Chapter 4

Political Parties

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Key points

- Political parties need to be inclusive. This can be done through legislation and systematic harmonisation with the electoral framework, especially where these contain gender commitments, and through mandatory electoral codes of conduct which all parties must sign up to.

- Political parties should have clear guidelines on how they seek to achieve gender inclusiveness. This will require a review of party constitutions and re-alignment of women's leagues, so that they can play more active roles to enhance women's engagement within the parties.

- Political parties need to field women candidates across the board – presidential, legislature and local government. Incentives for political parties to comply will come from the laws that require them to nominate and field women candidates.

Political parties are often referred to as 'the gate-keepers of democracy' and have multiple functions within the electoral process. They are first and foremost organisations that serve as the representatives of their membership and citizens of their countries. They also mirror the democratic soundness of their nations.

Internally, political parties facilitate political recruitment and play a crucial role in candidate selection in the nomination process. In some instances, through their party structures, they provide support, financial and professional, to potential candidates that inevitably form legislative bodies as elected Members of Parliament and, in some cases, the executive branch of government. Political parties and their support for women within their party structures and as candidates is crucial to enhancing and sustaining women's representation in the electoral process and in the decision-making process as a whole.

As noted in the earlier chapter on electoral systems and TSMs, parties in the constituency system need to make an even greater commitment to ensuring the representation of women in decision-making, as (in the absence of reserved seats) women can only get their foot in the door in this system if they are fielded in seats where the party is sure to win. This chapter focuses on the role of political parties in enhancing women's political participation, internally as well as in the electoral cycle.

4.1 Women in political party leadership

While some political parties have TSMs for women's representation in parliament, they do not necessarily apply these same TSMs to internal party structures. Studies show the importance of holding office in political party structures as a training ground for local and national politics.

When parties fail to ensure that women assume leadership posts within the party, this raises questions about their commitment to advancing gender equality more broadly. At a practical level, having women in decision-making within parties plays an important role in pushing for, and implementing, TSMs for women.

Table 4.1 shows that:

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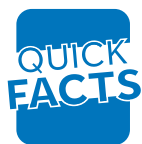
> ➢ All 34 leaders of political parties and main opposition parties in Commonwealth Africa at the time of writing were men.
>
> ➢ Women take up 14 out of 99 of the top positions in these parties (14 per cent).
>
> ➢ Women constitute one-third or more of top leadership in less than one-third (12 out of 34) of the parties.
>
> ➢ At 40 per cent, the main opposition Democratic Alliance Party in South Africa has the highest proportion of women in top leadership.
>
> ➢ Despite their stated commitment to gender equality, political parties have not 'walked the talk' of gender equality in their own ranks.

The absence of women in top leadership in political parties reflects in the paucity of women running for top office in elections. COG reports highlight the lack of female presidential candidates in Commonwealth Africa. Observers noted in multiple reports that, when there are female presidential candidates, they are normally a minority – one or two candidates standing out of a significant number, usually seven to ten. The reports also highlight that women presidential candidates tend to represent smaller parties, unlikely to win the presidency. As reflected in the interview for this handbook with Hon. Zainab Athman Katimba, the youngest woman to enter parliament in her country, access to leadership at all levels within parties is critical for women to gain confidence in political decision-making.

4.2 Political party support for women candidates

A greater focus is usually placed on those who finally win elections and assume public office. Since one of the key hurdles in women's political recruitment is the ambition to stand for public office, it is important to track how many women are actually putting themselves up for selection right from

Table 4.1 Women leaders in ruling and opposition parties, Commonwealth Africa 2017

