decision-making currently takes place, progress is much more modest at 12 per cent.[20]

18 The Commission that produced this report was led by Chief Justice Francis Nyalali, and its output came to be known as the Nyalali Report. See Peter (1999) and Baregu (2002).

19 *Human Rights Watch* (2002) accused the ruling party of complicity in the violence, citing in particular the role of party members such as the local militia, village authorities and Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM, Revolutionary State Party) youth supporters in Zanzibar.

20 Parliaments tend to rubber-stamp institutions in countries where there is no substantive opposition or adequate separation of powers.

TABLE 5
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE FORMER ONE-PARTY STATES

A. Legislatures				
Country	**Percentage of female legislators before multiparty elections**	**Percentage of female legislators in first multiparty elections**	**Percentage of female legislators in second multiparty elections**	**Percentage of female legislators in third multiparty elections**
Malawi [1]	10	6	9	14
Mozambique [2]	16	25	30	35
Lesotho	0	5	4	8
Seychelles	46	27	24	29
Tanzania [3]	11	18	21	na
Zambia [4]	7	10	11	12
B. Cabinet				
Country	**Percentage of females before multiparty elections**	**Percentage of females in first multiparty elections**	**Percentage of females in second multiparty elections**	**Percentage of females in third multiparty elections**
Malawi	na	na	12	14
Mozambique	na	5	13	13
Lesotho	0	na	6	25
Seychelles	na	na	23	25
Tanzania	na	8	12	na
Zambia	na	na	8	15

Notes:
1 Malawi held multiparty elections in 1994, 1999 and 2004.
2 Mozambique's first multiparty elections were in 1994, the second in 1999, and the third in 2004.
3 Tanzania held multiparty elections in 1995, 2000 and 2005.
4 Zambia's multiparty elections were first reinstated in 1991, and there were successive ones in 1996 and 2001.

na: not available.

Sources: www.odci.gov/cia/publications/chiefs; www.circaworld.com; www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif.htm, accessed on 15 April 2004.

In Zambia, the transition to multiparty elections and constitutional reforms was similarly marked by violence and intimidation, which aroused the concern of human rights groups. In the year leading to the end of one-party rule, Zambia broke out into public riots, and there was also an attempted coup, as violent expressions of public dissatisfaction with the state of the economy and political order. In reaction to this mounting internal and international pressure, Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda changed the constitution to make the country a multiparty state without going through the referendum process he had initially promised. The absence of national debate thus circumvented constructive negotiations and hurled an ill-prepared country towards multiparty elections with poorly developed constitutional and institutional support. In response, the electorate voted his party out of power, transferring the mandate instead to the new Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).

In contrast to other countries in the region where the ruling party has taken the lead in demonstrating commitment to enhancing the political status of women, in Zambia the ruling party's central committee contains only 11 per cent women, compared with the opposition parties where women hold 28 per cent of all executive positions.[21] The poor gender showing in the ruling party structures is also reflected in parliament, where the first post-independence multiparty elections gave women a 7 per cent share of the seats, similar to what they had at independence in 1964. In the second free elections in 1996, women's share of parliament increased modestly to 11 per cent, and it reached a historical high of 12 per cent in 2001. In the cabinet, the big push happened between the 1996 and 2001 elections, when women's share increased from 8 per cent to 15 per cent.

Zambia's electoral process continues to be marred by human rights violations which undermine the integrity of multiparty competition for the ruling mandate. Human rights reports suggest that the ruling party has blurred the line between party and state, and has returned to state intimidation of opponents reminiscent of the old single-party regime (Human Rights Watch 1999a, 2000; Ndulo 2002). Further, in the run-up to the 2001 elections, the ruling party tried to use its parliamentary majority to amend the constitution to allow the president a third term in office. This was not only vehemently resisted by the opposition, but the ensuing elections saw the ruling party's mandate reduced from its 1991 level of 81 per cent of the votes to a more modest 46 per cent, giving it just 45 per cent of parliamentary seats.

Mozambique and the Seychelles are the only former one-party states in southern Africa to have made strides comparable to South Africa and Namibia in terms of women's representation in parliament. As indicated in table 2, Mozambique attained independence in 1975 but was in a permanent state of armed conflict until 1992. Although the conflict was initially against an entrenched white regime, its loss of power did not lead to the end of warfare. Instead, ideological differences led to continued conflict between the former liberation movements, which were fuelled (in terms of resource support and other assistance) by powerful white interests in apartheid South Africa and white-ruled Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Like the current strategy used by the Bush administration in its so-called war against terror, apartheid South Africa in particular believed it would help its own cause by striking preemptively against regimes considered likely to aid or harbour its attackers.

Thus, unlike post-apartheid South Africa, Mozambique's independence did not offer an opportunity for internal negotiations over the sharing of power. On the contrary, Mozambique deliberately set out to promote one-party Marxist rule which, like all other authoritarian regimes in the region, was edged out with the demise of the Cold War. The government of Frelimo then negotiated a peace settlement with its opponent Renamo, and legalized plural politics. But in tune with many former single-party regimes in the region, the constitutional reform that heralded this change was effectively carried out by the ruling party. Thus, the rehabilitation of former enemies did not benefit from a negotiation process which established common trust based on compromises that contesting parties could live with.

This has meant that while the ruling party could use, and has used, its continuing dominance to ensure greater women's participation in its own structures as well as in government, those values are limited only to Frelimo and do not have very strong roots outside it. Further, the historical poverty of the country prevented the emergence of a diverse group of elites with a vested interest in negotiating for the maintenance of a reconstituted state and plural politics. Mozambique's political transformation process thus has major institutional weaknesses

21 See Lungu at http://democrats.nl/imd/projects.html, accessed on 15 April 2004.

which make for a fragile base for developing a stable democracy. Renamo, for instance, is fundamentally weak organizationally and has not transformed itself into an instrument of democratic processing of power.[22] Civic organizations, though growing rapidly as in all other countries in the region, rely heavily on external assistance for institutional development.

