Gender audit of the 2024 Botswana elections



Mock rally during the Palapye WPP Academy.

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

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Acronyms

AP	Alliance for Progressives
BCP	Botswana Congress Parties
BDP	Botswana Democratic Party
BMD	Botswana Movement for Democracy
BNF	Botswana National Front
BPF	Botswana Patriotic Front
BPP	Botswana Peoples Party
BRP	Botswana Republican Party
Btv	Botswana Television
BOCONGO	Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations
EU	European Union
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
II	International IDEA
FPTP	First Past The Post
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GL	Gender Links
NPGAD	National Policy on Gender and Development
OP	Office of the President
PR	Proportional Representation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC EOM	SADC Election Observer Mission
SEMP	Special Elected Members of Parliament
UDC	Umbrella for Democratic Change
WPP	Women Political Participation

Executive Summary

On November 1, 2024, Chief Justice Terrence Rannowane stepped up the podium to declare Advocate Duma Gideon Boko the Sixth President of the Republic of Botswana and his coalition, Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) the new government. Botswana erupted in a mix of emotions: of shock and joy. The call ended a 58-year-old grip on power by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). A new dawn, a second republic, the world declared!

Yet an uneasy truth accompanied these celebrations as women's representation in every sphere of political decision-making took a knock, raising fundamental questions about the meaning of democracy. The gains made over decades to push for gender equality and greater participation of women in politics went up in smoke as only three out of the 28 women who contested for seats in the National Assembly made it.[1]

Botswana, host of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) secretariat, slid to 8.7% women in parliament, the lowest in the regional groups' ranking, at the very moment when all countries around the world are working towards women's equal and effective participation in political decision-making. Women's representation at the local level, a key sphere for women, has dropped with each successive election to the current level of 15%. The only glimmer of hope is the increase of women in cabinet, from 17% to 22%, and indications that the new government is committed to changing the narrative.

Table 1: Women's representation in political decision-making in Botswana

	2009	2014	2019	2024	Comments
Women MPs	7.9%	9.5%	10.9%	**8.7%**	There has been fluctuation over 15-year period, having improved to over 10% during the 2019-2024 period. Elected members remain lower than Specially Elected MPs. This percentage is now the lowest in the SADC region.
Women Councillors	23.1%	18.5%	19%	**15%**	A steady decline in women's representation in local government to the lowest yet.
Ministers	11%	18.75%	16.6%	**22%**	Deliberate efforts to increase women's representation.
Assistant Ministers	28.5%	25%	28.5%	**10%**	This is the first time Botswana has only one-woman assistant minister.
Speaker	100%	100%	0%	**0%**	The Speaker is elected by MPs. Dr Margaret Nasha served as the first women speaker with Gladys Kokorwe taking over in 2014.
Deputy Speaker	0%	0%	0%	**100%**	The Deputy Speaker is elected from among elected MPs. First time MP Helen Manyeneng is the first woman Deputy Speaker

Source: Compiled by GL with data collected for the WPP Africa Barometer.

Table 1 tracks women's political participation in Botswana over four elections since 2009. Red shows where there have been declines; green where there have been gains. Overall, there were more losses than gains in women's political representation in Botswana in the 2024 elections.

[1] Bots: Women - the missing voice as elections begin - Gender Links

The 2024 elections featured a six-week gender and media-monitoring project, the first of its kind. The study found that women constituted a mere 4% of news sources in elections coverage. Gender Links (GL) Women's Political Participation manager Mabetha Manteboheleng commented that this outcome "is a stark reminder of just how far we still have to go in achieving gender equality: that the media, which should give 'voice to the voiceless', silences women during elections, the most important of all democratic projects."

GL conducted this gender audit of elections under the Enhancing the Inclusion of ***Women in Political Participation (WPP) in Africa*** project in Botswana. The GL-led project focussed on three areas of capacity building: training academies, inter-generational dialogue, and mentoring.

Over 100 women politicians, from five political formations - the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF), Botswana Congress Party (BCP) and UDC member parties, Botswana National Party (BNF) and the Alliance for Progressives (AP) graduated from the academies and 14 contested the elections. One Parliamentary candidate, Helen Pushie Manyeneng won, and five won council seats.[2] Three more went on to receive ministers' nominations, Maina Moruimang in Maun, and youths, Kesego Magapa in Mahalapye and Gorata Phakedi in Mabutsane.

The two young women in 2023 represented Botswana at the International IDEA funded inter-generational conference in Nairobi, Kenya. After the swearing in, the BNF/UDC youth activist, Phakedi was elected to seven council committees, gaining greater leadership roles, being elected to the publicity portfolio of the Botswana Association of Local Authorities (BALA) and the Mabutsane Council Gender Commissioner. BALA has worked with Gender Links on mainstreaming gender in the councils, among other programs.



Deputy Speaker, Helen Pushie Manyeneng on the campaign trail. A graduate of the WPP Academies, Pushie went on to win the Mmopane/Metsimotlhabe constituency.
Photo: Trevor Davies

[2] Bots: Woman deputy speaker, but fewer women MPs - Gender Links

Before the elections, GL facilitated four Political Party Dialogues with the main parties - UDC, BCP, BDP and BPF. Among the participants were the three UDC Parliamentarians, deputy speaker Helen Pushie Manyeneng, minister of Basic Education and Child Welfare, Nono Kgafela-Mokoka and the assistant minister in the Office of the President (OP), Maipelo Mophuting. Also part of the dialogues and many other GL programs in the last five years, is the newly elected deputy Mayor of Gaborone, Mankie Sekete.

Like many other African countries, Botswana follows the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system. Globally, the odds in this highly competitive system, often biased towards candidates with influence and resources, is heavily stacked against women. In Botswana, there are two special dispensation protocols in place, the Special Elected Members of Parliament (SEMP) and nominated councillors.

While leaders (including in the new government) have used these measures to help balance the scales, a *key conclusion of this report is that fundamental reform is required if women are to take their rightful seat at the political decision-making table*.

During the course of this project, women from across the political spectrum launched a campaign: *Molaomotheo, Buang Bomme*, a call for a new Constitution, with a new electoral system, and Special Temporary Measures, or quotas, to facilitate women's political participation. The previous government failed to take these recommendations seriously in its final report. A key, long-term contribution of the new government, which has signalled its intention to move ahead with Constitutional reform, would be to action these recommendations on women's political participation.

Background and objectives

Although Botswana is widely regarded as one of Africa's most progressive democracies, it lags significantly in promoting women's participation in politics. Botswana gained political independence in 1966. At the time, the representation of women in Parliament was non-existent. After independence, Botswana had three terms (15 years) of a male only Parliament until 1974 when two women came to Parliament through Special Nomination. Dr Gaositwe K. T. Chiepe became Minister of Commerce and Industry, while Ms Kebatshabile Disele remained a backbencher until her elevation to cabinet as Minister of Home Affairs in 1979.[3]

The opposition parties did not have a woman member of Parliament until in 2013, when Dr Habaudi Hubona of the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) was elected to Parliament after a by-election following the death Tshelang Masisi, a member of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party. This was short lived; she was in Parliament for less than a year only, losing general elections of 2014. Another woman member of the opposition elected into Parliament during the 2014 general elections, Same Bathobakae of the Botswana National Front (BNF) died in 2016. Since then, and until the most recent election, there has not been a woman MP from the opposition.

According to the World Economic Forum's 2022 Global Gender Gap Index, Botswana ranks 66th out of 146 countries. The index measures gender parity, economic opportunities, education, health and political leadership. The 2023 AFRO Barometer report on Gender Equality noted that despite Botswana's strides to gender equality and parity, in sub-Saharan Africa, the country is placed 14th among 36 countries, well behind top-rates Rwanda, Namibia and South Africa.

[3] Gretchen Bauer, 2011, Update on the Women's Movement in Botswana: Have Women Stopped Talking? African Studies Review; Vol. 54, No. 2

The recent election results will likely result in Botswana dropping even further in these stakes.

The 2024 Beijing + 30 country report notes that the Botswana government acceded to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). The report further states that Botswana continues to repeal discriminatory laws and replace with gender-responsive statutes. These include the Bail Bill adopted by Parliament in 2023, Penal Code Amendment of 2021, the Sexual Offenders Registry Act and the Anti-Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act of 2024.

The Beijing+30 country report also stated that the former president, Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi, had pledged to appoint 67% of SEMPs on retaining power. The Review Task Force, made up of government officials, civic society actors and academia, found the pledge justifiable as the now-former president had, since taking power in 2018, made significant appointments of women, such as of former Finance Minister Peggy Serame as well as the Court of Appeal president and the Commissioner of Police Dinah Marathe.

