

GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT

GENDER IN THE 2011 LESOTHO LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION



Women participants in GL Women in Politics Workshops, Qomoqomong Lesotho

Photo by Ntolo Lekau

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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
ABC	All Basotho Convention
BNP	Basotho National Party
FPTP	First Past the Post (System)
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
LCD	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
MGYSR	Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation
MLGC	Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional (System)
PR	Proportional Representation (System)
SADC	Southern African Development Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proportion of women elected in the 1 October 2011 Local Government elections in Lesotho decreased from 58% (2005 elections) to 49.1%¹. The result reduces the number of women represented at the local level but is considered a more representative reflection of the aspirations of Basotho people and the outcomes of a fairer process to select Local Councillors. Moreover the two sets of results have come about within an electoral system that reserves special seats for women. Though Lesotho has implemented two different electoral systems with reserved seats, the country is well on its way to proving that quota systems or seat reservation for women in governance (moreover local government) can yield results.



Participants at GL Women in Politics Workshop, Mapholaneng, Lesotho – Photo by Ntolo Lekau

Lesotho has the highest proportion of women's representation within the SADC region and has done exceptionally well to remain close to the 50% mark despite the 2011 decrease. The country remains an example for other SADC states and is in the fortunate position – with regard gender equality – to have had a system of reserved seats for women in local government elections from the onset in 2005.

The above noted electoral outcomes occur against the backdrop of increased recognition of the importance of women's presence and gender equality in governance in Africa, Southern Africa remains to achieve sub-regional, regional and global targets on parity in this sphere. At a time when efforts towards gender equality are urging for focus on women outside of mainstream service delivery and opportunities, Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries only have three years left to reach 50% women and men's representation in all areas of decision making.

Lesotho demonstrates that while having missed the 2015 opportunity efforts towards parity cannot be slowed down. The African Union (AU) declared 2010 to 2020 to be the African Women Decade with a priority focus on a "grassroots approach to gender equality and women's empowerment"². The 2012 Commission on the Status of Women happened under the theme "The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges". Lesotho is slightly missing the mark and there can be confidence that the country will sustain if not surpass close to 50% gender representation at the local government level.

Key issues persist where women's participation in politics, governance or decision-making are concerned. The report brings attention to some of the barriers that women continue to

¹Mapetla, M. 2012. "Gender Parity in Local Government Representation". Lesotho 2012 local government elections.

²All Voices, "African Women Decade promises greater Gender Parity", 2010. Accessed 2 April 2012 [Available at: <http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/7031937-african-women-decade-officially-launched>].

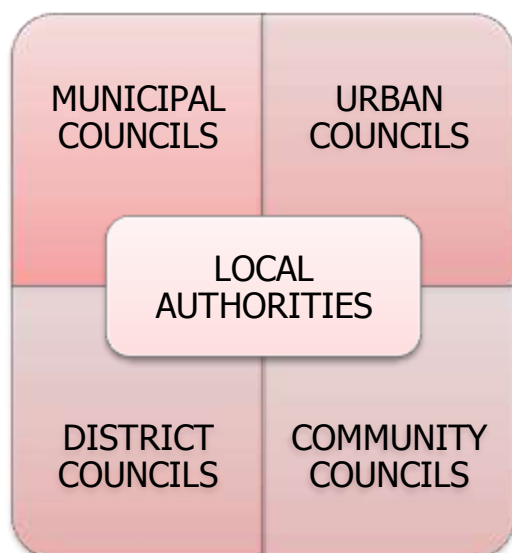
face. These are evident in the stories of the four women featured in the report. The report also discusses the benefits that can accrue to a democratic society and its consolidation through establishing a quota system or reserving seats for women.

Research for this report was conducted using a combination of face – to- face interviews and desk top research.

BACKGROUND

Local Government Arrangements

Lesotho recently held the country's second local government elections under new local authority demarcations. Lesotho's local authorities previously comprised 128 Community councils, 10 District councils and 1 Municipal council. In 2011 the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy (MLGC) revised the arrangement of local authorities. The new demarcations maintain 1 municipal council and 10 district councils while 11 urban councils have been introduced and community councils amalgamated and reduced to 65. In total there are 87 local authorities.



Lesotho has only had 2 local government elections, as this system of government continues to evolve; demarcations of local authorities will also change and new arrangements that enhance administrative effectiveness introduced.

Municipal Council

This one local authority is Maseru City and is made up of an urbanised region with some rural surroundings.

Urban Councils

The urban councils comprise 11 urban areas with the exception of Maseru.

Community Councils

Community councils are based in primarily village or rural communities.

Key facts: Lesotho Local Government

- Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with 2 spheres of governance – central and local.
- Local government is established through Local Government Act (1997) and Local Government Elections Act (1998).
- Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy provides policy direction and support for local authorities; Ministry is responsible for the administration of the Local Government Act.
- The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) is responsible for the administration of the Local Government Elections Act.
- Local government is made up of 87 local authorities.
- There is one **Municipal Council** – the City of Maseru.
- There are **11 Urban councils**.
- There are **10 District councils** that are made up of representatives of community councils and elected chiefs.
- There are **65 Community councils** each falling under one of the districts.
- Traditional leadership in the form of chiefs are also represented in local authorities.
- Lesotho held first Local Government elections in April 2005. Subsequent elections were in October 2011.
- Lesotho does not yet have a local government association.

District Councils

District councils are made up of representatives of the community councils but exclude individuals from the urban and municipal authorities.

The 10 districts are representative of all parts of Lesotho. The Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation (MGYSR) has assigned District Gender Officers throughout the country that assist the districts to address gender related matters. These officers are also available and work regularly with the local authorities.

Lesotho's Electoral System

There are two main types of electoral system, *Proportional Representation* (PR) or the "party list system". In this system citizens vote for parties that are allocated seats in parliament according to the percentage of vote they receive. Individual candidates are awarded a seat in office according to where they are placed on the party list. In an *Open List* system, voters determine where candidates are placed on the list. In a *Closed List* system, the party determines where candidates are placed; this is usually based on democratic nomination processes within the party.

In the constituency or *First Past the Post* (FPTP) system, citizens vote not just for the party, but also for the candidate who represents the party in a geographically defined constituency. Thus a party can garner a significant percentage of the votes, but still have no representative in parliament. This system is also referred to as a "winner takes all" system and perhaps not the most ideal for consolidating democracy.

In Lesotho national elections are conducted on a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) basis. The MMP is a dual ballot system that allows a voter to cast two ballots – constituency vote and a party vote. Constituency representation in the National Assembly is determined by the constituency vote while the party vote compensates parties that have won few to no constituency seats. The party vote is used to select candidates from a party list to make up for seats a party would have been entitled to had constituency seats been allocated on a proportional basis³.