In the context of the facilitative programmes of the UN preparations for the Beijing conference, however, Mozambican women have benefited considerably from regional networking and resource mobilization, which enabled them to mobilize within the country for greater political space. Since 1990, some 20 women's NGOs have thus mobilized for organized collective struggle for women's inclusion in the leadership. But as table 5 illustrates, women's representation in government is only impressive in parliament, where Mozambique has attained the 30 per cent UN quota. In the cabinet, where the major decision-making happens, given the overwhelming control of both arms of government by the same party, Mozambique is no better than most other countries in the region, with just 13 per cent female representation. On this score, it is outperformed by the Seychelles and also by Lesotho, whose return to multiparty elections has been much more chequered.[23]

In 2002, the only elections when parties in Lesotho had reasonable confidence in the electoral process, 25 per cent of the cabinet posts went to women, compared with a mere 6 per cent after the previous elections. In the Seychelles, the return to multiple parties has seen a decline in women's representation. At parliamentary level, almost half the seats were in female hands during one-party rule, but the proportion has dropped to under 30 per cent since the reinstatement of multiple parties. The Seychelles uses a combination of proportional representation (for one-third of the parliamentary seats) and direct elections (for two-thirds of the seats), a factor that many analysts have come to associate with fairer representation as well as greater chances for women to gain a significant share. But in the Seychelles, this in fact led to less rather than more female representation.

Overall, the road from one party to oppositional competition for government power has been very bumpy in southern Africa. The arena that women are struggling to enter is one still marked by violent conflict and tendencies for human rights violations. In these particular countries, leaders simply failed to make this second transition a period of national reconstruction and renegotiation of new, participatory rules of engagement. The superficial nature of transformation has thus not augured well for women and the consolidation of democratic practice. In Zambia, two women, Dr Chomba Gwendoline Konie and Dr Inonge Mbikusita Lewanika, took the bold step of founding their own parties (the Social Democratic Party and the Agenda for Zambia, respectively) in a bid to circumvent the stifling structures of male-dominated political parties. Although their parties were among five that failed to win enough votes in the 2001 elections to get parliamentary representation, the two women also contested the presidential election.

The experience of most of these countries has been that, after years of repression of liberties and silencing of dissent, political parties in the former single-party states have come out of the woods into a veritable Tower of Babel where they are effectively speaking in different tongues and drowning each other out. Insufficient respect by governments for the rule of law and human rights is still a factor that seriously undermines the capacity of citizens to engage in meaningful political contestation and civil society mobilization.

22 After holding a congress with its general membership in 1994, the party did not have any more such gatherings until 2003, when it was prodded into action by capacity-building programmes sponsored by USAID.

23 Lesotho's 1993 and 1999 multiparty elections were characterized by considerable violence and produced no opposition in parliament even though the opposition parties attracted 25 per cent of the vote in 1993 and 39 per cent in 1998. See da Silva (2001) and Matlosa (1998, 2002).

In a study by Backer and Kollman (2003), Mozambique, Lesotho, Tanzania and Zambia were rated as having bad political practices, measured in terms of key indicators such as the extent of (a) regulated political participation, (b) repression of competitive participation, (c) autocracy, and (d) institutionalization of open electoral competition. Of the four tests administered on these countries, they failed either three or, in the case of Tanzania and Malawi, all four. The study noted that although electoral environments have steadily improved, they have not persistently paved the way for further enhancements in governmental protection of civil liberties. Sachikonye (2002) also notes that although political parties have been important instruments in encouraging participation in the electoral process, they are still fragile in most of southern Africa.

In the countries that are examined next, the democratization movement seems to have not so much advanced shakily as moved in reverse gear. I look at these before examining how the various experiences in southern Africa have contributed to the politics of voice, and what might be learned from these experiences.

II.E.

one foot forward and three steps back: regressing states

In four southern African countries, the parody of political democratization has been a macabre dance of one foot forward, three steps back. Zimbabwe is a prime example of this failed process of participatory rule after a very promising start. After 16 years of armed warfare against a white settler regime determined not to extend the franchise to the black majority, Zimbabwe finally reached an accord between various liberation movements and the white government which ended this conflict in 1979. Zimbabweans thus went to the polls in 1980 in what would be the only time in this country's history where the process was relatively free and fair (Nkiwane 2002). The mandate, with 20 per cent of seats automatically reserved for whites, was won by ZANU-PF, with 57 per cent of the seats. The other competing liberation movement, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF-ZAPU) got 20 per cent of the seats, and was immediately invited by ZANU into a coalition which saw some of this party's members getting cabinet positions.

But in the run-up to the 1985 elections, the ZANU-PF party accused PF-ZAPU of a plot to overthrow the government, and it then proceeded to dismiss all the PF-ZAPU ministers, arrest several of its prominent leaders and begin a purge in the PF-ZAPU stronghold, the Matebeleland region, which led to the massacre of ethnic Ndebele and other groups (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe 1999; Afako 2004). The 1985 elections thus occurred with the Matebeleland region still under a state of emergency and continuing state violence and political intimidation which persisted through to the next elections in 1990 (Nkiwane 2002; Afako 2004). Having thus quashed the PF-ZAPU opposition and effectively transformed Zimbabwe into a one-party state, in the 1990s the ZANU-PF government turned to other dissenting voices, such as the private media and emerging new opposition parties, and accused them of being agents of Western imperialism and therefore enemies of the state.[24] The government's intolerance heightened considerably after the IMF/World Bank imposition of structural adjustment programmes and the failure of Zimbabwe's military adventure in the resource-rich DRC under President Laurent Kabila.