Constitutional Provisions

II Consortium on Women's Political Participation GL is part of the International Idea-led consortium of six organisations implementing the Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa project. The consortium focuses on eight African countries namely Botswana, Eswatini, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The consortium has five main areas of work which include Knowledge Generation, Documentation and Dissemination, training and capacity enhancement, Policy and Political Dialogues, Advocacy and Outreach, Peer-to-Peer Exchanges and Mentorship. The Embassy of Sweden in Ethiopia supports the project. The overall goal is to increase the political representation and participation of women in the SADC region and in Africa in line with the Maputo Protocol of 2003, the revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development of 2015, various sub-regional protocols and standards and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Mock Rally during the WPP Academy in Maun, North West Botswana, in 2022. *Photo: Gender Links*

GL Botswana implemented the Botswana component of the Women's Political Participation (WPP) programme from 2021 to 2024. The programme entailed conducting inter-generational academies in four regions. The first of the five-day academies towards the end of 2021 were in Palapye, followed by Gaborone in the first quarter of 2022 and Maun in 2023.

The Academies covered tools and strategies for electioneering, leadership skills and contesting, communications and branding, inter-generational dialogues and mentorship. Participants received further training on skills in radio interviews, creating and managing social media content and mock rallies. The academies also covered the legislative framework (constitutional provisions and statutes on elections and gender), as well as international protocols.

The aim of the *Gender Audit of the Botswana Elections* is to assess the extent of gender mainstreaming in the elections; how gender equality issues are perceived and prioritised by the political parties, management bodies, media and other stakeholders.

The audit covers the legislative and policy framework; WPP representation in parliament and councils; the electoral system, media coverage of women and issues, the legislative framework, political party manifestos and gender policies, and recommendations.

Legislative and policy framework

Section 3 of the Constitution of Botswana guarantees protection of human rights and freedoms of individuals. Beyond this guarantee, the Constitution does not have provisions for affirmative action for women in political decision-making.

The **Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)** was established in 1977 by Section 65A of the Constitution. Other legal instruments used to ensure credible elections, held every five years, are the Electoral Act, Local Government Act and the Presidential Elections (Supplementary Provisions) Act.

The IEC Board is headed by a sitting Judge of the High Court, assisted by a legal practitioner, both appointed by the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). The JSC also appoints the five other members, on recommendations of the All Party Conference (APC). There is no specified provision for gender consideration in the appointment of the Board. Currently, only two women form part of the seven-member board.



The tense 2024 electioneering saw opposition parties interdicting the JSC, alleging that this body failed to heed the recommendations of the APC. The opposition lost the case with costs a week before the elections.

This was not the only case. At the beginning of the voter registration, the UDC-sponsored pressure group, known as *Madibelatlhopho* (vote protectors) took the IEC to court seeking the right observe the process. The civil society organisation won the first round, but a panel of Judges at the Apex court reversed the lower court decision. The court case led to delay and uncertainty.

The **National Policy on Gender and Development (NPGAD)** which replaced the National Policy on Women in Development (WID) in 2015, is aimed at closing the relative gap between men and women in terms of equality and equity in accessing socio-economic and political development resources. The NPGAD priorities are to:

- Advocate for gender equality and equity in Botswana;
- Create and strengthen an enabling and supportive environment for the effective national gender response;
- Adopt and apply affirmative action measures as necessary, to address identified gender gaps;
- Provide guidance on gender mainstreaming to all sectors - public and private sectors and civil society organisations; and
- Advocate for and support strengthening of national capacity for gender mainstreaming in sector policies, programmes and operations.

A key policy directive impacting on WPP is section 4 (iii) on Political power, democratic governance and decision-making. Sub-section 52 speaks to ensuring *meaningful participation by men and women in political governance and leadership structures*. Sub-section 53 further stipulates that advocacy will be intensifies to promote equal representation of men, women and youth as well as other vulnerable groups at all levels of governance and leadership structures, such as, Parliament, Local Authorities, Public Service, parastatal organisations, the private sector and civil society organisations.

The policies expected outcome is *gender quality and representation in political power, democratic governance and in decision-making*.

Electoral System and quotas

Since independence in 1966, elections in Botswana have been run according to the First Past the Past (FPTP) electoral system. Globally, the FPTP system, also known as 'Winner Takes All' has been found to be unfriendly to underprivileged groupings such as women, people with disabilities, sexual minorities, and minority tribes.



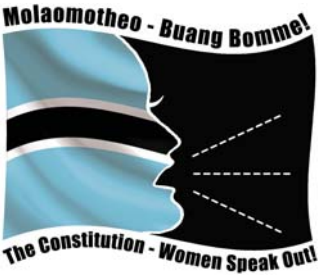
Former GL Board member, the late Chigedze Chinyepi leading women activists petitioning the n the Constitutional Review Commission in 2023. *Photo: Gender Links*

Botswana has no legislated quotas. The only constitutional special dispensations - Specially Elected Members of Parliament (by the president) and Nominated councillors (by Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs) - do not specify affirmative action. The appointment of women and other disadvantaged groups is left solely to the discretion of the decision-makers.

During the course of this project, representatives of all five major political parties and seven Women's Rights Organisations prepared submission to the Presidential Commission of

Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution of Botswana (the Dibotelo Commission). The submission can be accessed here: Botswana: The constitution - Women speak out - Gender Links

Gender Links, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Botswana, UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and the South Africa Multi Country Office (SAMCO) provided technical support.



The paper draws its inspiration from three academies as part of an II- led consortium *Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa*[4]. The academies brought together serving and aspiring women politicians from all political parties (local and national) for capacity building and cross generation dialogues on women's equal and effective participation in decision-making from November 2021 to March 2022. These dialogues identified the Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution as a key strategic entry point for effecting change.

The submission observes that many Constitutions employ affirmative action provisions to address historical and widespread discrimination against women and to promote progress toward substantive gender equality. According to the UN Women's Constitution Database, there are currently 99 countries with broad affirmative action provisions in their Constitutions. Twenty-eight Constitutions include specific quotas for women's political participation.[5]

CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation Five defines Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) as "positive action, preferential treatment or quota systems to advance women's integration into education, into the economy, politics, and employment."[6]

Temporary special measures are concrete actions aimed at dismantling obstacles and positively promoting substantive gender equality, including advancing the equal participation of women in public and private institutions, thereby advancing progress on Sustainable Development Goal targets 5.5 and 16.7. Consideration of temporary special measures is a legal obligation for any state that has ratified or acceded to the CEDAW[7].

TSMs recognise that guaranteeing formal equality is not sufficient to achieve women's substantive equality with men. TSMs are a crucial short-term strategy to overcome the effect of historical discrimination and immediately accelerate the achievement of substantive equality for women. Likewise, affirmative action and quotas are measures to enhance access to equal opportunities for women and girls.

The CEDAW makes clear that TSMs do not constitute discrimination against men. Article 4 of CEDAW states that once equality is achieved TSMs will no longer be needed; hence the term 'temporary'. TSMs can be broad (e.g., creating a general State obligation to take action in support of women's equality) or very specific (e.g. providing the exact number of seats for women in parliament). Several countries now use TSMs provisions, such as quotas or other similar mechanisms, to bolster women's political rights and participation in public life and institutions. The measure is most commonly used to increase women's representation in national-level parliaments through:

- Candidate quotas: a minimum percentage of women candidates from all parties;
- Reserved seat quotas: a certain number of parliamentary seats are reserved for women; and
- A maximum level of representation for either gender (e.g., neither gender can occupy more than 60 percent of seats)[8].

4 The six other organisations in the consortium are FAWE, FEMNET, Gender Links, IFAN Gender Laboratory, PADARE, and WLSA
5 Global Gender Equality Constitutional Database, https://constitutions.unwomen.org/en, accessed 25 May 2022.
6 Refworld, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 5: Temporary Special Measures, https://www.refworld.org/docid/52dcfeb84.html, accessed 25 May 2022.
7 UN Women Guidance note on Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) 2021.
8 A Guidance note on the making and shaping of Constitutions from a gender perspective, UN Women 2021. See more in p54.

Quotas can be applied in any one of the three most common electoral systems: First Past the Post (FPTP), Proportional Representation (PR), or Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR). The most effective combination is candidate quotas in a PR or list system, especially when this is based on a "zebra" style list of one woman, and one man. In this case, regardless of what proportion of seats a party wins, women will constitute half of those who win. In several Southern African countries with a PR system, such as South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique, ruling parties have adopted *voluntary quotas* that have led to a substantial increase in women's representation. This is good for party buy-in. The downside is that if the dominant party loses support, the proportion of women declines accordingly. Legislated quotas have the advantage of ensuring that all parties have to comply.