This electoral model was adopted in 2002 following years of one party rule enabled by the initial FPTP system. While the institution of MMP diversified party representation in National Assembly it continued to be gender blind. Women's representation at the national level in the 2002 and 2007 elections was 11.67% and 24.19% respectively; both not even half way towards parity⁴.

Local government elections held in October 2011 were conducted under a new electoral system that reserved a third of seats in all constituencies for women. Essentially at local level the electoral system is mixed – as was the one used during 2005 elections. The system is mixed FPTP and then PR with closed party list for the special seats reserved for women.



Mokhotlong, Lesotho - Photo by Mpho Mankimane

http://gemcommunity.genderlinks.org.za/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=14017

³Matlosa, K. 2007. "Lesotho" in Cawthra, G., du Pisani, A and Omari, A (eds) *Security and Democracy in Southern Africa*.

⁴Ntho, M. 2010. "Lesotho" in Gender Links (ed), *This Seat is Taken*.

GENDER AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN SADC

Jogging our memories that we need quotas for women

The table below outlines articles 5, 12 and 13 of the SADC Gender and Development Protocol. The three articles all refer to provisions that outline the need for gender parity in all decision making positions by the year 2015.

Table 1: SADC Protocol Governance Provisions

ARTICLE	TARGET AREA	PROVISION - 2015
5	Full and meaningful participation in all spheres of life	Affirmative action measures with particular reference to women with the aim of eliminating all barriers which prevent them from participating.
12	Women in decision making positions	At least fifty per cent of decision making positions in public and private sectors are held by women; affirmative action measures in effect.
	Equal representation and democracy	Laws and policies are accompanied by public awareness campaigns to demonstrate link between equal representation participation of men and women to democracy, good governance and citizen participation.
13	Participation in electoral processes	Laws and policies put in place to enable women to have equal opportunities with men to participate in electoral processes.
	Ensuring enabling participation and	Policies, strategies and programmes for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building women's capacity to effectively participate – leadership, gender sensitivity and mentoring. • Support structures for women in decision making. • Establish and strengthen structures to enhance gender mainstreaming. • Addressing discriminatory attitudes and norms in decision making structures.
	Men's inclusion	Gender training and community mobilisation to include men at all levels.

Local government elections in Lesotho in 2011 - and national elections to be held in May 2012 – were the last opportunity for the country to achieve parity as stipulated by the SADC Protocol. As a signatory to the Protocol Lesotho has an obligation to ensure this happens. The 46% to 49% proportion of women's representation after 2011 elections reflects that the opportunity was missed leaving a several questions to be asked.

The first question to be asked is: given that the 2015 mark has been missed, what next for the SADC Protocol and other regional and international targets? Lesotho performed very well in the 2005 local government elections but what does the 2011 decrease signify? Does it mean that the SADC targets are not a priority and if not how can we make this so, what is keeping us from doing that?

As noted above Lesotho has gone to the local polls twice using electoral methods that ensure women's representation and in both instances women have performed exceptionally

well. At this point it is important to recall the importance of creating these avenues for women and for gender equality to flourish. The domain of policy making, implementation and service delivery determines allocation of opportunities and resources. In turn access to resources and opportunities, represent participating and benefitting from social, political and economic development. When critical segments of society such as women are excluded from spaces where resources and opportunities are allocated the likelihood of their needs being addressed is substantially unlikely. History has shown us, albeit slowly, that when stakeholders are at the table, they have a better chance of their interests being met.

Some critics will argue that just because women are at the table does not necessarily mean women's needs will be represented. Lesotho has had a significant number of women in local government but actual change in the plight of women has been difficult to measure or demonstrate. It is also important to note that Lesotho has only had women in local government office for one term, five years. While continued aspiration towards the targets of the SADC Protocol may appear futile for the immediate future, gender activists recognise that various interest groups stand to make traction with sympathetic women politicians although they may not pursue gender sensitive activities themselves.

In many of the interviews conducted during this research, respondents repeatedly stated that one of the challenges for women in politics or desiring to enter politics are the beliefs and attitudes of society – in addition to limited support from within political parties and economic sustainability. A push for equal representation now has to be premised on the fact that immediate efforts to achieve gender equality will reap more robust qualitative and quantitative benefits in future generations. In order to change beliefs and attitudes there is a need to normalise women's participation and inspire generations to come that what could not be accomplished in the lifetimes of those before them will be achieved in their own.

Table 2: Challenges that persist for women in politics

CHALLENGES	COMMENTS
Attitudes, culture and beliefs	All respondents during the interview process (both male and female) attested to attitudes, culture and beliefs being a major challenge for women's authority within decision-making positions to be acknowledged. Women respondents noted the intense verbal abuse they underwent when visiting the Districts and promoting women's involvement.
Support of political parties	Women continue to occupy low ranking positions within political parties, or they are confined to women's wings where their primary responsibilities are to mobilise membership and support for the party – usually on behalf of men candidates.
Women's economic status	In Lesotho women are generally economically independent in relation to their male counterparts. However within political office they remain within lower positions that prevent them from being visible.
Technical competencies and capacity	Technical capacity to effectively carry out the duties and responsibilities at local government level remain a challenge for women in Lesotho as literacy levels remain quite high. Efforts of civil society organisations are however contributing to closing the capacity gap.

GENDER AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Key Dates for Gender and Local Government Elections

Malawi 1997 - SADC Heads of State (HOS) Summit agrees on 30% representation for women in decision making.

Mozambique 2003 – AU Summit agrees on 50% women's representation in decision making.

Lesotho 2005 – 30% reservation of all constituencies for women in local government elections.

Botswana 2005 – SADC HOS Summit, SADC agrees to 50% representation. Only Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania have achieved 30%.

2008 – Adoption of SADC Gender and Development Protocol

Lesotho 2011 – Amendment of Local Government Electoral Act, new electoral system of reservation instituted.

2005 Elections – Reservation of women's seats

In 2005 Lesotho was signatory to SADC agreements regarding women and men in decision making. Lesotho introduced local government at a time when the sub-region was negotiating and deciding on allocated seats for women in all positions of decision-making. The motivation behind adoption was to use the quota system at the Local Government level to accelerate women's representation and participation in governance.

The country adopted a system to reserve seats for women on a trial basis to gauge if it could work with the new local government system and the extent to which Basotho women would be interested in being included in local government. The government decided to implement the quota at local government level to lessen the risk of error as opposed to the national level. The rationale was that if the system succeeded at the local level then it would

be applicable nationally.

The system was such that 30% of all constituencies were reserved for women on a FPTP system - in other words only women could contest in these constituencies and men could not. The remaining 70% of constituencies were open to men and women to compete again on an FPTP basis. This system was intended to exist for three successive elections whereupon constituencies reserved for women would be rotated and the effectiveness of the system ascertained.