24 Nkiwane 2002; Afako 2004; Global Campaign for Free Expression 2000.

Like most African governments coming out of colonial rule to full sovereignty and majority rule, the Zimbabwean government relied on heavy borrowing to finance an ambitious programme of modernization and development which would greatly transform the lives of the majority of citizens. That programme was threatened by the IMF/World Bank's insistence on the reduction of the public expenditure budget to bring it in line with national income. This undermined not only the government's capacity to continue providing public resources to its voting public, but also its ability to maintain its legitimacy and practical sovereignty. Probably as an attempt to find alternatives to the IMF/World Bank conditional loans, Zimbabwe turned to the DRC to help President Kabila, whose dictatorship had led to insurgency and attempts to topple the government.

Zimbabwe hoped to help the government maintain its power in exchange for new trade links which could assist President Robert Mugabe in rescuing his country from the economic hardships imposed by structural adjustment. It was a big gamble for a government with a large debt and deteriorating balance of payments. It failed because the campaign did not have decisive strength against the insurgents, and was completely scuppered when Kabila was murdered and his more moderate son took over the reins of power. President Joseph Kabila immediately leaned towards South Africa for assistance to start peace negotiations with rebel groups. Zimbabwe was thus left with a worse debt problem than before, and President Mugabe increasingly turned to repression as the only means left to maintain power.

Zimbabwe has since degenerated into a reign of terror where the state has little respect for the rule of law and human rights, and this continues with spiralling violations of human rights and political oppression, which are no longer limited to the oppositional Matebeleland region. Human rights surveillance groups have catalogued reports of the mounting level of intimidation and state violence across the nation, which have most frequently targeted new oppositional groups, principally the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).[25] The growing list of documented evidence of Zimbabwe's state terror and political repression suggests that oppositional politics has become a deadly game, reminiscent of the dark days of President Banda's long reign in Malawi.

In relation to the women's rights agenda, the ZANU-PF government similarly started on a promising note, with the aim of recognizing the role that women had played during the liberation war, and rewarding them accordingly. As table 6 illustrates, this translated into 12 per cent of parliamentary seats going to women, with a number of them also moving into the cabinet (where they comprised 14 per cent). Many women's NGOs also emerged to lobby and provide support for enhanced participation of women across all sections of decision-making, making Zimbabwe a major player and regional network focal point for activities for women's empowerment. However, within Zimbabwe the gains of this lobbying were quite modest in terms of increasing the share of decision-making positions in the legislature, and in fact they dropped below the initial 12 per cent after the Beijing conference (see table 6).

25 See for example Afako (2004), Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (2003), Zimbabwe Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations Forum (ZHRNGO) (2000, 2001, 2003).

TABLE 6
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN UNCERTAIN LEGISLATURES AND CABINETS

A. Legislatures				
Country	**Percentage of female legislators before 1991**	**Percentage of female legislators 1991–1994**	**Percentage of female legislators 1995–1999**	**Percentage of female legislators 2000–2005**
Zimbabwe	12	15	10	17
Angola	not applicable	15	15	15
Swaziland	4	3	8	11
DRC	not available	not available	not available	12
B. Cabinets				
Country	**Percentage of female ministers before 1991**	**Percentage of female ministers 1991–1994**	**Percentage of female ministers 1995–1999**	**Percentage of female ministers 2000–2005**
Zimbabwe	not available	not available	14	5[1]
Angola	not available	not available	14	14
Swaziland	not available	not available	12[2]	20
DRC	not available	not available	12	15

Notes:
1 July 2000 appointments.
2 1998 cabinet after November.

Sources: www.odci.gov/cia/publications/chiefs; www.circaworld.com; www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif.htm; www.zanupfpub.co.zw, accessed on 15 April 2004 and 19 January 2006.

In the run-up to the 2000 elections, when strong opposition had mobilized against the ruling party, the level of state repression also hit the women's political mobilization programmes. The June 2003 report of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO (ZHRNGO) Forum noted that one of the civic organizations that had to formally halt its programme because of fears of intimidation was the Association of Women's Clubs, which had run programmes on voter education, women's legal rights and human rights issues. The results of the 2000 elections showed a dramatic decline in the ruling party's mandate to 52 per cent of elected seats. In reaction, ZANU-PF drastically reduced women's representation in the cabinet to just 5 per cent (from the previous 14 per cent), despite the government's official commitment to women's representation and the fact that the president appoints 16 per cent of members of the legislature and all of the cabinet.

Other southern African states that have been driving on political reverse gear are Angola, Swaziland and the DRC. In Angola, the MPLA was formed in 1956 as the first nationalist movement against colonial domination. A crackdown by the colonial government in 1961 led to its leaders going into exile, from where they began to organize armed incursions into the territory. Their support base was mainly in Luanda and the north-western provinces. In 1962, another nationalist movement, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), came into existence and started operating from bases in Zaire. Its internal support was among the Bakongo people in the northwest of the country, bordering Zaire. Four years on the FNLA split, leading to the formation of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which concentrated its support base in the largest ethnic group, from which its leader Jonas Savimbi came.

For a long time, Angola's internal conflict was fuelled by Cold War politics and the divisive interventions of the United States and the Soviet Union. The FNLA and UNITA were supported financially by the United States, and militarily by the apartheid regime in South Africa. The MPLA got military support from the Soviet Union and Cuba. The region under UNITA's control was also rich in diamonds, whose export financed its military challenge to the MPLA government for decades. The government in turn controlled the oil-rich regions and was thus able to finance its war against the rebel onslaught.