Candidate quotas in the FPTP system have the least chance of success, as there is no guarantee that women will win, even if they are fielded in equal numbers. Reserved seats for women in the FPTP are the most controversial of TSMs, as these deny men the right to contest elections in the constituencies reserved for women only. Reserved PR seats for women only are used in several countries (e.g. Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Lesotho at the local level) to boost the representation of women, over and above the FPTP seats that are openly contested. Women who come into office through reserved PR seats in a predominantly FPTP system are often viewed as "second class" by those who contest the FPTP seats.

The Botswana Constitution (Ss63) provides for an FPTP electoral system and six nominated MPs as well as the Ntlo ya Dikgosi (chiefs) Ss 77-82. It does not provide for specific affirmative action for women's equal participation in all areas, nor in political decision-making levels. However, Sec 15 provides that:

> *(e) whereby persons of any such description as is mentioned in subsection (3) of this section may be subjected to any disability or restriction or may be accorded any privilege or advantage which, having regard to its nature and to special circumstances pertaining to those persons or to persons of any other such description, is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.*

Some political parties claim to have voluntary quotas, but none have observed these. In the 12th parliament, women constituted 11% of MPs in Botswana and 19% of councillors. These figures have either remained constant or declined over the last three elections at the very moment that Botswana has committed to gender parity in all areas of decision-making. Evidence from the SADC region and globally is clear. Women's representation in political decision-making is highest in countries with a) either a proportional representation or a mixed system and b) one in which there are TSMs - constitutional, legislated, and or voluntary party quotas.

CEDAW, in its 2019 response to Botswana's report recommends that the country should "Ensure representation of women at all decision-making levels, through:

(a) The introduction of temporary special measures;
(b) Awareness-raising campaigns for politicians, community and religious leaders, the media, and the general public on the importance of having women participate in political life and occupy decision-making positions;
(c) Capacity-building programmes for women wishing to enter political life and equal media visibility of women and men who are candidates or elected representatives, and specific funds for the election campaigns of women candidates."

In Botswana, there is already a lively debate on electoral systems. While the FPTP system is strong on accountability, it is weak on inclusion. The reverse applies in the case of the PR system. There is a strong case to be made for the current system of six MPs appointed by the President being allocated on a PR basis as this is more democratic. This would create a mixed system - the direction in which many countries are heading. With regard to TSMs, Botswana can benefit from the lessons learned in other countries. Rather than reserve all PR seats for

women which may result in women being regarded as a token, these seats can be distributed equally between women and men based on a legislated "zebra" quota."

A 50% candidate quota can also apply to the FPTP seats. While there is no guarantee that women will win if all parties field 50% women candidates, there is a strong possibility that over time, women's representation will increase in these seats as well. Another critical point is that it is one thing to have quota provisions but the devil is in the detail of how it will work in the political parties, and in practice. The methodology is key and should be determined beforehand as leaving it open often encourages distortions and may fail to achieve the intended result.

Unfortunately, the commission recommendations that framed the failed Constitutional Review Bill ignored the women's submission. Botswana ran the 2024 elections on the same basis as all those before: the FPTP system; no legislated quotas; and discretionary use of special seats to advance diversity. Given the even more competitive nature of these elections than those past, the die was cast against increases in WPP from the start.

The SADC Election Observer Mission (SADC-EOM) noted that despite women making up 54% of registered voters, and youth 34%, the FPTP system "does not allow for recognition of other marginalised groups in the political system like women."

Political parties, gender policies and practices



Honourable Lillian Griesmar, BDP Councillor for Phillip Matante ward in Francistown, Botswana. *Photo: Mboyi Mswabi*

The current Parliament has four political parties - the ruling Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), main opposition the Botswana Congress Party (BCP), Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF) and Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). A sole independent MP, Dr Edwin Dikoloti has been absorbed into the UDC cabinet.

Before the elections, Gender Links conducted political party dialogues with all the four main parties. Key documents presented and shared in strategic positioning for women candidates, were the individual gender policies and quotas.

The **UDC**, a coalition of three parties, does not have a gender policy nor quotas. The current minister of Child Welfare and Basic Education, Nono Kgafela-Mokoka, spoke of the frustration in attempting to develop coalition policies. She explained that individual parties, the BNF, BPP and AP, have policies, but have not been able to implement these. The coalition's official position is that it will reserve at least two thirds of the positions of specially elected members of parliament and councils for disadvantaged minorities, women, youths and other marginalised groups. Presently President Boko's nomination of women to SEMP stands at 50%. The party has pledged to implement all other pledges in the first quarter of 2025.

The **BCP** is the only party with clear and constituted gender policy and 30% quotas for women in all positions in all structures - Central Committee, and Youth League.

However, the party failed to apply the policies in the primary elections, citing the fact that for as long as the country uses FPTP electoral system, it would be challenging to reserve and sell a chunk of their candidacy to women, youth and people with disability.

The party's secretary general and a Member of Parliament for Maun East, Goretetse Kekgonegile, pledged to ensure that in the 2025 elective congress, the party would put a proposal to raise the quotas to 50% and develop strategies to ensure implementation at all leadership levels, including candidacy in the national elections.

The **BDP**, which had been in power since independence, never had pronounced policies on gender. The party maintained that lack of policies was not a hindrance to the appointment of women in positions, citing the consistency in presidential nominations of women in SEMP and cabinet positions.

The **BPF**, founded just before the 2019 general elections pledged to develop a gender policy and quotas.

Table 2 below lists all political parties in Botswana that participated in the 2024 general elections. All party leaders/Presidents are men, with only one woman Vice President. The table presents a summary of commitments made by the political parties through their manifestos.

The UDC and BCP manifestos have mainstreamed gender. The BDP manifesto focuses on review of government policies and statutes. BDP, BPF and BRP mention gender issues in certain areas, but their manifestos do not comprehensively integrate gender.

Political parties made commitments towards promoting equal representation in political leadership positions during the 2024 campaigns, even though most their manifestos were silent on that.

The four main political parties' manifestos spoke in detail to gender equality and parity, responding to high youth and women unemployment by pledging social protection nets.

The UDC and BCP had almost similar manifesto pledges to among other things:

- Increase old age pensions from the current P700 to P1, 500 (BCP) and P1, 800 (UDC). The ruling party further pledged to drop the age of qualification from 65 to 60.

- Increase student allowance to P2,500.
- Increase the minimum wage to a living wage of P4,000 (UDC).
- Introduce child care allowance.

The Botswana Council of Civil Society Organisations (BOCONGO) led a civil society election monitoring mission, known as BOCONGO BESNet Local Electoral Observation Mission. Gender Links formed part of the mission. The group noted that some political parties had quotas for women "however, it is clear that such quotas are ineffective in increasing the representation of women in both council and parliamentary seats."

Table 2: Political Party leadership and Manifesto pledges

Political party	President	Sex	Vice President	Sex	Quotas	Pledges on gender equality
Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC)	Advocate Duma Boko	M	Ndaba Gaolathe	M	Yes for individual parties, but not for Coalition as a whole	A UDC government will reserve at least two thirds of the positions of specially elected members of parliament and councils for disadvantaged minorities, women, youth and other marginalised groups. Other commitments on gender: • Increase old age pensions from the current P700 to P1,800. The ruling party further pledged to drop the age of qualification from 65 to 60. • Increase student allowance to P2,500. • Increase the minimum wage to a living wage of P4,000. • Introduce child care allowance.
Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)	Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi	M	Slumber Tsogwane	M	No	The BDP manifesto focuses on redressing GBV. The manifesto also highlights that they would undertake a comprehensive Constitutional review, which will remove all discriminatory provisions in favour of more inclusive ones.[9]
Botswana Congress Party (BCP)	Dumelang Saleshando	M	Taolo Lucas	M	Yes	BPC has a 30% quota, but is not implemented. Higher percentage of women, youth and disabled to go into SEMP and nominations to local government. Develop gender friendly policies. Legislated gender quotas at 50%. Introduce social nets for women, children and the elderly.
Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD)	Rev. Thuso Tiego	M	None		No	Nothing on quotas mentioned in their manifesto.
Botswana Republican Party (BRP)	Rev. Biggie Butale	M	None			More women to occupy positions of leadership.
Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF)	Mephato Reatile	M	Dr Keorapetse Muzila	F	Yes	Introduce gender quotas.
Real Alliance Party (RAP)	Gaontebale Mokgosi	M	None		Yes	The RAP manifesto partially mainstreamed gender, it goes further to recognise gender beyond men and women and include other groups such as the Lesbian. Gay, Bisexual, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) people.