"The constituencies were even called female constituencies" MatauFutho-Letsatsi

Elections held under this system yielded 58% women's representation and 42% men. The initial results were promising and provided evidence that implementing a form of seat reservation/ quotas for women could make a difference for gender representation in governance. However the trend

was that women were placed in lower level positions once elected and were often reluctant to be vocal within council. Because of women occupying lower positions it meant they were not very visible in the communities and led to criticism of the quota system. One of the observations of WLSA was that women had to have capacity development in the area of articulating themselves.



Councillor Ranooe and GL Country Facilitator, Lesotho - Photo by Ntolo Lekau

Numerous complaints ensued from implementation of the 2005 system of reservation. Political parties and men that had been prevented from standing for local government election were highly disgruntled by the electoral process. Men complained that the quota discriminated against them and did not allow them to contest elections in the electoral divisions reserved for women alone. This meant that potentially viable and qualified male contenders had no way of contesting. The primary complaint of political parties was that the FPTP system in spite of the reserved constituencies would entitle only the party with the most votes to occupy the seats therein.

This led to a legal battle where an individual man took his case before the High Court claiming the quota was in direct opposition to his constitutional rights. The Court ruled that the electoral law was “justifiable discrimination” and the law was allowed to remain. Unhappy with this decision, political parties lobbied the IEC to investigate and initiate a law that was more favourable to all Basotho. Political parties wanted to field men in some constituencies that were specifically set aside for women and where men could not contest.

The IEC embarked on a study trip to Tanzania that included members of political parties and the MLGC. Upon return from Tanzania a new system was agreed and the electoral law was amended.

2011 Elections – Reservation of women’s seats

The new system borrows from the Tanzanian electoral model and is a mixed system. One part of the system comprises reserved seats for women on a PR basis while the remainder of the local government seats are contested through the FPTP method.

“A quota should at least be in operation for a number of elections” MatauFuthoLetsatsi

The new system has an average of 11 electoral divisions per constituency with a minimum of 7 and maximum of 15. One third of these seats per constituency are reserved for women candidates. The number of special seats in a constituency is calculated by dividing the number of electoral divisions by three and then rounding off to the nearest whole number to determine the number of seats. This new system guards against vacant special seats by ensuring the party list has a minimum and maximum number of nominees based on the number of electoral divisions and the number of special seats.

All political parties agreed to the new system primarily because it enabled parties to field male candidates in all constituencies and quite significantly represented the opportunity for parties to win special seats based on the proportion of the total vote they received.

Challenges of the new system

While the new system of reservation is overall more reflective of the populace desire for more equitable distribution in governance, some challenges persist. These were articulated by several respondents during the interviews:

The Legal Consultative Committee of the IEC decided to make a recommendation [to reconsider the 30% reserved electoral divisions] because they were worried that the 2011 election would not be as smooth and peaceful as desired.” RethabilePholo

- The women’s movement was not well consulted and by the time they were aware of what was happening they had little to no recourse to action.

- The previous election system should have been in place for at least 3 elections as initially

agreed in order to properly determine its sustainability. At least five elections would have been sufficient to review the extent to which women had had a chance to stand on their own; it would have been a form of affirmative action as with any research pilot project. The approach was not necessarily the best for the country.

- Women have been voted in to office but attitudes persist, culture and beliefs persist.
- Basotho women are generally economically independent but they continue to occupy lower positions within decision making structures.
- There is no quota at a national level and political parties are not obliged to reserve positions for women within their structures. Women continue to be the main mobilisers for the party. With the exception of LCD no other political party reserves positions for women within the party.



Women Local Government Election Candidates, Mabeleteng - Photo by NtoloLekau

http://gemcommunity.genderlinks.org.za/gallery/main.php?q2_itemId=14438

GENDER IN THE 2011 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Capacity building and women's ability to run for elections

With two sets of quotas (reserved seats for women) to fast track women into governance and ensure they are represented in politics, it is clear that civil society organisations are required to fill in the capacity and technical skill gaps. In 2011, Gender Links halted the Centres of Excellence work in Gender Mainstreaming for Local Government, owing to the dissolution of local councils in preparation for the October elections. In response to the need to boost the capacities of women politicians, GL worked in collaboration with the MGYSR and other NGOs such as WLSA to launch a 50/50 campaign for women in Local Government and conduct Women in Politics training workshops. These workshops were aimed at preparing women for the campaign trail, guiding them on articulating their issues, presenting before communities as well as articulating issues should they be successful and be elected.



Participants at the Women in Politics Workshop, Qomogomong - Photo by NtoloLekau http://gemcommunity.genderlinks.org.za/gallery/main.php?q2_itemId=14008

Lesotho 2011 Local Government 50/50 campaign

Civil society organisations including Gender Links took up the challenge to mount a 50/50 campaign to ensure that through a combination of the 30% seats allocated on a PR basis and those won through the open elections, Lesotho would continue to carry the banner of gender parity in local government. The campaign sought to equip women politicians with knowledge and skills on gender, issues of governance, electoral laws and running political campaigns. The final COE stages involve developing and implementing a campaign. In Lesotho, GL COE's focused on the elections. GL opened the training to existing and potential councillors, as some councillors indicated that they did not wish to stand a second term.

Activities

- Two - day training and campaign workshops for potential women candidates were held in the 10 Centres of Excellence in Gender Mainstreaming councils.
- Approximately 20 women from each of the 10 councils participated in the workshops.

- The local councils were used as the workshop venues, that ensured ownership by the council and also cut down on costs.



GL Lesotho Programme Officer, NtoloLekau talks to Women in Politics Participant - Photo by MphoMankimane

- Categories of women who attended the training included: independent women candidates; those belonging to the ruling party and main opposition parties, etc.

- The content was derived from GL's 'Getting Smart' training manual; the content was contextualised, simplified, translated and customised to suit the literacy levels of the women

- Key modules of the training included: gender concepts, gender and governance, leadership-position of women in Lesotho politics, profiles, and campaigns as communication strategies.

- Lesotho's Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation (MGYSR) continued to give their support through the

District Gender Officers who co - facilitated the workshops

- The IEC national office granted permission to work with its voter - educators across the country and the purpose of this was to explain the amended electoral law and procedure on how allocation of special seats for women in local government would be attained.

Challenges

- Many of the participants had no previous knowledge of gender.
- Low levels of literacy.
- Lack of spousal and family support; and this was largely perpetuated by stereotypes and the belief that women cannot make it in politics (this created self-doubt).
- The long travelling distances had a direct impact on campaigns – so women were not always able to leave their families for periods of time.
- Party loyalty overriding gender commitment.
- For many, the training was a first experience in campaign running with limited financial experience and budgets.