Country	Party	M	F	Total women in top three	Total top positions	% women
Botswana						
Ruling party	Botswana Democratic Party	1	0	0	3	0%
Main opposition	Botswana National Front	1	0	0	3	0%
Cameroon						
Ruling party	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement	1	0	0	2	0%
Main opposition	Social Democratic Front	1	0	0	2	0%
Ghana						
Ruling party	National Democratic Congress	1	0	0	3	0%
Main opposition	New Patriotic Party	1	0	0	3	0%
Kenya						
Ruling party	The National Alliance	1	0	1	3	33%
Main opposition	Orange Democratic Movement	1	0	1	3	33%
Lesotho						
Ruling party	All Bosotho Convention	1	0	0	3	0%
Main opposition	Democratic Congress	1	0	0	3	0%
Malawi						
Ruling party	Democratic Progressive	1	0	1	3	33%
Main opposition	Malawi Congress Party	1	0	1	3	33%
Mauritius						
Ruling party	Militant Socialist Movement	1	0	1	3	33%
Main opposition	Muvman Liberater	1	0	0	3	0%
Rwanda						
Ruling party	Rwandan Patriotic Front	1	0	0	3	0%
Main opposition	Social Democratic Party	1	0	1	3	33%
South Africa						
Ruling party	African National Congress	1	0	1	3	33%
Main opposition	Democratic Alliance	1	0	2	5	40%
Sierra Leone						
Ruling party	All People's Congress	1	0	0	2	0%
Main opposition	Sierra Leone People's Party	1	0	0	3	0%
Seychelles						
Ruling party	Linyon Demokratik Seselwa	1	0	0	3	0%
Main opposition	People's Party	1	0	0	1	0%
Uganda						
Ruling party	National Resistance Movement	1	0	1	3	33%
Main opposition	Forum for Democratic Change	1	0	0	3	0%

Table 4.1 Women leaders in ruling and opposition parties, Commonwealth Africa 2017 (*Continued*)

Country	Party	M	F	Total women in top three	Total top positions	% women
Tanzania						
Ruling party	Chama Cha Mapinduzi	1	0	0	3	0%
Main opposition	Chadema	1	0	1	3	33%
Zambia						
Ruling party	Patriotic Front	1	0	1	3	33%
Main opposition	United Party for National Development Zambia	1	0	0	3	0%
Nigeria						
Ruling party	All People's Congress	1	0	0	3	0%
Main opposition	People's Democratic Party	1	0	0	3	0%
Namibia						
Ruling party	South West Africa People's Organization	1	0	1	3	33%
Main opposition	Democratic Turnhalle	1	0	0	3	0%
Mozambique						
Ruling party	FRELIMO	1	0	1	3	33%
Main opposition	Mozambican National Resistance	1	0	0	3	0%
Total		**34**	**0**	**14**	**99**	**14%**

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat with data from party websites
Note: For the purposes of this table, the three top roles in political parties are: leader, deputy-leader and secretary-general.

Box 4.1 Political parties and young female leaders: A personal experience

'As a woman, my involvement in politics has been discouraged by many. Limited resources to sustain political engagement have posed a serious setback. These resources include skills, human resources, facilities and finance. I have had sexual propaganda against me from those who had wanted to demoralise me and throw me off from political engagement. It has been a psychological torture to tolerate such humiliation. Had I not been exposed to various leadership training, I would have quit politics at some point.

I have had a platform to exercise my leadership talent from schools I went to. At university, I had the rare opportunity of vying for and holding various positions in the University Students Representative Organization. At a later stage, CCM (ruling party) Youth League became my mentoring ground. I attained leadership training from various institutes. To a large extent, the Youth League has been my entry point into the political world. I have had a platform to exercise my leadership talent in various voluntarily party roles, especially in the party's youth wing. The women's wing of CCM party has mentored me and exposed me to various leadership training.'

Hon. Zainab Athman Katimba, the United Republic of Tanzania

party primaries. Standing in an election is a significant step and, whether women win or lose, the more they stand the more the political culture will be amenable to change as they slowly move from being an exception to the norm.

