

GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT

GENDER IN THE 2011 LESOTHO LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS



Women participants in GL Women in Politics Workshops, Qomoqomong Lesotho.

Photo by Ntolo Lekau

The proportion of women elected in the October 2011 Local Government elections in Lesotho decreased from 58% (2005 elections) to 49.1%¹. However, the result is considered a more representative reflection of the aspirations of Basotho people after amendments to the quota system in the 2011 elections. Lesotho is also still in the lead with regard to women's representation in local government in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Lesotho's bold experiments with quotas in a First Past the Post (FPTP) Electoral System at the local level offers many lessons for the region in the count down to 2015 - the target date for gender parity in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

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Key facts: Lesotho Local Government

- Lesotho is a Constitutional monarchy with two spheres of governance - central and local.
- Local government is established through the Local Government Act (1997) and Local Government Elections Act (1998).
- The 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 (chiefs) are also represented in local authorities.
- Lesotho held its first Local Government elections in April 200, and second in October 2011.
- Women constituted 58% of the total in the first elections and 49% in the 2011 elections.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN LESOTHO

Lesotho's local authorities previously comprised 128 Community councils, 10 District councils and one Municipal council. In 2011 the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy (MLGC) revised the arrangement of local authorities. The new demarcations maintain one 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.

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.

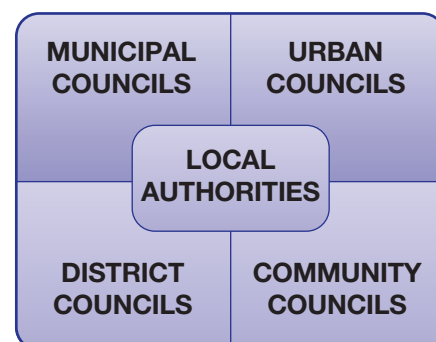
Community Councils

Community councils are based in primarily village or rural communities.

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.



GENDER AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN SADC

The table below summarises provisions on Gender and Governance in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development to be achieved by 2015.

SADC Protocol Governance Provisions

ARTICLE	TARGET AREA	TARGET AREA
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 and enabling participation	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.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The table below summarises the barriers to women's political participation raised in interviews.

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.

CHALLENGES	COMMENTS
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

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 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. In this system a party can have a significant proportion of the vote, but still have no seats in parliament.

Elections - Reservation of women's seats 2005

In 2005 Lesotho adopted a system of 30% of all constituencies being reserved for women in a FPTP system - in other words only women could contest in these constituencies. Women and men could both compete on a winner-takes-all basis in the remaining 70% of seats. The Electoral Act made provision for this system to rotate to different constituencies for at least three elections, following which it would be assessed.

“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

“The constituencies were even called female constituencies.”
Matau Futho-Letsatsi

Women had a guaranteed 30% of the seats. In addition they won 28% of the seats in the openly contested elections. This resulted in 58% women's representation - the only instance at the time of women constituting the majority in an area of decision-making in SADC.

But this success came at a cost. Tsepo Molefe, a farmer from Litjotjela challenged Lesotho's legislated 30 percent quota for women in local government on grounds that it infringed his Constitutional rights. The Court ruled in favour of the electoral law as “justifiable discrimination.” Unhappy with this decision, political parties lobbied the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to investigate and initiate a law more favourable to all Basotho. Political parties argued that they needed to be free to field candidates in any constituency. The IEC embarked on a study trip to Tanzania that included members of political parties and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy (MLGC). This led to an amendment of the Electoral Act for the 2011 elections.



Tsepo Molefe and Mateboho Tsepame, who won the reserved seat in Litjotjela, in the 2005 elections. Photo by Colleen Lowe Morna

2011 Elections - The Tanzania model

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.”
Rethabile Pholo

Learning from the Tanzania model, Lesotho amended the Electoral Law ahead of the 2011 elections. The new system did away with reserved seats at the Constituency level. However, it introduced 30% seats reserved for women over and above these seats, distributed between parties on a Proportional Representation basis.