[9] Botswana Democratic Party Manifesto

Women in parliament



Dimpho Phirinyane, BCP Botswana, at her campaign rally, Francistown. *Photo: Mboyi Mswabi*

The most notable achievement of the 2024 elections was opposition parties getting women elected to the national assembly. Up until now, the former opposition parties, the UDC and BCP, had only two women, whose stay in Parliament was short-lived. The first opposition woman MP was the BCP's Dr Hubaudi Hobona, who just a year before the 2014 general elections, won a by-election seat Francistown West, following the passing of Tshelang Masisi, the elder brother to the recent former president, Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi. She lost the bid to retain the seat in the general elections. In the same year, 2014, UDC won the Tlokweng constituency with Same Bathobakae, former Council chairperson of the South East District Council. After she passed in 2016, the UDC fielded and retained the seat with a male candidate.

In the 2024 national elections, 262 candidates contested the 61 Parliament seats, 28 women. This is an increase from 11 women candidates in 2019. However, the increase in the number of women candidates did not translate into more seats for women.

UDC, a coalition of three opposition parties, the Botswana National Front (BNF), the Botswana Peoples Party (BPP), and the Alliance for Progressives (AP) won 36 seats out of the 61-member Parliament.

Only three women won seats directly, a mere 7.9% representation. Two, Maipelo Boitumelo Mophuting and Helen Pushie Manyeneng came on the UDC ticket while Dr. Unity Dow won the seat for the main opposition, Botswana Congress Party (BCP).



Maipelo Boitumelo Mophuting, a surprise winner, took the seat from the former minister of Home Affairs, Annah Mokgethi, who defeated the UDC President, Duma Boko, in 2019. Mophuting won the Gaborone Bonnington North constituency under the UDC ticket. Mophuting is an award winning women's development advocate, who was bestowed the 2024 Global Icon Award in Doha Qatar. A new comer to local politics, Mophuting first had to battle against internal resistance and de-campaigning by supporters of veteran politicians she defeated in the primaries. The Kanye-born activist has made her mark mainly in the international development space, serving in among other institutions, the African Parliamentary Network on Illicit Financial Flows and Taxation (APNIFFT).



On 8 November, parliament elected **Helen Pushie Manyeneng** as Deputy Speaker of parliament with 43 votes against 21 votes for Dr Unity Dow of the main opposition Botswana Congress Party (BCP). Dow is the MP for Kgatleng West.

Manyeneng is the first woman to hold the post since independence in 1966. Dr Margaret Nasha, who famously coined the phrase "Madam Speaker, Sir", served as Speaker in the 9th Parliament, and the second woman Speaker was Gladys Kokorwe in 2014.

The highest-ranking woman in the current Parliament, Manyeneng is one of the more than 100 women who participated in the International IDEA supported Gender Links Women's Political Participation (WPP) Academies, which has been running since 2021.

A nurse by profession, Manyeneng went into active politics after being sacked, along with hundreds of other health workers, for participating in Botswana's longest public servants strike of 2011. A gender activist of note, Manyeneng was part of a panel that drafted the Women's submission to the Presidential Commission on constitutional review, *'Molaomotheo, Buang Bomme'*. She is also a successful businesswomen, driving the women's business advocacy program.



The only woman in the opposition ranks in Parliament is BCP's **Unity Dow**, human rights lawyer and longtime gender activist, who first made headlines in the early 1990s when she litigated against the Botswana government denying citizenship to children born foreign fathers and Batswana women. Dow served as Botswana's first woman judge and as a minister in the Ian Khama and Mokgweetsi Masisi administrations. She crossed over from BDP to BCP last year.

At the first sitting of the 13th Parliament on 8 November, President Boko used his constitutional power to nominate six Special Elected Members of Parliament (SEMP): three women. Elected parliamentarians voted for six Special Elected Members of Parliament (SEMP), half of whom were women. This brought women's representation in the National Assembly to six out of 69; or 8.7%, down from 11% in 2019: the lowest in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

The three women SEMPs are **Nono Kgafela-Mokoka**, a UDC chair of the Gender committee, who had lost by 20 votes to the former BDP minister, **Bogolo Kenewendo**, who made a short appearance through the same special dispensation in 2017, and the reigning Miss World Africa, **Lesego Chombo**.



The purpose of the SEMP is to allow latitude for the filling of gaps - skills, diversity and any other consideration to advance democratic ideals. Kenewendo, a 37-year old economist is making a

second appearance, having come through on the same special dispensation that allows for the head of state to nominate six individuals in 2017. The then president Ian Khama appointed Kenewendo as Minister of Trade, but president Mokgweetsi Masisi dropped her after 2019 elections, due to divisions within the then ruling BDP.

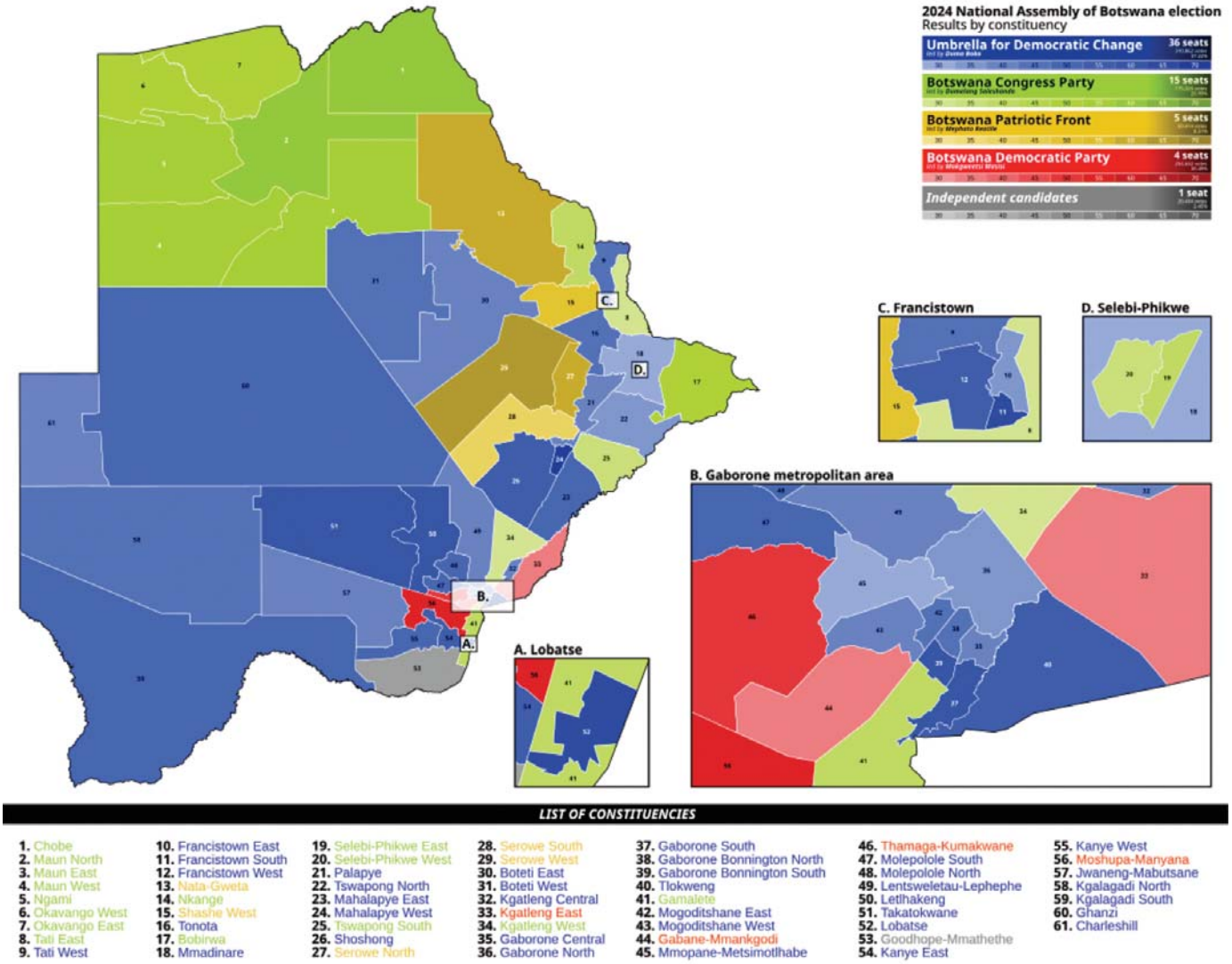


The reigning Miss World Africa, **Lesego Chombo**'s election as SEMP had the social media platforms talking, with some dismissing it as the UDC government attempt to ride on her popularity, especially among the youth. Supporters of Chombo's vote pointed to the fact that 26-year old was not recognised as a beauty queen. She is a lawyer of the High Court, children's rights activist and philanthropist.