In a sense, Angola's political history had echoes of what happened in other countries in southern Africa, where incoming ruling parties felt that nation-building could not be achieved properly under conditions of plural politics. But in the Angolan case, the situation was grossly exacerbated both by the considerable interference of superpower rivalries and the fact that the Portuguese colonial administration left hurriedly without ensuring that there was an accountable government in place to which to hand over power. This led to protracted armed conflict which was more intense than the earlier insurrection against the colonial government. Further, where elections in other countries had preceded the takeover of government by the ruling power and conferred legitimate authority, in Angola the ruling party simply took over and never sought the people's mandate. Thus, it had no meaningful political base to begin with and it did not make any attempt to legitimize its rule through a popular mandate.

Angola's governance structure, from independence to 1992, when the country went to the polls for the first time, also differed substantially from other government forms in southern Africa in ways that have had particular significance for women's struggle for political power. Whereas in other countries the post-independence government was the institution that assumed sovereignty, in Angola the party was the supreme sovereign body, to which the government was subordinated. Thus, the executive branch of the government carried out the directives of the party's superior organs, chiefly the Political Bureau and the Central Committee. More than in any other country in the region, the party was much more important as a target for power-sharing than the normal government structures of parliament and cabinet. Stringent controls over party membership made entry for new members extremely difficult, and it was equally difficult to lobby for reform and inclusive power-sharing.

In fact, Angola's political space only began to open up to all citizens at the end of the Cold War and the start of negotiations with UNITA for a ceasefire and constitutional reform. Civil liberties and freedoms were finally guaranteed and constitutionally protected. Most importantly, the MPLA opened up its membership to all citizens and allowed other party formations in the run-up to the first general elections in 1992.

Three decades before, the MPLA had sponsored the formation of the Organization of Angolan Women primarily as a vehicle for mobilizing support for the party among women. But it was only after 1990 that women could freely mobilize to press specifically for their rights and interests. In response, one woman, Analia Pereira, formed a political party in 1991, the Partido Liberal Democratico, and became its president. The party went on to win three seats in the legislature, occupied by three women who have remained there since as no other elections have been held because warfare resumed after the 1992 elections.[26] Thus, a decade after Beijing 1995, Angola still needs to get to the starting line in terms of the march to democratic reform and building of meaningful institutions for plural politics. Notwithstanding this, women account for 14 per cent of Angola's cabinet and 15 per cent of its parliament.[27]

26 In 1994, the Lusaka Protocol was instituted to pave the way for a government of national unity in which all the parties would be represented, but fighting continued. See http://www.circa-uk.demon.co.uk/xpage9.html, accessed on 20 January 2004.

27 Parliament has simply extended its mandate in light of the difficulties of holding elections. The Lusaka Protocol for power-sharing among those parties that had won seats in the 1992 elections has ensured that there is a legitimate government of sorts in power.

In Swaziland, the development of political parties and party politics has followed a similar trend to that in many other southern African countries, in so far as oppositional parties were nipped in the bud before they could flower and mature into institutions of social mobilization for post-independence plural politics. Swaziland's first political party to agitate for independence was formally established in 1960 out of an organization that was established in 1929. The party, the Swaziland Progressive Party (SPP), later split, and a new party was formed as the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC). This was followed by another party formation, the Swaziland Democratic Party (SDP). But it was the newest party, the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM), which enjoyed the patronage of the monarch, King Sobhuza II, and thus received considerable support and validation, giving it the capacity to campaign effectively for the popular mandate.

When the Swazis went to the polls for the first time in 1964, and then in 1967, the INM won complete control of the legislature on the basis of 80 per cent of the vote, and thus took on the transitional governing mandate in 1968 with no parliamentary opposition. In the first post-independence round of elections in 1972, however, the NNLC won 13 per cent of the parliamentary seats on the basis of 18 per cent of the vote, and this led the King, with the support of the ruling INM, to revoke the constitution that had allowed multiparty elections. The King proclaimed the dissolution of parliament and conferred all legislative, executive and judicial powers on himself, becoming an absolute monarch. In 1978, a new electoral system was introduced to select representatives for a reconstituted parliament. Candidates were nominated by modernized traditional assemblies in rural constituencies and submitted for appointment by the monarch. But this parliament did not have legislative powers as these remained vested in the king.

In light of the winds of change that marked the end of Cold War hostilities and brought the democratization movement across the continent, the new Swazi monarch[28] reformed the constitution and devolved some of its absolute powers to other arms of government, including parliament and the courts. In the parliamentary system, the revisions introduced a three-stage election process involving nomination followed by two secret ballots. At the first stage, candidates are proposed and nominated openly by a show of hands. The nominees are forwarded for primary elections using a secret ballot. After this second stage, the winners go through constituency elections conducted by secret ballot. No candidate is allowed to canvass for support in person or through political party organizations. Instead, candidates must be proposed publicly in the first instance.

This new system came into effect in the 1993 elections, which gave women 3 per cent of the parliamentary seats. In the next two rounds of elections, in 1998 and 2002, women's share of parliamentary seats rose to 8 per cent and then 11 per cent to reflect the monarch's commitment to the Beijing principles and other protocols. Women were also appointed to the cabinet, where they currently hold 20 per cent of the posts. But the Kingdom of Swaziland remains the only member of the SADC where women are still legal minors and therefore have limited capacity to exercise the rights that the recent constitutional reforms have reintroduced through incorporating a bill of rights. There have been no legal political parties for women to lobby for female representation. Several of those that have formed illegally have, like other parties in the region, set aside space for ancillary women's wings.