Civil society organisations including Women in Law Southern Africa and Gender Links worked with the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation on a 50/50 campaign to ensure that the new system delivered

gender parity. The campaign sought to equip women politicians with knowledge and skills on gender, issues of governance, electoral laws and running political campaigns. GL's Centres of Excellence for gender in local government includes developing and implementing a campaign. In the ten COE Councils, GL worked with women politicians to develop their campaigns.



Participants at the Women in Politics Workshop, Qomoqomong.
Photo by Ntolo Lekau

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	221	44.1
ABC	98	84	182	53.8	22	84	106	20.7	22	20.7
BNP	21	13	34	61.7	2	13	15	13.3	2	13.3
NIP	4	2	6	50	0	2	2	0	0	0
LPC	4	3	7	57	1	3	4	2.5	1	2.5
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	6	31.5
Independents	30	143	173	-	30	143	173	17.3	30	17.3
Elected Chiefs	45	108	153	29.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	627	649	1276		282	541	823		282	
	49.1%	50.9%	100%	49.1%	34.0%	65.7%	100%	34.3%	34.0%	34.3%

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

The table above reflects the 2011 local government election results obtained from IEC and MLGC databases². A total of 1276 Councillors won seats in the October 2011 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%

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'so Sekatle

Women won 282 out of 823 FPTP seats (34%). These women successfully contested elections in the “winner take all” system. This is a significant achievement and increase from the 28% women who came in through the openly contested FPTP seats in 2005. It shows that since the first elections women have become more confident and capable of contesting against men. The highest

proportion of women who won seats in the openly contested elections (221 or 44.1%) come from the then ruling Lesotho Congress of Democracy (LCD) party. The remaining 61 are from opposition parties. Three smaller parties have no women at all. 30 women or 17.3% of successful female candidates were independent, having 8 more representatives than the biggest opposition party.

Of the 298 reserved seats distributed on a PR basis, the LCD won the majority of these - 190 (63.7%) - with the All Basotho Convention (ABC) winning 76 (25.5%) of the seats. The two parties account for approximately 90% of the reserved seats.

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT - MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The following are some examples of women in local government who are making a difference in their communities. These are excerpts of their stories, in their own words. Their full stories can be accessed on: <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/women-in-politics>, a growing data base of the stories of women in local government in the SADC region. The challenge going forward is both to maintain gender parity in local government in Lesotho as well as ensure gender responsive governance.

² At 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.



Mamorobane Ngakane - Qacha's Nek, Tsoelikane Community Council

“Before joining politics, I volunteered as a village health worker in my community. In 2005 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 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. My community re-elected me. I took this as a huge vote of confidence in me as a leader.

With the second local government election approaching, I decided to run for office as an LCD candidate again. 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.

In 2000, my husband passed away leaving me with 4 children to take care of. This meant that I had to work hard. In doing so, I became a representative of widowed women and orphans in my community. I am encouraged and motivated to continue doing this work by people such as Minister Ponto's Sekatle of Local government and Minister Mathabiso Lepono 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.”



Mathato Mabitle - Mokhotlong, Sanqebethu Community Council

“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 comprise 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 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. 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.

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.

In early 2011 I attended a 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 held at Mateanong Council to help me prepare for local government elections as an independent candidate.

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."



Mamojalefa Jonase - Quthing, Qomoqomong Community Council

"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. The journey was very difficult and we encountered all manner of challenges.

I had a tough campaign. Opposition supporters made allegations that I use *muti* in pursuit of victory. On 3 October 2011, I was certain that God had had his way of performing miracles. I cannot explain the joy that I felt in my heart when the IEC announced the proportional allocation of seats. 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."



Ntina Alinah Ngakane - Qacha's Nek, Tsoelikane Community Council

"With the announcement of election date for the Lesotho second local government election, I decided I would not miss the opportunity of a lifetime. What seemed most appealing 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 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 2000 while still in High School participating in debates and subjects like Development Studies. 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.

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.

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's Sekatle 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."



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