Some of the COG reports indicate the proportion of women candidates. For example, the 2014 report on Malawi showed that women constituted 20 per cent and 17.4 per cent of candidates at the parliamentary and local council levels respectively. In Tanzania's 2015 elections, women constituted 8.5 per cent of all candidates. In Nigeria's 2007 elections, women constituted 6 per cent of all the candidates for the National Assembly. Such evidence can help to identify the road blocks in women's electoral path, including the reality that women are not offering themselves for public office. It is very evident that there are critical gaps at candidature level. Women are not standing for office in numbers commensurate with their share of the total populations.

4.3 Party support for TSMs – legislated and voluntary

As reflected in Chapter 3, 14 out of the 18 Commonwealth African countries now have TSMs of some kind – whether constitutional, legislated or voluntary. Where there are no 'special measures' (for example in Ghana and Nigeria) pressure is mounting to adopt measures of some kind. This means that parties are under pressure to find and support women candidates.

Where they are constitutional but not legislated TSMs (for example Swaziland and Kenya) these provisions have not always been observed. Where TSMs are constitutional and/or legislated (for example, in Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania), it is obligatory for parties to field women candidates who are guaranteed a certain percentage of the seats. In the Ugandan case, where there are separate reserved seats for women, political parties have been resistant to placing women on the open/unreserved contests, thereby limiting them to a 'ghettoised' space of separate seats where women compete against each other (Tamale 2004).

Box 4.2 Tanzania: The value to women of political party support

'My political party, CCM, as the ruling party stood firm with the government policy decision to empower women by enabling them to participate fully and on equal ground with men in decision-making. In 2000, the Tanzania Constitution of 1977 was amended and allowed a quota system (30 per cent of women) in the national parliament and local authorities. CCM created a mechanism to encourage women, including to contest for constituencies. The party's women's wing urged Tanzanian women to vote for fellow women who vied for political office.'

HE Samia Suluhu Hassan, Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania

Yet having a quota also means that parties must start changing their ways of thinking. This is reflected in an example from Tanzania:

An interesting test of political party commitment is in countries that have voluntary party TSMs. As observed in Chapter 3, three PR African Commonwealth countries – South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique – all have relatively high levels of women in political decision-making because of voluntary TSMs by their ruling parties (the ANC, SWAPO and FRELIMO).

The ANC adopted a voluntary 30 per cent gender TSM for the 2006 local elections. In 2009, the party amended its constitution and increased this voluntary quota to 50 per cent. Similarly, the FRELIMO introduced a gender quota in 1994 that required 40 per cent representation of women in the national assembly and the local assembly. In 2014, Namibia's ruling party, SWAPO, adopted a 50:50 quota system known as the 'zebra' list to ensure that women were equally represented not only in parliament but also in government.

Across the globe, the PR or 'list' system favours women's political participation, as parties have the power to place women strategically in the list to ensure their electoral success. SWAPO and the ANC broke new ground by committing to and largely implementing the 'zebra' system (one woman, one man) in their past elections. This was especially true at the local level in Namibia, where there is a legislative requirement around women's representation.

PR as an electoral system in more than 30 per cent of the countries holds promise for decentring gender ideologies in nomination and campaign processes, as the focus tends to be more on party policies than the individual candidate. The voluntary TSMs in South Africa and Namibia, particularly the zebra style or zipped party list arrangements, are key achievements for women.

Rwanda, which at 64 per cent has the highest representation of women in politics in the Commonwealth, has a mixed electoral system, constitutional and legislated TSMs at the national and local levels. In addition, the constitutions of both the Rwandan Patriotic Front-Inkotanyi and the Centrist Democratic Party (Parti Démocratique Centrist) stipulate that there should be at least 30 per cent of female representation in all decision-making positions within the structures of the party (Kandawasvika-Nhundu 2014). This mix of factors has been critical in delivering a high level of women's political participation. In Lesotho (which also has a mixed system), the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) introduced a mandatory 30 per cent quota to ensure women's representation within the governance structures of the parties (Ntho 2010).