28 King Sobhuza II had died and been replaced by his teenage son, King Mswati III.

II.F.

presence in retrospect

Despite lofty commitments by the governments of southern Africa that they will ensure 30 per cent female representation in all structures of power by the end of the post-Beijing decade, table 7 illustrates that this ideal is far from being realized in most of the SADC countries in terms of national cabinets, legislatures and political parties. Specifically, SADC governments had set themselves targets and timelines for the achievement of the following by all Member States:

- at least 30 per cent women in decision-making positions in local government, parliament, cabinet and senior positions in the public sector by 2005, or affirmative action measures in place to accelerate the attainment of this target
- at least 40 per cent women in decision-making positions in local government, parliament, cabinet and senior positions in the public sector by 2010, or affirmative action measures in place to accelerate the attainment of this target
- at least 50 per cent women in decision-making positions in local government, parliament, cabinet and senior positions in the public sector by 2015, or affirmative action measures in place to accelerate the attainment of this target
- at least 20 per cent women in decision-making positions in large private-sector firms as defined by Member States by 2005, 30 per cent by 2010 and 40 per cent by 2015.

TABLE 7
COMPARATIVE FIGURES FOR WOMEN IN SADC CABINETS, PARLIAMENTS AND RULING PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEES, 2004

	Cabinet		Parliament		Ruling party	
	Size	**Percentage of females**	**Size**	**Percentage of females**	**Size**	**Percentage of females**
Mauritius	27	4	70	6	na	na
Zimbabwe	22	5	150	10	na	na
Malawi	26	12	193	14	na	na
Tanzania	32	12	274	21	na	na
Mozambique	24	13	250	30	na	na
Namibia	22	13	72	26	na	15
Angola	29	14	220	15	na	na
DRC	26	15	300	12	na	na
Zambia	26	15	158	12	37	11
Swaziland	17	20	65	11	na	na
Botswana	17	24	47	17	12	25
Lesotho	21	25	120	8	na	na
Seychelles	13	25	34	29	na	na
South Africa	30	44	400	33	66	33
Total	**332**	**17**	**2,353**	**19**		

na: not available.

Sources: www.odci.gov/cia/publications/chiefs; www.circaworld.com; www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif.htm; www.zanupfpub.co.zw; South African Election Website at www.elections.org.za/elections2004_static.asp; Da Silva (2002); www.nationmalawi.com/articles.asp?articleID=8171, accessed on 15 April 2004 and 19 January 2006.

By the 2005 deadline, South Africa was the only SADC member state to have achieved and surpassed the minimum targets in all the three key political institutions of cabinet (44 per cent), party (33 per cent ANC) and parliament (33 per cent). The Seychelles was the closest to that achievement with 25 per cent of the cabinet and 29 per cent of parliament female.[29] Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland have made significant strides in relation to their cabinets, where they are currently above 20 per cent representation, while for Namibia, Mozambique and Tanzania progress has been most significant in parliament (29 per cent, 30 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively), but less so in the other areas. Consistently, the majority of SADC countries fall below not only the set target minimum but also the region's average for female representation in both cabinet and parliament (at 17 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively). This is largely because in the majority of countries there are still no tangible affirmative action strategies to ensure that national commitments are realized by all relevant agencies.[30]

Mauritius has consistently been at the bottom end in all areas of women's political representation, despite being the second oldest democracy in the region and the only country to have experienced an electoral change of government more than once since its independence in 1968. Zimbabwe and Malawi also share ratings at the bottom in terms of parliament and cabinet, and both have experienced some of the worst forms of political repression in the region. Notably, they are outperformed by Angola and the DRC, which have been under a constant state of war over a very extended period of time. In the 2004 elections in Malawi, women accounted for just 12 per cent of the candidates.

29 The Seychelles data for political parties was not accessible for analysis.

30 In this case in particular, by all the political parties.

III.

climbing mountains: women and the politics of voice

Pregs Govender, a prominent South African feminist who played a key role in ensuring that women's voices were heard over the post-apartheid decade of reconstruction, made two very important observations about representation and leadership in her speech on International Women's Day 2004 (Govender 2004). Reminding feminists that in parliament they must always remember that they are there to represent the voices of the silenced and most invisible members of their society, she observed firstly that:

III.A.

negotiating with patriarchy in the legislatures and cabinets

> It means that you do not remain silent about the issue even though you are silent in the party. That you will stand up in the caucus and that you will argue your position, you will put it forward, you will make sure that you hear those voices and that you bring those voices to parliament even at a time when nobody wants you to do that. You will bring those voices there and you will make sure that they are heard, you will take those voices into the caucus, you will make sure that you present the argument despite the consequences. You will stand up for it and you will do it, if you are a feminist walking your talk.

Second, she also cautioned:

> But I think that as a feminist walking your talk you must also know when it is time to stop putting your head on the block and having it chopped off. Sometimes it's actually more useful to keep your dignity intact and to step outside and remain committed to the issues in other ways.

Given the record of persistent political intimidation that has been captured by human rights reports in many of the SADC countries, the impact of the increase in the number of women joining the legislatures has been tempered. In some instances it has in effect meant that women political activists inside and outside the government have put their heads on the block to be chopped off more often than they have actually had a fair opportunity to bring the voices of the silenced majority into parliament. This situation was succinctly captured by the Zimbabwe Women's Coalition in 2002 when they argued that, "Since the constitutional referendum in February 2000 women's participation in the political process has been severely limited by the political climate of intolerance, intimidation and violence."[31] And that:

> Thousands of women have been the silent and invisible victims of an orchestrated campaign of terror and political violence that has swept the country over the last two years. Women have been battered, have watched as their husbands, partners and children have been beaten and tortured, their property destroyed or been displaced from their homes.

31 See http://www.zesn.org.zw/ballot_news/default.htm, accessed on 21 November 2005.

They observed that:

> The Amendment of the Zimbabwe Citizenship Act dispossessed women of their right to vote because of the laborious and expensive process required to renounce either their foreign citizenship or their parent's foreign citizenship. Most rural women had no access to information on the new laws and no access to resources.