Nono Kgafela-Mokoka, UDC Gender coordinator, academic and seasoned politician comes in after losing the Kgatleng East constituency by a small margin of 20, to a former BDP minister, Mabuse Pule. She is the national chairperson of the UDC member party, Botswana Peoples Party and the first Motswana woman to referee boxing.

In the 12th Parliament, three BDP women were elected to Parliament, and Masisi brought in four more through the SEMP dispensation.



Source: 2024 Botswana National Assembly election - Results by constituency - 2024 Botswana general election - Wikipedia

In the October 30 general elections, the BDP won only four seats. None of the seven women candidates from the party made it, underscoring the extent to which the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system works against women in heavily contested elections, as they tend not to be fielded in "safe seats" for their parties.

Women in cabinet in 2024

As there are no legislated gender quotas, the appointment of women to cabinet is the prerogative of the President. This also makes cabinet a litmus test of political commitment to gender parity. At 22%, Botswana is still far from gender parity in cabinet. However, as reflected in Table One, there has been a steady increase in women's representation in this sphere from 11% in 2009; to 19% in 2014; a dip to 17% in 2019, and increase to 22% in 2024. This makes cabinet the only area in which there has been an increase in women's political representation following the 2024 elections.

All four women from the ruling party in Botswana have been appointed to cabinet, in a move described by President Duma Boko as strategic. "Having all ruling party women legislators being allocated high positions, is not by mistake. It is intentional, to say women are recognised," he said after announcing the appointment of Maipelo Mophuting as the assistant Minister for State President. "We know women face many challenges, and when they manage to break through, it is important that we recognise and respond accordingly, placing them in strategic positions."

Boko urged women to draw on "the unique and special skills they bring, which men do not have. Men at times are aggressive, while women bring compassion. The attributes of femininity entail sympathy, understanding, fellow-feeling, care giving. Women need to show this and not want to conform to societal dictates of male domination."

Mophuting, a Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaborone Bonnington North, is strategically placed in the highest office in the land, assisting UDC communications head, Moeti Mohwasa.

Nono Kgafela-Mokoka is minister of Basic Education and Child Welfare; Lesego Chombo leads Youth and Gender Affairs, and Bogolo Kenewendo the ministry of Minerals and Energy. She is the second woman after veteran Dr Gaositwe Chiepe who held the post during the late Sir Ketumile Masire's administration.

The ministry is viewed as critical to the economy. The Botswana economy is highly dependent on diamonds, and to some extent, copper and nickel. However, in the recent past, mineral fortunes have declined. The copper and nickel mining town of Selibe-Phikwe has become a ghost town following the closure of the BCL mine, and the Tati Copper Nickel Company in Francistown, seven years ago.

The biggest contributor and second employer in Botswana is DEBSWANA, a joint diamond operation owned by the government and De Beers. There has been decline in sales of diamond in recent times, and ongoing negotiations between the partners, were stalling, until the new government came to office, and immediately revived the talks.

In 2016, the number of women ministers went up from two to three, when the SEMP increased from four to six, and new MP, Bogolo Kenewendo was appointed Minister of Trade.

The Botswana Democratic Party administrations of Lieutenant General Ian Khama (2008 to 2018) and Mokgweetsi Masisi (2018 to 2024) had more women assistant ministers, while the new UDC government of Boko, has a little high percentage of ministers, at 22%, with the next best under in 2014 under Khama. The cabinets with higher number of assistant ministers were of 2009 and 2019.

Over the last five years, cabinet changed hands, with some, such Dr Unity Dow (now with BCP) resigning, former Environment minister Phildah Kereng withdrawn and posted on foreign missions.

The key structures of government are still held by men. Advocate Gideon Boko is the country's sixth (6th) president, albeit the first from outside Botswana Democratic Party, which has ruled for 58 years. The founding president was the late Sir Seretse Khama, a British-trained lawyer, who on his passing in the 1980s, was succeeded by Sir Ketumile Masire. Masire, the teacher credited for building Botswana economy and indigenous-led government, held it together during the political instability of the region, with apartheid South Africa, South West Africa (Namibia), Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) up north, and further down war-torn Mozambique and Angola. Through a newly constituted automatic succession, Masire, who has since passed on, handed over to economist Dr Festus Mogae, another British-educated leader, whose greatest challenge was tackling and succeeding in managing the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The son of the founding president, Lieutenant General Ian Khama was the fourth president passing the baton to Mokgweetsi Masisi in 2018. Although Botswana has had successive changes in leadership, the baton has not yet passed to women.

Mogae took the first moves to smash glass ceilings after two of his health ministers moved to global posts. **Professor Sheila Tlou**, a champion for HIV/AIDS, was in recent times regional director of UNAIDS. **Joy Phumaphi** went on to serve in the World Health Organisation (WHO). She is the current chairperson of the Botswana Gender Commission.



Mogae is also the first Botswana president to appoint a woman Attorney General, Ambassador **Dr Athalia Molokomme**, and first female member of the Appeals Court, Justice Dr Unity Dow, the current MP for Kgatleng West. Molokomme, now retired, went on to serve as Botswana's ambassador to Geneva.

Women in local government



Councillor Leina Moruimang campaigning at Thamalakane ward in the Maun West constituency. Moruimang, one of the WPP academy participants, lost the election, but received a minister's nomination to Council.
Photo: Mboy Maswabi

Local elections in Botswana are held on the same day as the national elections. Local Government is comprised of 16 Administrative Districts and 16 District Councils with district, town and city elections.

Following the 2022 national census, showing a significant population growth to over 2.4 million, Botswana increased the number of constituencies increased from 57 to 61, while council wards rose from 498 to 609. The amendments to Section 13 of the Local Government Act of 2012, increased the numbers of nominated councillors from 119 to 153, bringing the total number of councillors to 762.

Some 2455 candidates competed for the 609 local government seats. After every election, the Minister of Local Government specially nominates some Councillors. The Minister of Local Government, Ketlhalefile Motshwegwa, took longer than expected, to release the list of nominated councillors due to appeals from small member parties in the UDC. This led to a delay in announcing the local government election results.

Table 3: Women and men in local government in the 2024 Botswana elections

	Women	Men	Total	% women
Elected	54	555	609	8%
Nominated	62	91	153	40%
Total	116	646	762	15%

Source: Gender Links, with data from the Ministry of Local Government.

Table 3 shows the outcome of the Botswana local elections. Women constituted a mere 8% of elected councillors, and 40% of nominated councillors, giving an overall total of 116 women councillors, or 15%, in the 2024 Botswana local elections.

Table 4: Women and men participation in Local Government (1994 - 2024)

	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019	2024
No of Men	341	312	387	399	473	498	**602**
No of Women	60	93	102	88	116	111	**116**
Total	401	405	489	487	589	609	**762**
% Women	15	23	21	18	19	18	**15**

Source: African elections. tripod.com -2004; 2019 Botswana General Elections Results.

Table 4 shows women and men elected to Local Government as Councillors from 1994 to 2024. The table shows that after an initial increase from 15% to 23% between 1994 and 1999,the trend has been downwards, dipping back to 15% in 2024.

Gender Links, which has a special focus on local government, set up a women's observatory for the elections after undertaking training academies in four regions of Botswana. The Academies included inter-generational programs, where seasoned politicians mentored aspiring political participants. Half of the 14 council candidates who participated in the programme won their seats.

In Francistown, Dimpho Phirinyane and Nametso Lillian Griesmer won Phillip Matante and Central wards respectively. Felicity Keleeme is the new councilor Mogapinyana ward in Tswapong North constituency.

Three of Maun West constituency WPP councilors are Gaolefufa Nawa, and Tebogo Moya. In the deep rural Maun North constituency, Tshabang Paul was the winner of Sankuyo ward.

Subsequently, three graduates of the Academies - **Kesgofetse Magapa**, Gorata



Phakedi and Leina Moruimang were among the 153 nominated councilors. Moruimang had contested and lost Thamalakane ward in the Maun West constituency, while the two youths, Magapa and Phakedi, now sit in the Mahalapye and Mabutsane councils, respectively.