As reflected in Chapter 3, there are several examples in Commonwealth Africa of political parties in the FPTP system adopting voluntary TSMs. These include the Botswana National Front (BNF), the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) and the Patriotic Front (PF) in Zambia. However, these measures have had limited impact. This is the weakness of voluntary TSMs: political parties themselves are responsible for enforcing the TSMs. Unlike legislated TSMs, which are legally binding with sanctions attached, political parties are under no obligation to meet their own targets and similarly under no obligation to maintain those targets. In the competitive electoral environment of the FPTP system, the chances of these TSMs being dropped in the 'heat of the moment' by parties under pressure to win seats are high.

Box 4.3 Supporting candidates in Nigeria

The Nigerian Women's Trust Fund, launched in 2011, is a multi-stakeholder initiative backed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and a coalition of civil society, the private sector and international development agency partners, including UN Women.

Since 2011, it has grown into a robust political network-building and knowledge-sharing platform, with an active web presence and two flagship projects, 'Create Her Space' and 'She Should Contest', which seek to carve out a greater space for women politicians to participate in political activities and debates, and to inspire a national dialogue on the urgency of addressing gender imbalance in elective and appointed offices in Nigeria.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2016c)

Evidence suggests that women who make it through the nomination process are often put up to contest seats in districts where they cannot win, leaving the men to contest safe winnable seats (ODI Women). It is no coincidence that all the Commonwealth African countries still struggling to increase the number of women candidates and parliamentarians have FPTP systems and have made limited efforts at TSMs of any kind, whether legislated or voluntary. Male dominance of party politics has been named as one of the key constraints for women to overcome and participate, especially as candidates.

Women's representation in parliaments has remained relatively stagnant over the past ten years in Nigeria, Swaziland, Botswana and Ghana. According to a paper on 'Political Parties and Women's Political Participation in Commonwealth Africa' (M'Cormack-Hale 2018), some political party members have explicitly stated their opposition to TSMs. As these parties are not advocating for electoral reform, legislated or voluntary TSMs, it is unclear how the log jam over women's low political participation in these countries will be overcome.

4.4 Financial support for women candidates

A major barrier to women's political participation is the lack of resources in comparison to their male counterparts. Political parties have a role to play in mitigating the burden felt be women aspirants. The COG reports note that some political parties in Commonwealth Africa, namely the National Democratic Congress and National Patriotic Party in Ghana and the All Progressives Congress in Nigeria, have sought to encourage women's political participation in the electoral process by waiving nomination fees in part or in full.

4.5 Violence against women in politics

Through interviews and surveys, the paper on political parties (this section is from M'Cormack-Hale 2018) found that women in politics may face harassment on several levels. First, respondents in several countries mentioned that women in politics were seen as morally loose, and they faced sexual harassment and other related threats. Unmarried and young women, in particular, mentioned receiving threats and unwelcome propositions. Furthermore, given the risks associated with politics, some women encountered resistance from family members and lack of support, including from spouses, children and parents.

VAWP was another frequently mentioned barrier for women aspiring to go into politics. Women faced violence at all levels, from members of their own party during party nomination processes, to violence from opposition candidates when vying for electoral positions. In this respect, women faced both physical and sexual abuse. Incidents mentioned included physical intimidation and assault, acid attacks, shootings, vandalism, rape and verbal abuse. To ensure their physical safety, women reported campaigning with hired security, which depleted their meagre resources.

Related to harassment, women politician respondents noted that vetting procedures for women were often different from those for men for political appointments, with women subjected to different standards and impertinent questions, including, for example, on their marital status, number of children and their appearance. Women were also judged on what they wore and how they looked. In addition, respondents noted that the public were quicker to condemn and criticise women on scandals, who faced more coverage and condemnation than men in similar positions. They believed that women's indiscretions tended to be blown out of proportion, which in turn discouraged other women from contesting for fear of being 'tarred with the same brush'.