In 1995, when the ruling party expelled one Zimbabwean member of parliament, Margaret Dongo, from its ranks, she reacted to this attempt at silencing her by contesting the elections as an independent candidate, and then went on to form her own party. Her case was significant in that although the ruling party candidate was declared winner of that constituency, Margaret Dongo successfully challenged the results through the courts, citing irregularities and tampering with the electoral process by the ruling party. The recount of the ballots vindicated her as she came out the winning candidate. But since then, the increase in the level of political intimidation and interference with judicial processes has greatly undermined people's confidence in the impartiality of the courts and women's ability to lobby effectively for a voice.

Expulsion has been used as a means of silencing women members of the Zambian parliament when they become vocal on issues that affect women. This leads to low retention of women and reduces their effectiveness in using parliament to articulate women's interests in legislation and national development policy.[32] For this and many other reasons that undermine women's capacity to be effective in parliament, in 2001 the Zambian National Women's Lobby Group established a caucus for women politicians, the Women in Politics Forum, to help consolidate the voices of women scattered in small numbers across parliament, local government, party national executives and the parties' women's wings.

Through both the forum and the lobby, not only are women politicians from all parties brought together, but they are also put into regular contact with women's NGOs fighting for equality in various aspects of women's lives. Women in civic organizations and parliament have for instance recently worked together to lobby for electoral reform, proposing the following in support of enhancing women's political representation and participation:[33]

- That Zambia should discard the first-past-the-post electoral system in favour of proportional representation and party lists, as the latter have been shown in other countries to be more responsive to women's participation.
- That legal provision should be made to compel political parties to introduce quotas for women during the nomination of candidates to stand for elections.
- That all electoral laws should reflect gender equality, including a quota system for the appointment of electoral commissions.
- That a statutory quota should be introduced whereby women make up a minimum of 30 per cent of parliament.
- That there should be a constitutional provision to reserve at least two parliamentary seats in each province to be contested by women only. This will help guarantee that women make it into elected positions of office.

32 See http://www.womenslobby.org.zm/press/lobbybulletin/news/viewnews.cgi?category=2&id=982109941, accessed on 21 November 2005.

33 See http://www.womenslobby.org.zm/press/news/viewnews.cgi?category=2&id=1082728985, accessed on 21 November 2005.

In the 1990s, when this lobby organization submitted women's proposals to the Constitutional Review Commission, the submission was rejected by the government on the grounds that gender equality was already adequately guaranteed by the present constitution. This has not deterred Zambian women from constantly seeking ways to navigate around patriarchal obstacles to levelling the ground for equal opportunity. But without an adequate presence in parliament itself, particularly in the context where the institutional structures and processes of good governance are still weak, the outcome is still very limited in relation to the amount of effort invested. Thus for instance, while the Zambian government has ratified a number of international conventions guaranteeing greater liberties and equality for women, there has been little effort to translate these into national laws and policies.

This contrasts sharply with Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, where the network between women parliamentarians and women's civic organizations has ensured fairly effective and consistent pressure inside and outside parliament to translate international conventions into national laws and to repeal discriminatory legislation. In Botswana in 1997, for instance, following the successful court challenge of the 1982 Citizenship Amendment Act and the lobby activities preceding and surrounding it, the government set up a commission to review all laws that discriminated against women and to make recommendations on how the national laws could be brought in line with international conventions and laws to which Botswana was signatory.[34] As a result, a number of the laws were revised immediately while others required further investigation.

Although a numerical minority, the women parliamentarians were very instrumental in ensuring that the ensuing parliamentary debate on the proposed legal reforms did not substantially water down the recommendations. The advantage they had over their male colleagues was that they had joined caucuses, undergone numerous workshop training sessions and been well briefed. After the 1999 elections, when their numbers doubled, this gave them even greater advantage in debating parliamentary motions and legal bills. Some of the laws that were amended are the Employment Act, Deeds Registry Act, Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act, as well as the Affiliation Proceeding Act, Public Service Act and the Marriage Acts. The amendment of the Public Service Act was meant to deal in part with discriminatory practices in the workplace, including sexual harassment and subjectivity in promotion and recruitment procedures which tended to greatly disadvantage women. One piece of legislation that is still in the pipeline for reform is the Marital Powers Act, which historically gave husbands inordinate control over women's lives. The revision is still being prepared for passage through parliament.

In Namibia, that far-reaching piece of legislation was removed from the statute books in 1996 and replaced by the Married Persons Equality Act, which gave spouses equal marital power and removed the notion of the husband as head of household. To deal with the widespread problem of violence against women that has been identified throughout most of the SADC countries, in 2000 and 2003 Namibia introduced two pieces of legislation designed to protect women. The first was the Combating of Rape Act (no. 8 of 2000) which, unlike other laws in the region, specifically includes marital rape in its definition. It replaced the archaic law that defined rape as "unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent", which had protected husbands' rights to obtain sex through coercion.

34 This included both the written laws and the unwritten customary laws of the various ethnic groups. To access the unwritten laws, the Commission conducted meetings with both the male guardians of customary law and women. The consultations with women happened both in general public meetings with men and in exclusive forums where they recounted their experience with law and practice.

In Botswana, the continued inclusion of the term "unlawful" in the definition of rape continues to sanction coercive sex between married people. One of the main revisions instituted in the definition of rape has been to not limit the offence only to incidences where the penis is the organ that penetrates the vagina, but to acknowledge that other objects could be used for forcible entry. Having failed to convince the legislatures to acknowledge marital rape, the Botswana women's lobby tested a case in court in 2003 where they hoped that, given the fact of spousal estrangement and the excessive violence persistently used by the husband to exercise his conjugal rights, the courts might force a revision of the law through the judicial process. However, as already mentioned earlier, the presiding female magistrate refused to allow the case to go to a hearing, thus denying the nation the opportunity to test the extent to which Botswana law was capable of balancing conflicting rights: the right of the woman to security and protection from violent coercion on the one hand, and the conjugal rights of the man on the other.[35]

In most of southern Africa, there has been a concerted effort to mitigate the isolation of numerical minority situations and augment the voice of women in elected office through support structures such as parliamentary caucuses (where the numbers justified these) or combined caucuses for women parliamentarians and local government authorities (such as in Botswana). In the case of Botswana, women leaders identified such limitations as lack of transport, office space and support staff, and then lobbied government to increase resources. The proposal was heartily endorsed by male leaders, and led to the provision of constituency offices for members of parliament as well as a government subsidy scheme for the purchase of private vehicles.[36] The Women's Caucus also took over some of the activities of the Emang Basadi Women's Association to fundraise for women politicians and canvass for more female candidates to stand for elected office across all political parties.