Media monitoring



Pamela Dube (in front) training a team on monitoring the media. *Photo: Gender Links*

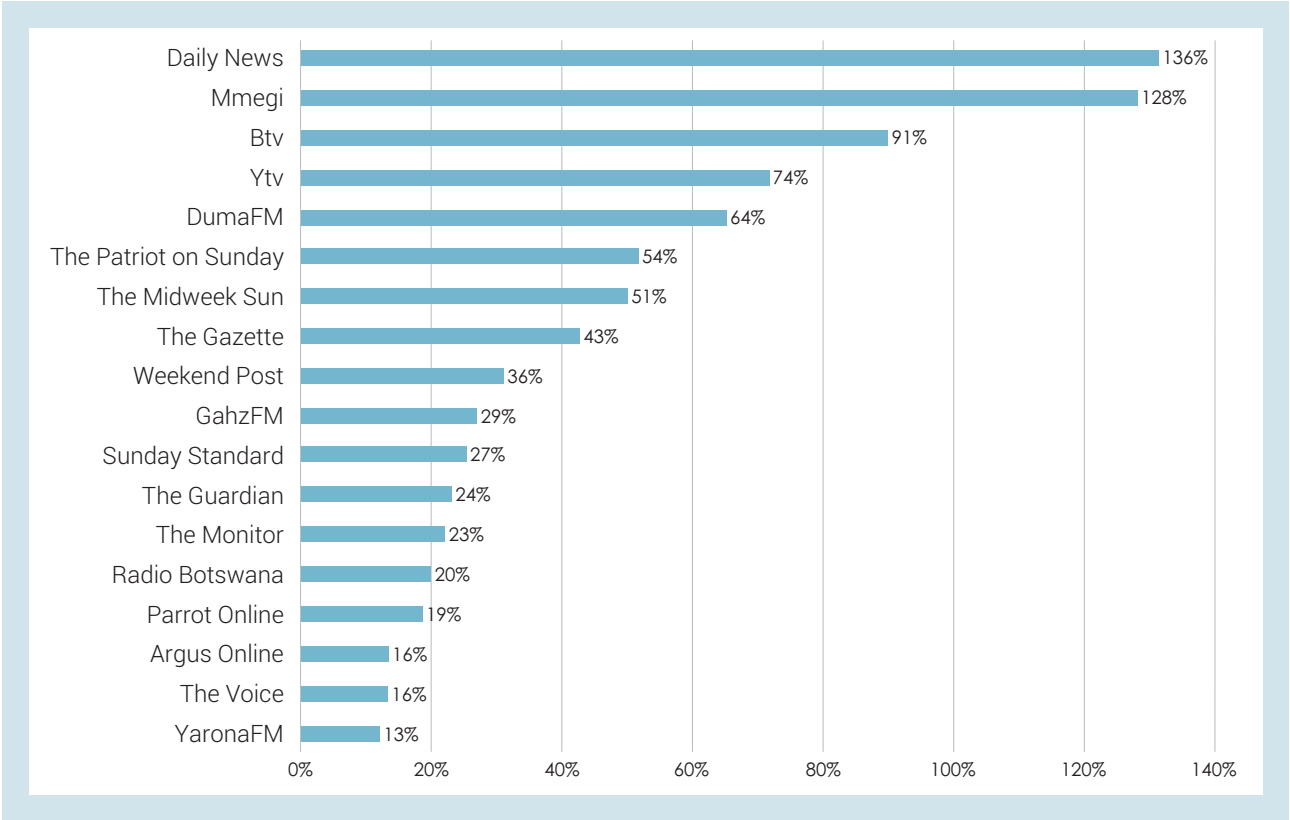
From 1 to 15 November 2024 a team of five monitored the media, pre, during and post-election. The full Botswana Gender and Media Monitoring results can be viewed on this link. The monitoring covered a broad spectrum of Botswana media; public and private; print, radio, TV and online.

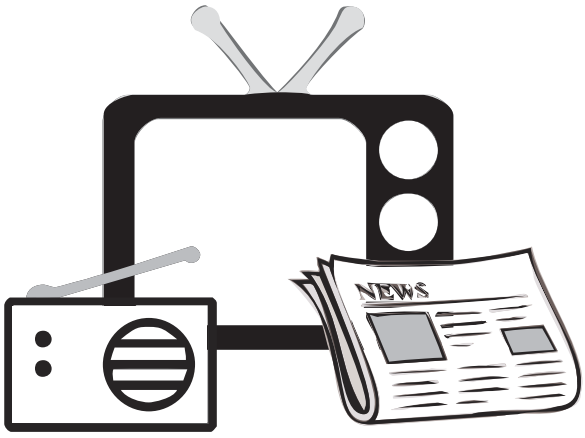
Media monitored
Television: Botswana Television (BTV) and YTV
Radio:
- State media: Radio Botswana and RB2
- Private: YaronaFM, DumaFM, GabzFM

Print: Daily News (state), Mmegi, The Monitor, The Guardian, Midweek Sun, The Gazette, The Voice, Weekend Post, Sunday Standard, The Patriot on Sunday
Online: The Argus and The Parrot Online

State media is the largest chunk of the Botswana media landscape and national reach, controlling 69.7%, while the private entities make up 30.2% of the total reach. Radio Botswana claims almost 100% coverage of Botswana, going as far as border villages and towns of neighbouring countries - the North West province of South Africa, Namibia, Zimabawe, Zambia and Angola. BTV is the only television station with national footprint, with small, under resourced YTV, having had to buy space on DSTV platforms to make an impact. The Daily News, daily newspaper, with a print run of 70,000, distributes free copies in all villages, towns, cities and settlements. Botswana has no community media, with only University of Botswana Radio recognised as an online community media.

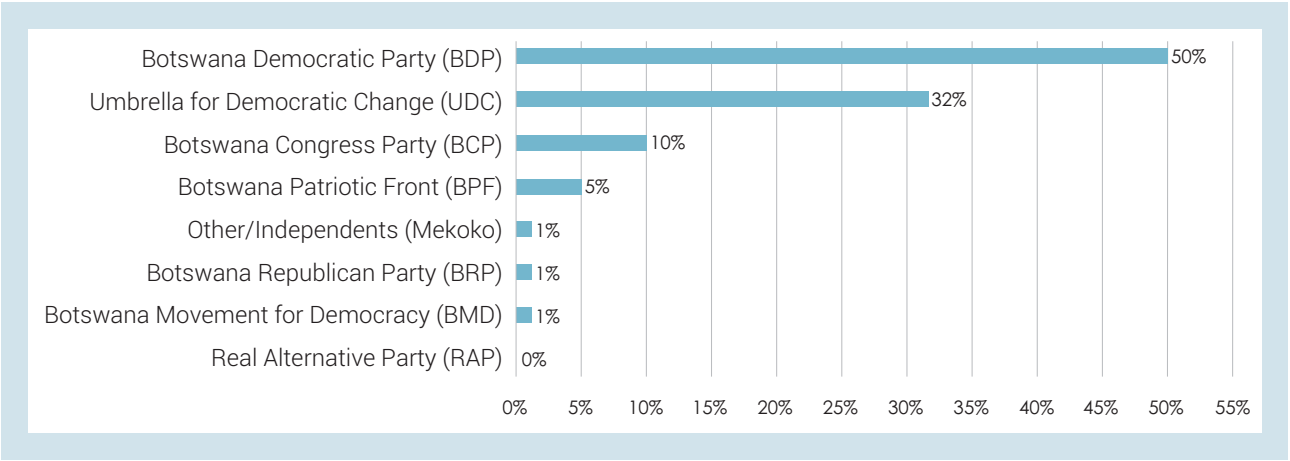
Figure 1: Number of news items in the Botswana 2024 media monitoring





As illustrated in Figure 1, in total, the monitoring covered 864 news items ranging from 13 (Yarona FM) to 128 (Daily News). Print media had a highest proportiom of election coverage, at 62.5%, followed by radio with 18.8% of news, debates and analytical content. Television stories made 14.6%, while recorded Online (only two publications) were a negligible 4.1%.

Figure 2: Coverage by political party in the 2024 Botswana elections



Reflecting a clear bias towards the outgoing ruling party, the BDP received 50% of the coverage in the items monitored, followed by the now ruling UDC at 32%. UDC coverage picked up considerably post elections. Figure 2 shows that smaller parties received considerably less coverage.