Outcomes

- While a few councils experienced a decline in women's participation most managed to hold the line or increase women's participation.
- The training resulted in increased knowledge gained by the women participants on gender, elections and women's need to be represented and to participate in decision-making processes.
- The training exposed women for the first time to the SADC Gender Protocol, etc.
- Participants attained practical skills e.g. writing their own profiles and doing mock interviews, etc.
- There was a level of elevated confidence and solidarity amongst women (the facilitator received continuous comments of gratitude and positive feedback).
- The women kept diaries of their experiences that can be used to write a book.

Several key issues on women's participation emerged from this process. While each woman's experience is individual there are some general trends that can be identified. These same issues emerged during the research interviews.

Key issues for women in politics

- ***Women's identity and how they are viewed in society*** – some of the women running for politics struggled with using their maiden names and married names. One woman spoke of having to obtain legal proof and a waiver that she was who she claimed to be. This is often related to culture and tradition and the fact that women are still recognised as minors with no legal standing within Lesotho society.
- ***Age and ability*** – were also viewed as a challenge. One woman (featured below) related how she faced opposition from family, peers and community members owing to her age. The irony was that she was highly respected within the party and nominated to stand in the party. She has since been elected and one of the spin offs of her standing in the elections is her being an advisor to the government on the youth councils. Beyond age, many of the women were in a contradictory place where they were encouraged to run for the elections because of community involvement and having proven their commitment to development of the society. Often when they faced challenges, their capabilities to conduct the business of the local councils was doubted by naysayers. One woman related how even God was used to make people doubt her ability.
- ***Personal challenges of a gendered dimension*** – Women that participated in GL training workshops and also ran for local councils expressed that challenges within their personal lives also affected the way in which they participated in the election. One woman described how her husband and his relatives tried to push her out of their family business when she ran for politics. Owing to the family's disagreement with her running for politics, she was excluded from any income generating projects. On the other hand, some women who were single mothers had ended up in politics because their struggle to care for their children had resulted in them playing supportive roles beyond the home.
- ***Previous involvement in social development and community work*** – the majority of women that ran for local government had prior involvement and engagement in the development of the community. While some were not voted into council, this did not stop them from returning to community work. During campaigns women were often berated by the public that once politicians were in office they would forget about the electorate and their concerns. What is heartening however from the profiles of these women is their long standing record of community involvement that is confirmed by their peers encouraging them to stand for elections. One woman narrates how she received a letter from women in a neighbouring village pledging their support to her because they had seen her serve the community for years.
- ***Other trends*** – include women who were not elected to council now assisting men that are running for national assembly to campaign in their constituencies; women having been elected ahead of men to run in the local government elections and a major challenge of voter fatigue and loss of faith in politicians by the electorate.

GL followed some of these women and wrote their profiles, identifying who they are, where they came from and how they came to be in politics. Some of the women kept journals during the campaign and then GL followed up with some of them in early 2012 to see how life after the elections has panned out. Here are four of their stories:

Name of politician - 'MamorobaneNgakane

Country - Lesotho

Constituency - Qacha's Nek, Tsoelikane Community Council

Age group - 42

Education Level - Secondary

Who is 'Mamorobane Ngakane?

I am a 42 year old woman and former Councillor from Likhohloaneng, a rural village in the district of Qacha's Nek.

Before joining politics, I volunteered as a village health worker in my community. In this line of work, I worked with expectant mothers and their new born babies in caring for basic health needs. Sometimes I assisted in delivering babies in homes because back then, few women could afford to pay for hospital fares and travelling from rural villages was very difficult. In the year 2000, I started helping people living with HIV and AIDS as well as affected families.



At that time, sensitisation efforts and public talks on the issue were high on the agenda. I attended trainings and travelled around villages to talk to men and women about HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and support to challenge stigma associated with the epidemic. Even though I experienced a lot of heart-breaking moments because of the sensitivity of the job, I am humbled because it brought me inside people's homes and I could see the intensity with which poor families suffered because of limited access to proper health care, education and economic opportunities.

In 2005 when the first local government elections were to be held, my community insisted that I stand for office. I grabbed the opportunity when I realised that people had faith in me. I contested as the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) member and I was fortunate to have won the election. After that, I started to believe in myself and my interest in politics and issues of governance got stronger.

After my first term in office, I felt that there was still a lot more to be done and I was not done contributing to the development of my community. With the second local government election approaching, I decided to run for office as an LCD candidate again. I had told myself that if I succeeded to get into office, youth development was one of the issues that I would push for. I had recognised that the youth were rarely included in community development plans and they in turn appeared to lack interest in some of the issues. The youth of today have to be encouraged through trainings and peer support on how to survive on their own without depending heavily on parents or guardians.

'Mamorobane Ngakane's Campaign Journey

I started to serve the community in 1999 when I was serving as a Village Health Worker. In 2001, I joined a Home Based Care Support Group (HBCSG). In 2002, I joined an interim Community Council where I represented my village. I was elected ahead of two men. In 2005 when the local community councils kicked off and the three villages of LikhohloanengPitseng, Motalaneng and Mafikeng were grouped to form an electoral division, I was again elected to lead again ahead of two men.

The electoral division I contested in was not one of the ones exclusive to women. In 2011 I again contested in the local government elections under the LCD. Three of us were elected from party structures and all of us were community councilors in the previous term.

Campaign highlights

On the 4th of September 2001, we held a political campaign with other LCD candidates at Ha Mojaki. The campaign was not that successful probably because it was held on a Sunday after church. The experienced say that for a campaign to be successful, it has to be held in the morning hours. The campaign was also competing with other functions held in the village. We managed to have an audience of 17 women and 3 men and they asked us to visit them again because other LCD members were not present at the gathering.

I held another public gathering on the 29th of September 2011 at Kanana village. This meeting was not that successful because there were only 14 women and 4 men present.

On the local government Election Day, 1st October 2011, I contested with 2 other women and I won. I was and continue to be grateful because I am very passionate about politics. I have always said to the women I encounter and interact with that politics is not fighting. We should support our parties with honesty and peace. Women were reluctant to take charge in matters relating to the community but the training from Gender Links made me a brave woman. Another important milestone for me was that in the year 2000, my husband passed away leaving me with 4 children to take care of. This meant that I had to work hard and in doing so, I became a representative of widowed women and orphans in my community.

Where is 'Mamorobane Ngakane now?

I have encountered with Gender Links many times now. I first knew about Gender Links when I was a councillor in 2011 as they were training councillors about gender issues. It was the first organisation that gave us councillors rigorous and detailed training on gender issues at a time when people did not want to hear anything about gender. People's assumption was that this thing would encourage women to disrespect their husband. However, Gender Links working together with the Ministry of Gender explained the concepts to us very well.