III.B.

meeting the challenges of gendering political parties

Parliament and cabinet are much more visible to public and international scrutiny than are political party structures. It therefore appears that without the international spotlight on them, political parties have been more resistant to calls for increased power-sharing with women. While some progress has been made in increasing women's representation in parliament and cabinet, in political parties there generally does not seem to have been as much reform or advance, particularly with regards to bringing women's voices onto central committees. This is evidenced for instance by the fact that in most countries in southern Africa, not only is information on

35 In a society that still believes that marriage confers indivisible conjugal rights which cannot be separated from how the individual exercises them, it is critically important to debate this in the context of conflicting rights, as most liberal rights are founded on the principle that one person's rights must not encroach on the rights of another. In a newspaper commentary I made on this issue, I compared this case with the right of the state to lawful killing, and argued that the conferment of that right on the state does not mean that the state can exercise it indiscriminately. The newspaper editor chopped out the comparison. We do not yet have any known cases where women have used coercion to exercise their conjugal rights.

36 In the first year of implementation, this scheme was grossly abused as there were no set limits on the absolute amount of subsidy. Members of parliament and councillors took advantage of this loophole to buy very expensive cars for which they only paid 50 per cent of the cost. The loophole was closed after a public outcry.

the internal composition of central committees of political parties not readily available for public scrutiny, but it hardly ever gets reported in national accounts on progress in women's political participation. Nor it is ever specifically mentioned in national or regional platforms for actions concerning the political arena.

This notwithstanding, women have targeted political parties for greater inclusion and democratization as a means of gaining access to parliament, cabinet, national development policy and other areas of public decision-making. The greatest challenges have been lack of democracy within the political parties themselves and major weaknesses in oppositional politics. Historically, internal elections within the party structures tended to be tightly controlled by either one person, as was the case in Malawi, or central governing committees, as was the case in most other countries in the region. Parties tended to rely on electoral colleges and limitations on the number of candidates contesting party positions, or the right to stand as party candidates in general elections.

In Botswana, where multiparty contests have had the longest uninterrupted history, this problem was correctly identified as a major obstacle to women's advancement because the system was open to abuse and patronage. While the general elections had consistently been conducted under fairly free and fair conditions for multiple parties, women historically did not feature in the race at party level, where they were overlooked as potential candidates. Thus, the women's movement encouraged and supported members of political parties to lobby for internal electoral reform and more direct elections. In reaction to this lobby, the ruling party first opened up the primary elections for all candidates in 1999 but did not remove the electoral colleges. Even then the immediate result was a dramatic upsurge in female candidates, which saw ten times more women contesting primary elections in the ruling party that year than the cumulative number for all past elections and all political parties combined. The opposition parties similarly relaxed their tight controls and saw dramatic increases in the number of female candidates.

In the run-up to the 2004 elections, the ruling party further relaxed its tight hold on the elections by introducing direct elections and removing electoral colleges, as well as other restrictions which had reduced the freedom and fairness of primary elections. However, there has been considerable resistance in the ruling party to the use of quotas to realize the commitment to 30 per cent minimum representation for women, for either party structures or selection of candidates for parliament and council. Speaking at a fundraising dinner hosted by the ruling party's Women's Wing on 22 May 2004, for instance, President Festus Mogae reiterated his party's position that they did not subscribe to a quota but that, "As a party, we will continue to strive to create an enabling climate that permits women to attain positions in political decision making institutions."[37] In spite of the women's lobby and the increased number of women now standing for elections, Botswana's political parties continue to complain that not enough of their female members are willing to stand for elected office.

In other countries in the region where oppositional parties have been reintroduced, women have used political NGOs to lobby their leadership for a quota. Tanzania, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and the Seychelles are examples where the lobby for a quota system was successful as far as the legislative positions were concerned. But within political party structures, only in South Africa has the informal quota worked. In the other countries, political leaders have not thought it important to use affirmative action to redress women's exclusion. Essentially, the assumption is that women's wings are still the primary location where women should be politically represented in the party structures.

37 See Botswana Daily News, http://www.gov.bw/cgi-bin/news.cgi?d=20040524&i=BDP_women_told_to_take_up_the_challenge, accessed on 6 June 2004.