Figure 3: Topics covered in the Botswana elections

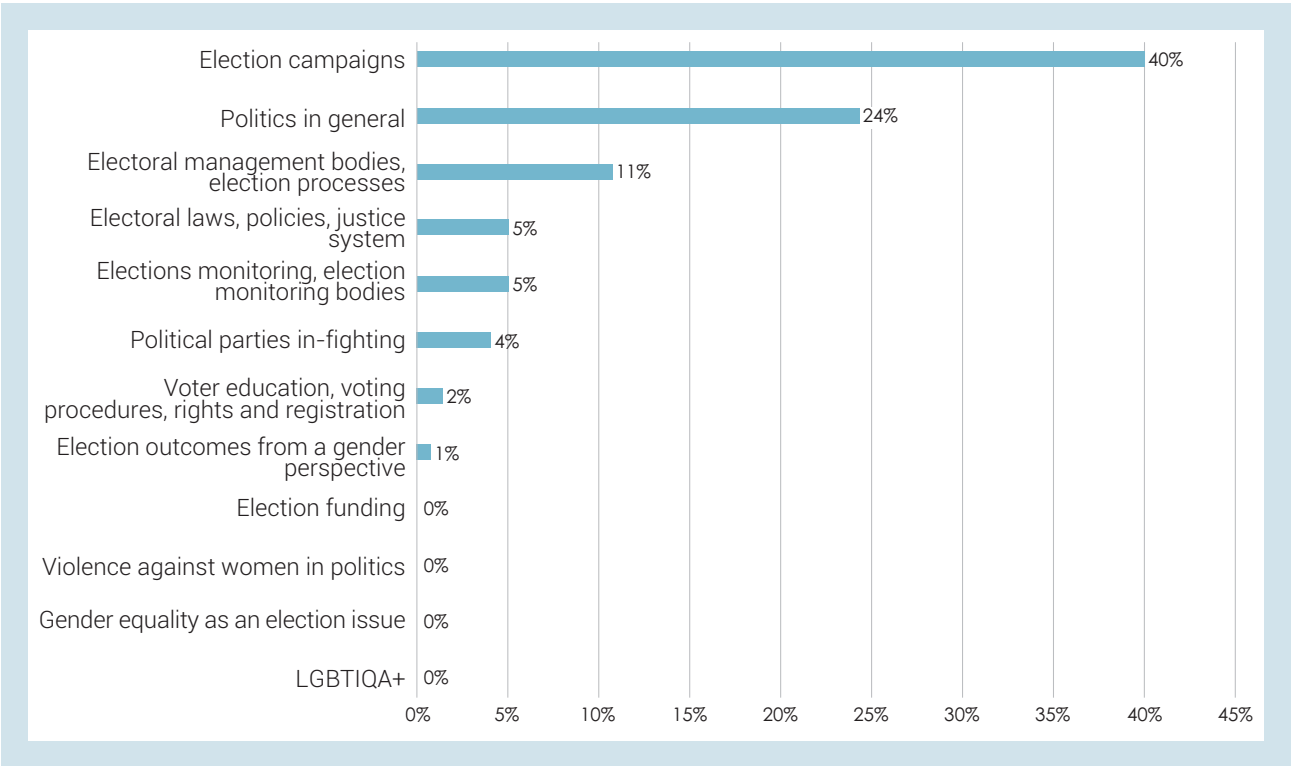
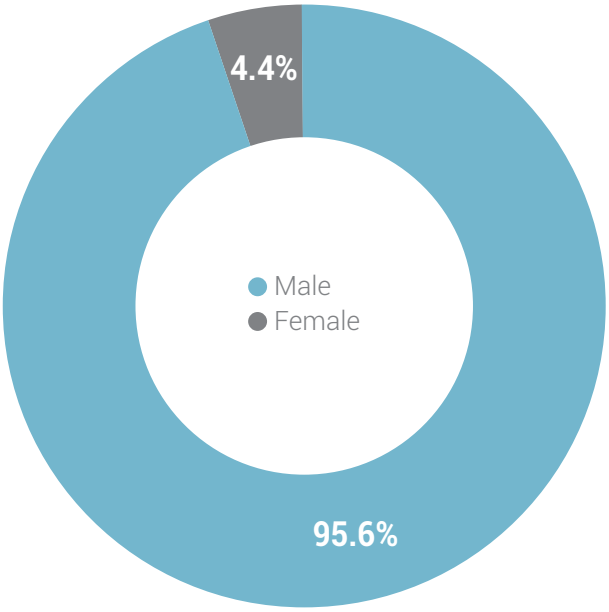


Figure 3 shows that 40% of election coverage concerned the party campaigns; 24% politics in general and 11% electoral management bodies and election processes. Gender equality as an election issue; LGBTIQA and violence against women in politics did not feature at all in election coverage. Election outcomes from a gender perspective constituted just 1% of coverage, largely as a result of this project, that generated some debate on the topic.

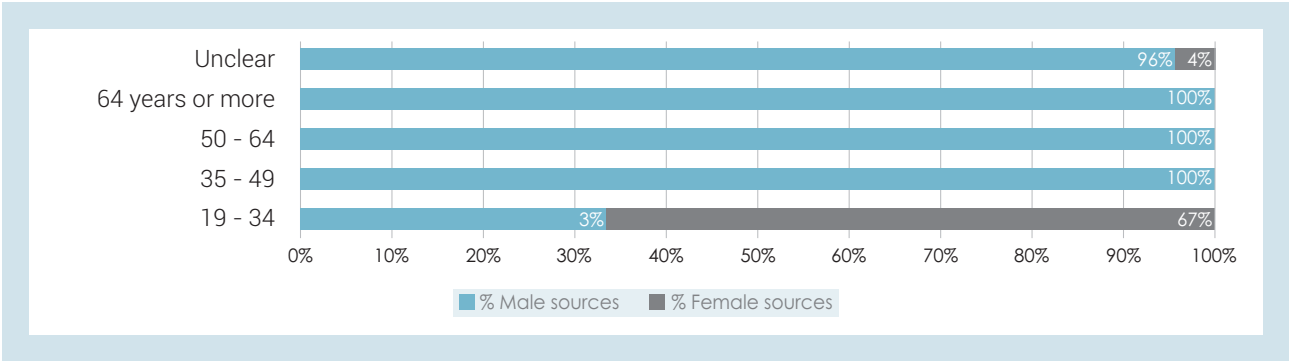
Figure 4: Women sources in the 2024 Botswana elections



The most glaring finding of the study is that overall women constituted a mere 4.4% of news sources in election coverage in Botswana, way below the usual national and regional average for women sources in the news. In the Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS) conducted by GL, women comprised 21% of news sources in Southern African media coverage, and 26% in Botswana.

As an illustration of how women sources drop during elections, South Africa, with 29% women sources in the 2020 GMPS, recorded just 13% women sources in the May 2024 elections in that country. There are several reasons for women sources dropping during elections, that focus heavily on electoral candidates (very few women contested); top candidates (no women contested) and spokespersons (invariably men). Election coverage hardly focuses on issues, and the views of voters, the category in which women constitute a clear majority.

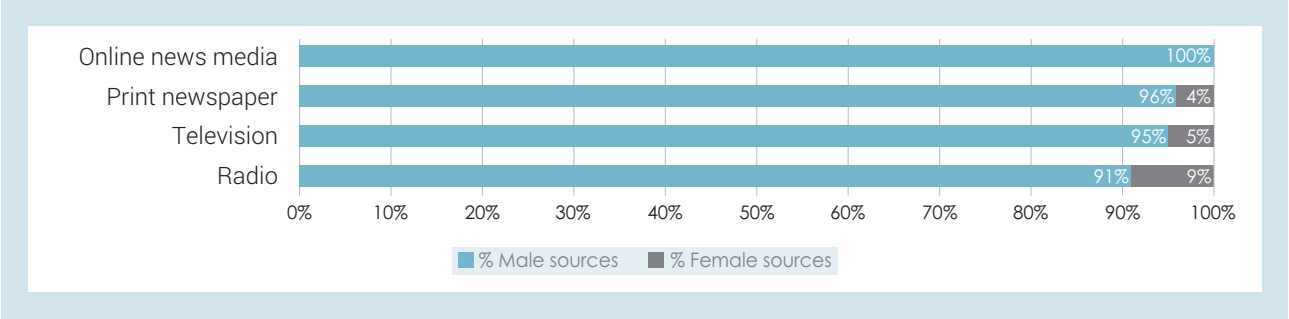
Figure 5: Women sources in the 2024 Botswana election coverage by age

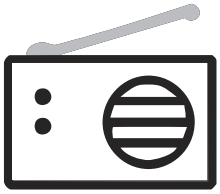


When disaggregated by age, women constituted two thirds of sources in the youth (19-34) age category. Men constituted 100% of sources in all the other age categories. This reinforces the stereotype that older women cease to exist altogether in the mainstream media, despite constituting the majority of the few women who contested the elections.