More recently I was part of the Women in Politics workshops that Gender Links held here in Tsoelikana Council in order to prepare us women for the elections in October. I benefitted a great deal from the training. It had a focus on how us women can participate in politics and we were encouraged to participate as much as we can. The workshop was a great influence on my campaign. I applied all the tactics and principles that I was taught when I was running my campaigns and I believe this helped my community to see the importance of women's representation in the governance.

I am so happy to have been re-elected as a Councillor and since we began work in the office I have been conducting few public gatherings about gender issues. A key focus has been addressing the issues that affect most women and men in relationships or married people.

HIV/AIDS continues to be a major problem in our community and I continue to encourage men to join support groups.

I am encouraged and motivated to continue doing this work by people such as Minister Ponts'oSekatle of Local government and Minister MathabisoLepono of the Gender Ministry. These women are not merely women in politics but are visible in the society and one can see them doing their jobs effectively. They are women making a difference and they are my role models. I aspire to be like them and believe I am also making a difference in the lives of those I serve. Many people approach me for advice and counselling, particularly on family matters. This has made me realise that people regard me as a very important person in the community. In addition the fact that my community re-elected me was a huge vote of confidence in me as a leader.

Future Plans

I have been home based care worker for some time now and I still do my best in supporting people living with HIV/AIDS and their affected families. In the future, I intend to be part of government's plan to achieve this goal of "zero new infections" in 2015. We have already made major achievements in encouraging women and men to test regularly, in particular pregnant women.

Name of politician – 'MathatoMabitle

Country - Lesotho

Village - Mokhotlong, Saneqebethu Community Council

Age group - 41

Education Level - Secondary

Who is 'Mathato Mabitle?



I am a Mosotho woman aged 41 years from the village of Linotsing in Mokhotlong district. I contested the second local government elections as an independent candidate. In my village, there are Home Based Care Support Groups and I am a member of one of them. These groups are comprised of women and men with a common goal of caring for the community. There are also women health workers that assist pregnant women in attending check-ups and taking care of themselves. Besides being a volunteer in the health care field, I am involved in farming activities and am a successful farmer.

Growing up, I had no interest in politics whatsoever. But with time, people saw potential in me and my community insisted that I compete in local government elections. Some people said that I have what it takes to be a councillor. To be honest, I was not sure whether I was happy, confused or afraid of the challenge. Nonetheless, I just told myself that if people believed in me, then I should do the same.

My community gave me all the support I needed. I was extremely nervous. Contesting as an independent candidate against those with political party back-up was quite a challenge. My thoughts were that if I happened to win this election, I would pursue the improvement of village health centres so as to ensure access to medical supplies by all people. I also encouraged women in my locality to stand united and to give each other support regardless of whether those competing were independent candidates or represented their political parties. What mattered was for women to have a voice in decision-making structures.

'Mathato Mabitle's Campaign Journey

On 29 July 2011 I held a public gathering in the Boiketlo village and I could tell that the people had become extremely demoralised by politics. In my campaign, I reminded people of the fact that each individual is free and that we are under His Majesty's kingdom. This gave each of us the right to freedom of speech without any threat as long as exercising one's right did not harm anyone.

The major area of dissatisfaction amongst the community was that once politicians were elected into office, they forgot about those who elected them. I reminded them that they had a right to approach the Council office to raise those and other concerns.

At the end of my presentations, people seemed to have a different perception of things as compared to when I started. This was because I used some of the ideas I got from the training workshop we had with Gender Links on gender equality, representation and participation in politics. I also made them aware of the important laws that apply to us as Basotho. At the end of the discussion, I could feel the general enthusiasm from people to participate in the elections. I saw it as a huge achievement when people decided to vote in the elections instead of being despondent and not voting.

I also held a public gathering in Thaba-Khubelu Village at Mapoteng. The attendance was not good but I continued with the discussions. The people were very happy with what I had to say. I discussed issues that affects us as Basotho especially the laws on gender and equality. Again people complained about elected officials forgetting the promises made to the people once in office. I made every effort to remind them that they always had a say in how they were governed and inform of the different avenues available to them to raise their concerns. Overall the meeting was successful.

I held a public gathering in Mohlanapeng village on 20 August 2011. The gathering was a success and people had been expecting me. In this village the people simply applauded what I had to say and asked very few questions. Many did not have any awareness at all on gender issues but were enlightened by the discussions. Some people were opposed to the notion of a right to gender equality. I took this as a challenge to try to improve their understanding on the subject.

I held a public gathering once more in the Thaba-Khubelu village on 17 September 2011; the community had requested the gathering. They listened attentively to what I had to say and they even asked questions. They however maintained the fact that we come to them when we want to be elected and once we are elected we forget everything about them. I realised that going to the people to ask for their support in the elections and going back to serve them seemed to be a very tough task.

On 18 September 2011, I held my most successful meeting in the Kholokoe village. In my discussion, I did not leave behind the issues about the individual freedom. The same grievances were expressed by this group as by previous groups.

My final public meeting was on 20 September 2011 in the village of Linots'ing village where I reside. The meeting went very smoothly despite there being three candidates competing and addressing the people. I had a simple message, that urged people to give women the opportunity to take part in law making decisions by electing them. I emphasised that it was not wise to sideline women especially because most often men leaders could not always recognise women's needs.

It was a difficult campaign.

Where is 'Mathato Mabitle now?

In early 2011 I attended SADC Gender Protocol Village Workshop, organised by Gender Links, at Mateanong Community Council. It was my first encounter with GL. The workshop was very important, as it was my first time to even know that Lesotho was part of SADC countries and more importantly had signed the SADC Gender Protocol. We were also encouraged to publicise it in our communities. This is how I became involved with the GL

Women in Politics workshops that were subsequently held at Mateanong Council to help me prepare for contestation in 2nd local government elections as an independent candidate.

I was never in any doubt that contesting for elections would be a big challenge especially when as a woman and standing as an independent candidate. Most voters identify with a party and hence vote for political parties. My community encouraged me to stand as they had seen the potential in me, but the fact of the matter was that I was an independent. Besides all the challenges at my community and different villages I visited, the workshop helped me a lot as I was able to plan my campaigns effectively and also know what to say to people that I wanted to vote for me. The workshops helped me to have clarity and be truthful during my presentations on the campaigns trail.

Unfortunately, I did not win but I am continuing with my work of supporting HIV/AIDS groups. I have also been talking about gender issues at those support group meetings and in other public gatherings.

I am inspired to continue with the work I do in the community because of my role models. These people have shown me that even the smallest bit counts. Most people laughed at me when they asked about my role models and they heard what I said, and I think it's because they expected to hear me mentioning some of the people in high ranking. My role models are Mrs. Mats'epo Rasethunts'a a teacher from Linotsing Primary School and Chief Mafu Lerotholi, these two women had been an inspiration to me for a very long time now because of their hard work and commitment they have shown in serving the community. I look up to them daily.