Case study 4.1 South Africa: Gender audit of party manifestos in the 2016 local elections

During the 2016 local government elections, Gender Links devised a gender rating index of South Africa's political party commitment to advancing gender issues. The index rates the extent to which gender is reflected in party manifestos in relation to political and economic participation, infrastructure, services and social concerns, i.e. whether:

1. the importance of women's participation is highlighted and there are strategies for addressing this, including affirmative action;
2. there is a gendered analysis of local economic development and specific strategies for addressing women's equal access and participation;
3. there is a gendered analysis of access to resources such as land, housing and credit, and how to redress these gaps;
4. there is a gendered analysis of access to services such as water, energy and sanitation, and how to ensure that women and men access these equally; and
5. there is a gender analysis of social challenges, especially gender-based violence (GBV), HIV and AIDS, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and how to ensure that local government promotes women's rights.

The analysis put the African National Congress (ANC) and the United Democratic Movement (UDM) in lead positions with a score of just 40 per cent. The Congress of the People (COPE), at 36 per cent, and the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) at 28 per cent did not do much better. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) at 24 per cent and Freedom Front, at 20 per cent, tailed the list. The report commented:

'It stands to reason that any party tapping into the issues impacting directly on a majority voting bloc such as women, should enjoy statistical advantage over its competition. Contentions within the ruling party, shifts in the balance of power between the ANC and its official opposition, the DA, as well as rising contender, the EFF, all indicate that in many municipalities, the vote is up for grabs. Might a party responsive to the everyday needs of the majority of the electorate – that of women – swing that vote? *It would appear that no party identified this opportunity*.

By comparison, most of the parties have revealed an understanding of particular challenges experienced by the youth as a sector, and have detailed specific interventions in response. These include measures designed to ensure young people's participation in the economy and in municipal decision-making processes, in accessing training and entrepreneurial opportunities, and in addressing social challenges experience by the youth. As with parties' manifesto commitments on other issues, measures for the youth are not gender mainstreamed, in that they do not stipulate how challenges experienced by young women are likely to be overcome to ensure equal access.

The analysis of party manifestos indicates that some parties have identified specific measures which would benefit women, and most have proposed measures from which women, as community stakeholders, would benefit. Nonetheless, parties cannot be said to be particularly gender-aware, in that they have not mainstreamed gender throughout their manifestos, by clearly indicating measures that would address the systemic challenges and barriers women experience in access to rights and services, outlined earlier in this brief. Gender mainstreaming requires an analysis of such structural challenges and the implementation of specific measures to ensure equal access to rights and services.

Only the ANC addresses the issue of GBV at policy level, by expressing a commitment to work with all sectors to end violence against women and children. The IFP makes a reference to women and

children "feeling safe in our streets". Neither offers any analysis of why women's rights continue to be so flagrantly violated in this way.

Only the UDM commits to ensuring women's representation on municipal structures and in decision-making. The ANC commits to ensuring women constitute 60 per cent of extended public works programme beneficiaries. COPE commits to creating a dedicated women's fund and encouraging women to engage in small, medium and micro businesses. The UDM envisages supporting youth, women and people with disabilities to be entrepreneurs. None of the parties provide a gendered analysis of access to resources such as land, housing and credit.'

Hicks and Morna (2016)

4.6 Gender and campaigns

A major avenue for assessing women's participation in the electoral process is during campaigns, when political parties engage with the electorate in a bid to win support for their candidates. The COG reports highlight the role played by women in campaigns. On election day, women participate as presiding officers and party agents. The case study that follows shows the importance of monitoring political party manifestos during elections.

4.7 Political party allegiance

All politicians face dilemmas at one time or another over divergences between political party positions and their own convictions. Women in politics often feel these tensions more acutely because of the expectation that they 'represent women'.

The dilemmas for women politicians over allegiance to party versus their commitment as women arise in all political systems and cut across countries with high and low proportions of women in politics. Interviewees stressed that, if a member takes a different line to that of her party, she stands a risk of being regarded as challenging the leader and might face disciplinary proceedings.

Women MPs, aware of divisions across party lines, are addressing them in the newly formed parliamentary caucuses where they share strategies to support each other on issues that are common to them as women. They further mentioned that the women's parliamentary caucus is a good opportunity to bring all women together and to extend solidarity on all issues that affect them.