In Botswana, this has led women to work towards democratizing that female space by pushing out spouses of male politicians from the key positions of leadership that they had historically occupied. During the annual conferences that the Emang Basadi Women's Association hosted,[38] women from political parties had identified the obstacles posed by the conflict of interest in which spouses of male politicians were caught, which undermined their capacity to represent women's political aspirations against those of the male leaders. For most of southern Africa, women's wings of political parties remain very much subjugated to the male-dominated governing organs, where women are still poorly represented. The experience of South Africa, where women have had the greatest success in enhancing their representation, is that even where women have a significant presence, they cannot take it for granted that the party's commitment to gender equality necessarily translates into gender-sensitive programmes without women watching out and speaking out. Pregs Govender learned this the hard way when the financial allocation for a Domestic Violence Act proposal was sidelined by the ANC in favour of an allocation for a new arms deal in the defence budget, indicating the party's priorities.[39]

For most of the countries returning to multi-party competition for government power, recent elections suggest that the support for the opposition parties tends to fragment along ethno-regional lines. This undermines not only the capacity of these parties to have a broad national appeal, but also the potential for interest groups such as the women's lobby to effectively play off the parties against each other to win concessions for equality. The Botswana experience that with sound economic management and fair ethno-regional distribution of public resources, this character is just a passing phase in the maturation of the democratic process. As in most countries at independence, in Botswana one party emerged to dominate electorally because of support from all regions, while the opposition parties' small support tended initially to suggest ethnic polarization. For instance, one party was localized among the Okavango people, another among the Kalanga-speaking north, and yet another among the Ngwaketse in the south. But with increasing voter support for the opposition, these tendencies have now been blurred, and parties have focused more on urban opposition to the rural ruling party and related class differentiation.

38 The first was in 1996, and for every subsequent one the women's wings of political parties had to report on progress and obstacles to attain greater women's political participation: particularly their agendas for reaching 30 per cent representation in parliament. See Selolwane (1999, 1997).

39 See http://web.uct.ac.za/org/agi/events/pregs per cent20govender per cent20speech.htm, accessed on 18 March 2004.

III.C.

strengthening oppositional politics and party institutions

For historical reasons related to donor-dependent modernization, state-driven economic transformation, and the tendencies for African states to be wealthier than their people and therefore offer the main locus of development resources, ruling parties tend to enjoy better resource capacity to canvass for electoral support and generally organize themselves better to contest for the ruling mandate. The opposition parties, even where there are no oppressive state machineries to undermine them, tend to be organizationally weak and therefore unable to offer viable alternative governments to the voting public. This considerably undermines the capacity of the vote to become a meaningful tool by which the electorate can bargain for improved governance and accountability by both party and government.

In the whole southern African region, the significance of these weaknesses is fully appreciated by the women's lobby, hence the tendencies for their programmes of political emancipation to target all political parties and raise their awareness of the fact that they are accountable to the nation for a well-functioning democratic process. In the experience of Botswana, however, the particular weaknesses of the opposition parties have negatively impacted the potential to achieve optimal progress towards wider, more inclusive representation. Among the opposition parties, the achievements were made modest by the fact that the central committee of the main opposition party was initially very suspicious of the motives behind the Emang Basadi's political programme, and accused the organization of attempting to shore up the failing support of the ruling party. The committee took a stance of restricting the party's female members from participating in the activities of the programme, further alleging that there was a plot to encourage the party's female voters to vote across party lines for other women, thus potentially undermining the chances of the opposition winning as it had fewer women candidates.

The impact of this was that, while the initial voter education campaign and development of the Women's Manifesto had galvanized parties into action to meet the demands made by women, the continuing inability of the opposition to rise effectively to the challenge of offering an alternative government led to a relaxation of urgency in commitment on the part of the ruling party. In the run-up to the 1994 elections there had been such a dramatic shift in votes that it created the largest parliamentary opposition in the country since 1965. The ruling party geared up not only to a major challenge, but to the possibility of a change of government in 1999. This did not materialize because, in time-honoured tradition, the main opposition suffered yet another split on the eve of the general elections, thus turning certain defeat of the ruling party into certain victory for it.

The history of Botswana's opposition parties has been a history of splits. Although some observers correctly suggest that this is caused by a lack of resources for effective mobilization, a large part of the problem also stems from impulses towards destructive power struggles that are fuelled by the assumption that the mandate to rule offers opportunities for personal wealth accumulation. Further, like many political organizations across the continent, the opposition parties betray tendencies to let ideology dictate the power struggles within the party, and therefore the impulse to purge the parties of dissenting viewpoints. Such ideological inclinations do not correlate with the class positions of the contestants, and therefore there is often a gap between the professed ideology and the real conditions of the protagonists. This undermines their capacity for pragmatic organization.

In the context of the successful campaigns for voter enlightenment by women's groups, the failure of the opposition parties to react meaningfully to electoral demands for an alternative government in Botswana has encouraged other NGOs to play a more active role in encouraging programmes for strengthening opposition parties. This has also been the case in other countries in the region, where the opposition parties have increasingly been put under pressure to appreciate the extent to which their tendencies for injurious power struggles and splits fragment and destroy the basis for creating meaningful plural politics. In the 2004 general elections, most of Botswana's opposition parties finally succeeded in creating electoral pacts that will reduce vote splitting between them and therefore enable them to challenge the ruling party more effectively, through the mediation of other agencies as much as their own initiatives. But in other southern African countries where most political parties have gone back to the starting line and have not had a long history of bruising and self-inflicted splits, electoral pacts are still highly unstable and in flux.

Clearly, in Botswana the women's lobby has played a critical role in making political parties aware that they owe voters accountability and must therefore subordinate their personality differences and power struggles to the need to respond to the demands and interests of their voters. The presence of a small but significant number of women in the party executive structures has helped to force male politicians to appreciate where they are allowing egotistical conflicts to conflict with larger institutional interests.[40] In South Africa, the negotiated terms of power sharing have resulted in financial support for all political parties to help them organize themselves better. That initiative has been used cynically in Zimbabwe to exclusively benefit the ruling party at a time when its support has been critically eroded.

The main obstacles to strengthening oppositional parties in the region, however, remain essentially the antics of many ruling parties as they attempt to undermine the growth of their competitors, especially those to which voter support seems to be flowing inexorably. Like the voices of other interest groups, women's voice is muffled when it encounters state repression, terror or when the rule of law is absent.

40 For further discussion, see Selolwane (2004).

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UNRISD
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
Phone: +41 (0)22 9173020
Fax: +41 (0)22 9170650
info@unrisd.org
www.unrisd.org

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