Their actions help me realise that I am making a difference in the lives of others. When people encouraged me to stand for elections, it made me look back and realise that people recognise and acknowledge the work I do of helping sick and elderly people. When people decide they want you as their leader it is really something that shows you are making a difference in their lives.

I have always wanted to be a leader and a businesswoman. I am passionate about creating jobs, especially for the youth. For now I am sellings chickens and eggs and I also sew and sell clothes. I will stand in the next local government elections in 2016.

Name of politician - 'Mamojalefa Jonase

Country - Lesotho

Constituency - Quthing, Qomoqomong Community Council

Age group - 37

Education Level - Primary

Who is 'Mamojalefa Jonase?

I am a 37 year old woman from Bolahla Village in the District of Quthing. When I decided to contest for the 2011 local government elections, members of my community were impressed and they saw leadership qualities in me. Sadly, there were other people from the party, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), who felt that I was not fit to represent their electoral division in council. Despite criticisms, I accepted the nomination and pursued my goals.

I am a farmer and a member of a Home Based Care Support which helps vulnerable groups such as orphaned children, the elderly persons and people living with HIV and AIDS.

Since the age of 15, I had always wanted to be a leader. I remember how people used to say I was authoritative when I spoke because I commanded full attention and compelled people to listen to me. From then, I knew that I had some form of potential and joined politics as a young adult.

I felt confident that I would win the elections if I got enough support from the community. I encouraged women in particular to come together, take charge of their lives and participate in local politics and any other community initiatives.

'MamojalefaJoanse's Campaign Journey

I faced many challenges in my journey of representing women in local government. On 20 July 2011 I met with men and women in my village and told them about the importance of electing women who would represent them in the coming local government elections. I asked for their support and told them that I was not only going to represent women from the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) but every woman regardless of her party, denomination or status. They understood and promised to support me.

On 30 July 2011, I paid one of my neighbours a visit and I found her and her two daughters talking about the upcoming elections. They seemed very understanding about women contesting in elections. While still talking a rumor came up that was being spread by some community members from other parties. They had said that if I won the election it would be evidence that God did not exist. We were so shocked by those rumors; however I did not



despair because I knew that such sentiment was to be expected. There would always be difficulties but I would hold on until the last minute.

The journey was very difficult and we encountered all manner of challenge. I was encouraged in early September when women from neighbouring villages wrote a letter to me telling me they would support me all the way. I was very encouraged by their gesture, especially because they wanted development and supported women's rights.

There were also some amazing and perplexing moments along the way. On 18 September 2011 while I was talking to some people about the development of the country one person made degrading remarks about the event. I happened to hear and recognize that person. What shocked me most was that she was one of the people who had attended the Gender Links' training workshop in Qomoqomong Council. I told the people to ignore her because I felt she had shallow knowledge about politics. She regarded politics as a fight which was not the case.

Towards the end of the campaign, 21 September 2011, I had begun to wonder if I would finish the journey; it was so difficult. After working so hard to convince people to vote for you, others would make such degrading and discouraging comments against you, causing people to doubt your capabilities and your integrity. Some even said things like "Are you relieving her from poverty?" and I wondered what my poverty had to do with serving the community or whether it meant that only wealthy people could do a better job.

When I was busy campaigning in the community for local government elections, I hardly received good news. Some people were making allegations that I use *muti* in pursuit of victory. Most of these allegations were from the people who supported the opposition parties. One cannot help it but wonder why their parties did not recommend them for the elections. Some said they would not vote for someone who did not study beyond the Primary School because she would not be able to go to the parliament as she does not know English. I began to ask myself as to how parliament has anything to do with the local government elections. Nonetheless, I stood firm and decided to give it a shot. I was prepared to accept any verdict because I was expecting to win or lose. I prayed everyday that God would help me accept both the good and the bad in life.

I knew that if I won it would not be because of my own wisdom or my supporters but it would be the will of God. If I lost I would accept the outcome whole-heartedly. I would not despair but acknowledge that it was not my time.

Where is she now?

On 3 October 2011, I was certain that God had had his way of performing miracles. I cannot explain the joy that I felt my heart when the proportional allocation seats were announced. My party had won both seats in Qomoqomong and I was one of the women who got the seat. I am very happy and I thank everybody who took part in these tough elections. Above all this, I thank God. God Bless Lesotho, God Bless Basotho.

Name of politician – NtinaAlinah Ngakane

Country - Lesotho

Village - Qacha's Nek, Tsoelikane Community Council

Age group - 24

Education Level - Secondary



Who is Ntina Ngakane?

I am a young vibrant woman aged 24 from Likhohloaneng village in Qacha's Nek district. With the announcement of election date for the Lesotho second local government election, I decided I would not miss the opportunity of a life time. What seemed most appealing most to me was the introduction of the 30% special seats for women in local government. I was so sure this would widen my chances of being a councillor.

Since my childhood, I have always been a big dreamer. I wanted to be the first female Prime Minister in Lesotho and I started to develop an

interest in politics in the year 2000 when I was still in High School participating in debates and subjects like Development Studies. The issues raised in debates and things that were happening at that time made me eager to participate in politics as an adult. I have been an active member of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) for over three years. I felt I stood a better chance of getting nominated by my party and winning the polls this time around. Once I found out that I was listed to represent my party in special seats for women, I did not hesitate to accept the nomination.

I had decided that if I won the election I would help all women's associations in my community by linking them to NGO's that can build their capacity in growing the work that they do. I have always believed in women and their potential and I wanted to bring change to their lives. We still exist in difficult times in Lesotho where women are treated as minors.

Ntina Ngakane's Campaign Journey

It came to my attention as a woman that people have no understanding about gender equality, human rights and development. I felt so challenged when I saw how well some women conducted themselves while in power and it made me believe that there was nothing a man could do that I could not do. I contested for women only seats under proportional representation in the 2011 local government elections.

I grew up in a family that is passionate about politics and I started participating in the year 2000. My dream was to become a female Prime Minister hence I was involved in my party's committee structures while still in school. In 2008 I had to quit school and I enrolled for computer studies in town. I would like to be more educated than my male siblings as I feel that they have received better treatment from my parents than me because of my gender.

In 2009, I went for a driving school. I was still young but I worked hard and got a drivers' license. My brother was totally against my education. He said it was worthless for my parents to educate me since I would eventually get married and they would not benefit from my education. Conflicts began in the family. I decided to hold on to politics since my education was at stake and I had no say in my family.

In 2011 I attended Gender Links' training workshop where I got empowered. I became brave and told my parents about what I heard at the workshop. They seemed to understand and appreciated what I told them. Since then, my life changed. I was no longer sidelined and I am very proud of my parents. I started being really active in politics and I was within party structures for two years. I enjoyed the experience very much. In the third year, I was elected as the Secretary and I spent two years working hard in that position. I was later elected again into a constituency committee as the secretary. This was very tough as I had to travel long distances while delivering mails. Sometimes I would use my limited resources for transport. I held on because I liked politics but this put a lot of strain on my parents. Each time I was depressed, I would feel refreshed after attending party conference.