4.8 Women's wings

As in other parts of the world, women's wings in Commonwealth Africa play an ambivalent role. On the one hand, women's structures in parties have been

an important mobilising tool for women in many countries. However, they also often serve as the glorified hospitality wing of the party, rather than as mechanisms for advancing the status of women in politics and in society.

Research from International IDEA suggests that the agendas of women's wings are often limited to the social and welfare affairs portfolio, therefore reinforcing the marginalisation of women in politics. To increase the effectiveness of women's wings beyond their traditional remit, political parties should incorporate them into the main party structure and increase their role in the candidate preparation selection and mentoring of potential female candidates (OSCE 2016).

4.9 Checklists for political parties

Commitment, codes and party statutes

- ✓ Is there a commitment to gender equality on the part of political parties? How and where is this reflected?
- ✓ Has gender been mainstreamed in the constitution, manifesto, policies and structures of each political party?
- ✓ To what extent do the procedures for the selection of candidates for decision-making within the party enhance or hinder gender balance and sensitivity?
- ✓ Do the political parties offer gender awareness training for all cadres?
- ✓ Do the political parties offer capacity-building, mentorship and other initiatives to enhance the political empowerment of women?
- ✓ Do political parties have codes of conduct on – or that include – firm measures to address sexual harassment/gender violence in all party, political and election conduct? To what extent have these been effectively implemented?

Women in political parties

- ✓ Does the election act oblige political parties to take measures to enhance gender equality?
- ✓ Have the parties themselves instituted special measures to enhance gender parity in all their structures, at all levels? For example, does the party have TSMs for women's participation within the party?
- ✓ How many of the executive positions are held by women?
- ✓ To the extent that women are missing from decision-making in the party, what is being done to redress this imbalance?

✓ Do the parties have women's wings? How effective are these in promoting gender equality within the parties?

✓ How has the women's wing supported women in the electoral process? For example, by providing mentoring, sponsorship and training for women in politics?

✓ How free are women in the party to take a stand on women's rights, especially where these may be contrary to party positions?

Candidates

Selection of candidates

✓ Are women involved in the processes to select candidates for the party (for specific seats in the case of FPTP, and position on the lists in the case of the PR system)?

✓ Is the right of women citizens to present themselves as candidates for election respected?

Women candidates

✓ How many women and men ran for office for each party?

✓ How does this compare with the last election? How is the variance explained?

✓ If this is a FPTP system, what percentage of women were fielded in safe seats for the parties? In a list system, where are women candidates situated on the lists?

✓ What proportion of the women candidates are new and how does this compare with the proportion of new male candidates?

✓ How many women are running as independent candidates? Is this more or fewer than before? Why?

✓ Are there any women candidates for the post of prime minister or president? Are they treated equally (by the media, public opinion, the EMB etc.)?

Campaign content

✓ Do commitments by parties and candidates to address gender issues feature in the campaigns and manifestos?

✓ Do these debates challenge or reinforce gender stereotypes?

✓ Are women candidates able to campaign on issues that are of particular concern to women, for example domestic violence?

✓ Do women candidates speak out on gender and other social justice issues as part of the campaign?

✓ Do men candidates speak out on gender and other social justice issues as part of the campaign?

Election outcome

✓ How many and what percentage of women were elected: a) in the lower house, b) in the upper house (if this exists) and c) in total?

✓ If the elections included local government, how many and what percentage of women councillors were elected?

✓ How do these figures compare to the last election? Has there been an increase or decrease in the percentage of women? If so, why?

✓ Are there differences in the proportion of women's representation in the different tiers of governance? If so, why?

✓ How do the figures break down by political party? Has there been an increase or decrease for each political party? If so, why?

✓ What proportion of women were re-elected, i.e. what is the retention rate? How does the retention rate compare to that of men?

✓ Do the parties accept the election outcome? If not, are any of the seats won by women contested in court or through other means? What is the outcome of this?

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