In 2010, we had to hold elections for the Youth Council and the youth from Tsoelike recommended me. I was very happy and I worked even harder. In 2011 I encouraged the youth from my party to work together and form income generating schemes. We made concerts to revive the youth, especially those who had children out of wedlock and those whose marriages did not workout. We tried to empower them to face challenges they encounter in life. We managed to generate a lot of money with these activities and the whole initiative was a success.

In 2011, I contested for women proportional representation seats in the local government election. This spurred my peers to do the same. Fortunately, I won. My recommendation as a young female to other young people is that we live in difficult times where everybody has to stand for him or herself and know what he or she wants in life. "Youth wake up, we are living in difficult times, people are dying from of HIV and AIDS, try to take good care of yourselves every time, avoid liquor and violence because a lot is still expected from us."

Where is Ntina Ngakane now?

I come from a very political family; that is where I fell in love with politics and I had always dreamt of being a leader at some stage. I remember my friends would laugh at me when I mentioned that I want to be the woman Prime Minister in Lesotho.

In 2011 I attended women in politics workshop that was organized by Gender Links and that was when I first met GL. It was that time when we were preparing for the 2nd Local government elections. The training was more on empowering women, encouraging and supporting the ones who were already in politics to participate more. The knowledge gained helped us as a party because we were representing the party. I managed to use the skills I learnt especially when planning our campaigns and the training helped me to prepare what to say to people during the campaigns.

I was elected as a Councillor through the special seats for women. Together with the person who contested under FPTP, we are trying to do public gatherings to determine the basic needs of the people in our community. We are also planning land allocations for the community.

I am encouraged by the work of women like Minister Ponto'sekatlle of Local government. I realise the potential she has as woman and leader operating in a portfolio that is so

demanding and big where people's expectations of her are great. The passion and strength she has motivates me every day to strive to make a difference in the lives of others.

I want to believe that I am making a huge difference in people's lives especially young people in my community. When my age mates heard that I was contesting for the local government elections, they were surprised. Some came to me to ask why I did it; they were saying Councillors were supposed to be old people, but I knew what I wanted. When the government introduced the youth council they came to me to ask for advice and that I had motivated them as a young woman leader. They wanted me to participate in the youth council. This made me realise that the position I hold and the work I do as a young leader has impact on other young people.

This motivates me to continue working those youth elected in our council, to do weekly public gatherings to motivate young people so that they can be leaders in future. I believe that we have so much potential.

Table 3: Local Government 2011 Election Results

Political Party	Total number of Councillors by sex and by %				FPTP Results for Men and Women Councillors				Women Reserved Seats Results	
	Women	Men	All Councillors	% of Women	Women	Men	Total	% of women	Women	% of women
Ruling LCD	411	280	691	59.5	221	280	501	44.1	190	63.7
ABC	98	84	182	53.8	22	84	106	20.7	76	25.5
BNP	21	13	34	61.7	2	13	15	13.3	19	6.4
NIP	4	2	6	50	0	2	2	0	2	0.7
LPC	4	3	7	57	1	3	4	2.5	3	1.0
LWP	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0
BAC	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Other parties	14	13	27	51.8	6	13	19	31.5	8	2.7
Independents	30	143	173	-	30	143	173	17.3	-	-
Elected Chiefs	45	108	153	29.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	627	649	1276		282	541	823		298	
	49.1%	50.9%	100%	49.1%	34.0%	65.7%	100%	34.3%	100%	100%

Source: Compiled from the IEC Database, 2011 and MLGC information. Compiled by Matseliso Mapetla, University of Lesotho.

Lesotho local government election results – the gendered dimension

The table above reflects the 2011 local government election results obtained from IEC and MLGC databases⁵. A total of 1276 Councillors were elected in the October polls. This number is made up of men and women elected through the FPTP seats, special reserved seats for women and elected chiefs. Of the total number of councillors, women make up 49.1% while men make 50.9%

282 women out of a total of 823 people were elected into local government through the FPTP, giving them 34% of FPTP seats. These women were successful in the “winner take all” system and contested against men. In this category the highest number of women (221 – 44.1%) were elected from the then ruling Lesotho Congress of Democracy (LCD) party. The remaining 61 were elected from opposition parties with 3 smaller parties having no women at all. 30 women or 17.3% of successful female candidates were independent, having 8 more representatives than the biggest opposition party.

Men negotiated with women and convinced them that they could contest the election in the special seats. This is why there is a decrease in women's representation. Pont'soSekatle

Under a total of 298 reserved seats the majority of these – 190 (63.7%) - were won by the LCD with the All Basotho Convention (ABC) won 76 (25.5%) of the votes the two parties altogether accounted for approximately 90% of the reserved seats.

So what do these results tell us about reserving seats for women?

Table 4: Lesotho election results and trends in reserved seats for women

Election outcomes	Implications on women's seat reservation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The ruling LCD party through an internal 30% quota policy managed to attain a total of 411 votes for women out of a possible 1276.• Women LCD candidates have the highest representation in local government at 32%.• Women within LCD did very well in the FPTP contest. Within their party they claimed 44.1% of the seats and 26.8% of the total FPTP seats. Therefore within the 34.3% of women represented within FPTP, women from LCD are the majority.	The good performance of the LCD points to the fact that over time having quotas for women candidates combined with a seat reservation system pays off. While it could be argued that LCD had the advantage of being the ruling party, women in the party fared well in both FPTP and reserved seats. The overall results for the LCD contradict that women cannot win elections.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LCD gains within reserved seats (190) are proportionally less than through FPTP (221). They are however almost	In terms of women's representation in decision –making, the LCD party has done extremely well. What remains to be asked

⁵At the time of writing this report final sex disaggregated results per district and council were not readily available from the IEC. This report makes use of a compilation done by Matseliso Mapetla, senior lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the National University of Lesotho.

<p>the same and hence double the number gained in the open contest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The result is that the women in the party have a greater total representation in local government than the men (411 or 32%). 	<p>however is how other parties can make similar gains and also how these gains can be translated into other levels of government. An additional critical question is how these gains can be translated into positive results in development and service delivery within local authorities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposition parties, for instance ABC and Basotho National Party (BNP) have significantly greater numbers of women elected through reserved seats as opposed to FPTP. ABC women won 76 (25.5%) of the special seats compared to just 22 in FPTP. The women in ABC won 53.8% of total ABC votes. BNP won 19 of the reserved seats compared to 2 in FPTP. Women won 61.7% of the total BNP votes. 	<p>The competition for political party relevance is still very high in Lesotho. Women in opposition parties generally fare poorly in the open contest but supersede men through the special seat votes. This suggests that men are prioritised in FPTP for opposition parties. These results are continued challenges for deepening democracy both in Lesotho and the sub-region. However ABC with 25.5% of the special reserved seats and BNP with 6.4% of these, there is some diversity of representation creeping being ensured in local authorities. Women are not homogeneous and these results should ensure broader representation in local decision making.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all three major parties (LCD, ABC and BNP) the more successful candidates were women. Independent candidates and elected chiefs have significantly less women represented. Out of 173 Independent candidates 143 were men and 30 were women. These women represent a mere 0.23% of the total elected local government officials. Out of 153 elected chief⁶ candidates, 45 of these nominated by their peers, were women representing 0.35% of the total number of councillors. Both these categories were not represented in the reserved seats. 	<p>Reserved seats on a PR basis have been significant for political parties in that distribution of seats amongst parties is guaranteed. This is positive for building democracy and consolidating gender equality. For women outside of political parties or within traditional leadership structures, they continue to be subject to culture, tradition and a political environment that is unkind to women standing alone. This demonstrates that women not only require a quota system or reserved seats but also political parties or other bodies that can provide them with the necessary support to stand for office.</p>

⁶Chiefs are not elected by ordinary members of Lesotho society. They are nominated by their peers and voted for by fellow traditional leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

Lesotho as test case for quotas

Why Lesotho?

Lesotho has experimented with two systems of reservation for women in two different elections and in both cases they have attained more than the envisioned 30% of representation. In 2005 women represented 58% of those elected into local government and 49% in 2011 elections.

The SADC context

The majority of SADC countries hold elections on a FPTP basis. Tanzania is an often cited example of a mixed system combining PR and reserved seats for women at the national level. South Africa also has a mixed FPTP and PR system operating at the local level but there is no system of reservation or a quota for women.



The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 fell short of legislating a quota in spite of various efforts by civil society organisations to secure guarantees that political parties would allocate at least 50% of the spaces on the party list for women. Party list allocations in South Africa remain at the discretion of party decision makers. The African National Congress (ANC) is the only party in South Africa with a 30% quota for women.

Lesotho operates under the MMP system nationally and an FPTP with 30% seat reservation in all constituencies for women. This has ensured that women's equal representation continues in spite of the decrease in 2011.

Lesotho's success is laudable and the case presents many interesting lessons for other countries in the sub-region that continue to operate under FPTP and yet yield little to nothing for women after elections. Lesotho attempted one system – reserved electoral divisions – and this system did not work. While it was affirmative action, men felt discriminated against. Taking into account the challenges inherent in the first system, Lesotho learnt from the Tanzania model and adapted what they learnt to the local peculiarities.

Taking into account the SADC Protocol

Lesotho held the country's first local government elections in 2005 and was considering how to address gender concerns at a time when the African Union and the SADC Heads of State were agreeing on women's quotas in decision making.

"Initially Lesotho desired to meet the SADC target of 30%. The Local Government Amendment Act of 2004 brought about the one third reserved seats for women"
Rethabile Pholo

Lesotho was a signatory to the SADC Protocol and other conventions in 2005 and had an obligation to domesticate and implement the regional instrument at the time of their inaugural local government election. Prevailing political and cultural beliefs relating to the perceived status of women posed a challenge to willing and committed institutions such as the MGYSR that was planning to achieve the SADC goals by 2015.

Institutions such as the IEC have also been instrumental in achieving the excellent results of the last two elections and working towards regional obligations. Leading up to 2005 the IEC was part of recommending a piece of legislation in parliament to ensure the goals of parity were achieved. Again after dissatisfaction expressed by men and political parties, the IEC's Legal Consultative Committee investigated how the country would continue to empower women while avoiding further discrimination of men. The Committee was concerned that an election under the 2005 guide lines would not be smooth and peaceful and so it was better to change the system. Despite the Court ruling, IEC was committed to ensuring women's participation and representation in governance and upholding regional obligations.

Lesotho achieved slightly below parity in 2011 local government elections but by 2016 the country will have doubled efforts with respect to gender equality. Between the 2011 and 2016 election there were opportunities to do away with a system of reservations for women altogether but four factors have prevented this. A commitment to regional obligations that shaped the discussions on gender parity in local government, the role of committed state institutions, support of the SADC Gender Unit to ensure the country achieved its commitments and potential of a quota along PR lines to ensure more than one single political party would have a share of the election pie.

In order to double impact and results of efforts by 2016, there will be need for more commitment to the Protocol by political parties and increased efforts by the SADC Gender Unit to lobby political parties to implement internal quotas. Lesotho remains a case study for other countries in the region.

The future of gender and local government elections

Lesotho has done well thus far with respect to gender representation at the local government level. Efforts of civil society organisations, MGYSR, the Gender Technical Committee (GTC) amongst others are evidence of this.

There is confidence in Lesotho that by 2016 the country will have exceeded beyond the 50% mark of women's representation. In fact by 2016 the aim is to have included other marginalised groups in governance.

The Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy remains committed to ensuring women's representation at all levels of decision-making in Local Government and this is very promising. During her interview, the Minister pointed out that the majority of senior positions within the Ministry are occupied by women. At one point the District administration was 50% men and the other 50% women. Although this had decreased and men were now represented at 80% in the Districts, key positions within the overall ministry such as Lands and Planning Department were headed by women.

*"Women need to realise they can also be in politics. Politics is not a family where a man is the head."
Chairperson, BNP Women's League*

The various Women's Leagues of the political parties appear to be shifting their perspective from existing simply to assist men with the campaigns and secure the women's vote for them but are slowly shifting to conscientising and raising awareness amongst their female members (first) on the importance of women's representation.

Overall it is evident that Lesotho has the legal frameworks in place to make huge strides in gender equality in local government. The challenges however remain at party level as well

as in the mind set of the people to attain the regional standards by 2015 or in time for the next local government elections. A possibility to ensure political parties set quotas for their women members may possibly lie with the SADC Secretariat or the Gender Unit. Only by compelling political parties regionally to comply with a regional standard will we see parties select more women to stand for elections, especially in the non-reserved seats.

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Annex A: List of interviewees

ORGANISATION	NAME	DESIGNATION	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Basotho National Party		Chairperson – Women's League	16 March 2012
Independent Electoral Commission	Rethabile Pholo	Deputy Director	15 March 2012
Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports	Matau Futho-Letsatsi	Director, Gender Department	20 January 2012
Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy	Pont'so Sekatle (Hon)	Minister	16 March 2012
Democratic Congress		Chairperson – Women's League	16 March 2012
Women in Law Southern Africa	Libakiso Mathlo	Director	20 January 2012