Figure 6: Women sources by media type in the 2024 Botswana elections





Although negligible, radio recorded the highest percentage of women sources, at 9%, with television coverage at 5%; print media 4% and online news media 0% women sources. Traditionally radio is a medium to which women have greater access and ease; this is borne out by the Botswana election results.

Figure 7: Women sources by media house in the 2024 Botswana elections

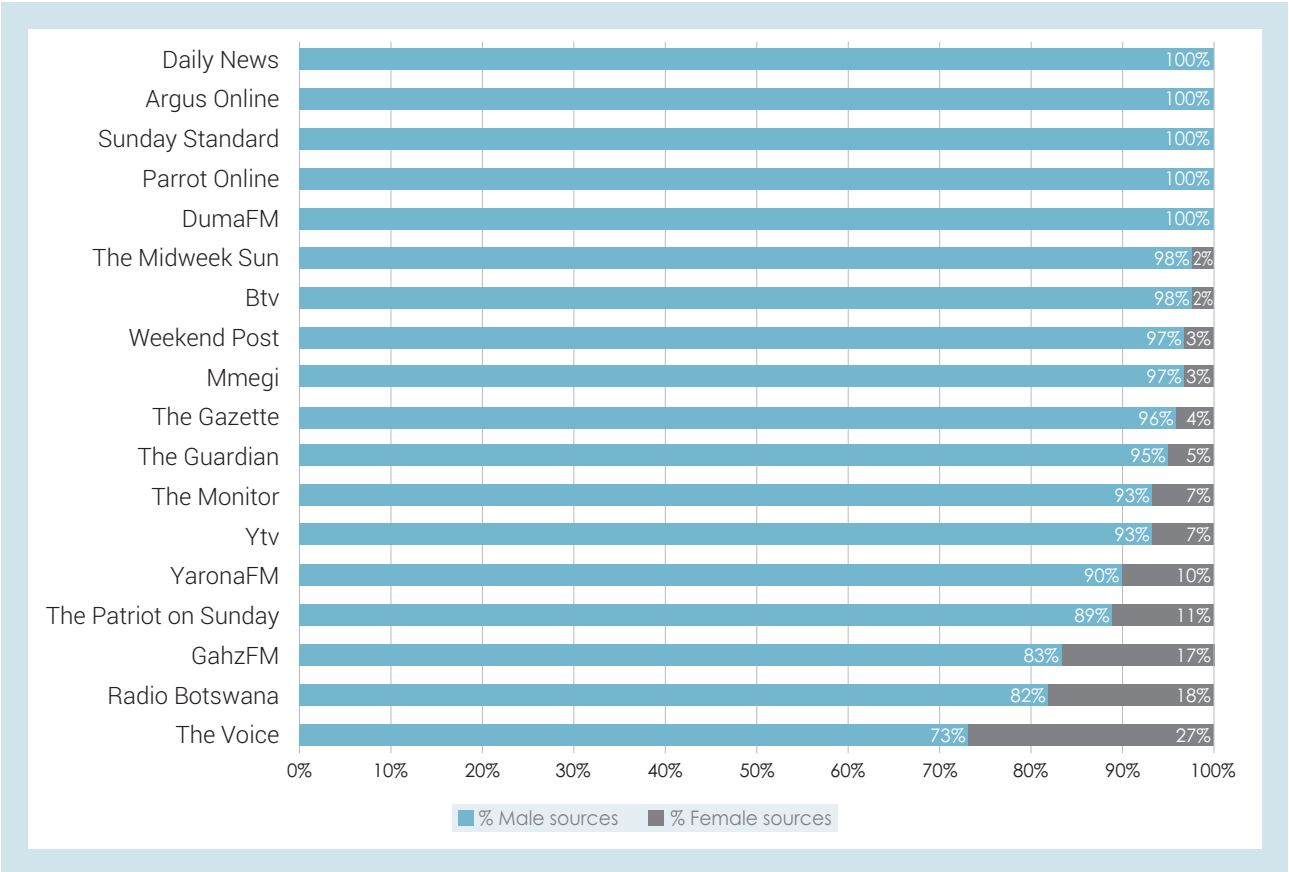


Figure 7 shows variations by media house. The Voice, which over several years has worked to increase women sources in its coverage, led with 27% women sources; followed by Radio Botswana (18%); GabzFM (17%); the Patriot on Sunday (11%) and Yarona FM (10%). All the others featured no women sources in election coverage. The few women who made headlines largely did so for negative reasons, as illustrated in the example below:



Former minister of Finance **Peggy Serame** made headlines for her battle against former BDP minister of health, and current assistant minister of Agriculture and Lands, Dr Edwin Dikoloti in the Good Hope/Mathethe constituency.

Dikoloti, against party president Mokgweetsi Masisi's wishes, won the primaries. The party's central committee withdrew him from the race, and had Serame represent the BDP. Dikoloti stood as an independent candidate. For weeks, Serame made headlines such as *"Serame's appeal could open Pandora's Box"* - Sunday Standard[10], *"Peggy Serame speaks: In the Eye of the storm, I'm a fighter"* - Mmegi[11] and *"Serame fights for political survival"* Mmegi[12]. Serame went on to suffer a major defeat while Dikoloti became the second ever independent candidate to win a Parliamentary seat in the history of Botswana.

Figure 8: Women sources by genre in the 2024 Botswana elections

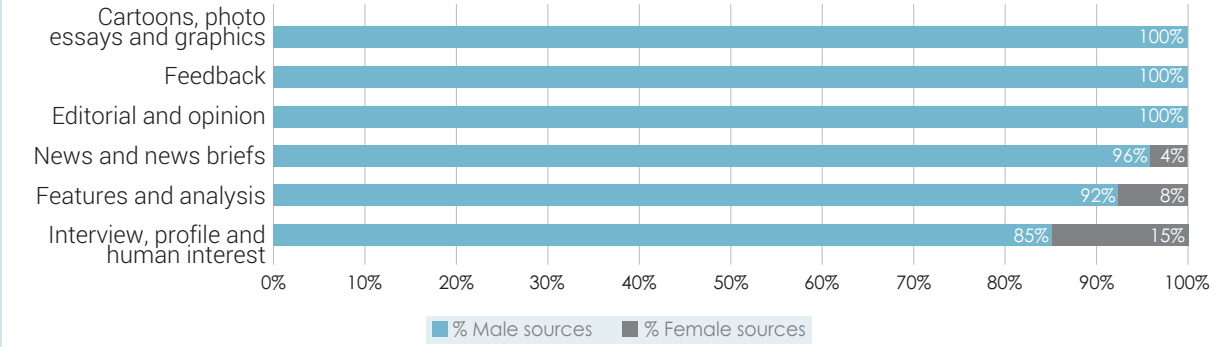
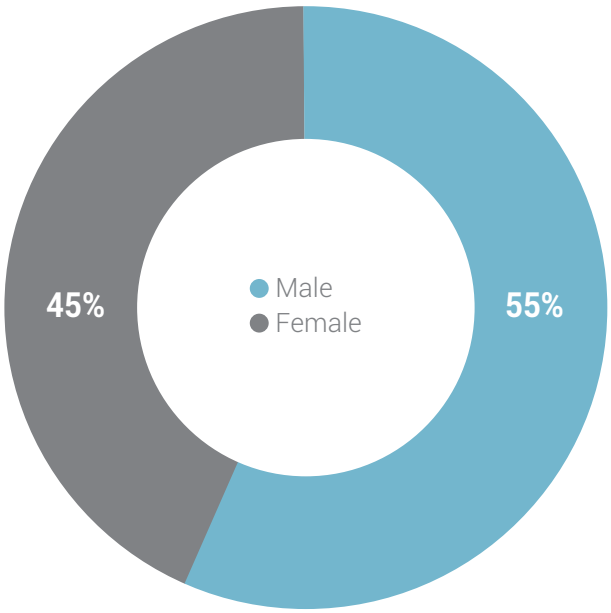


Figure 8 shows that women featured a little better in interviews, profiles and human interest stories (15%). *The Voice* had a dedicated women's column. The *GabzFM* election debate platform, "My Democracy", had an all women cast. The Mmegi Online television programme, "The Politburo", made a special effort to feature women candidates.

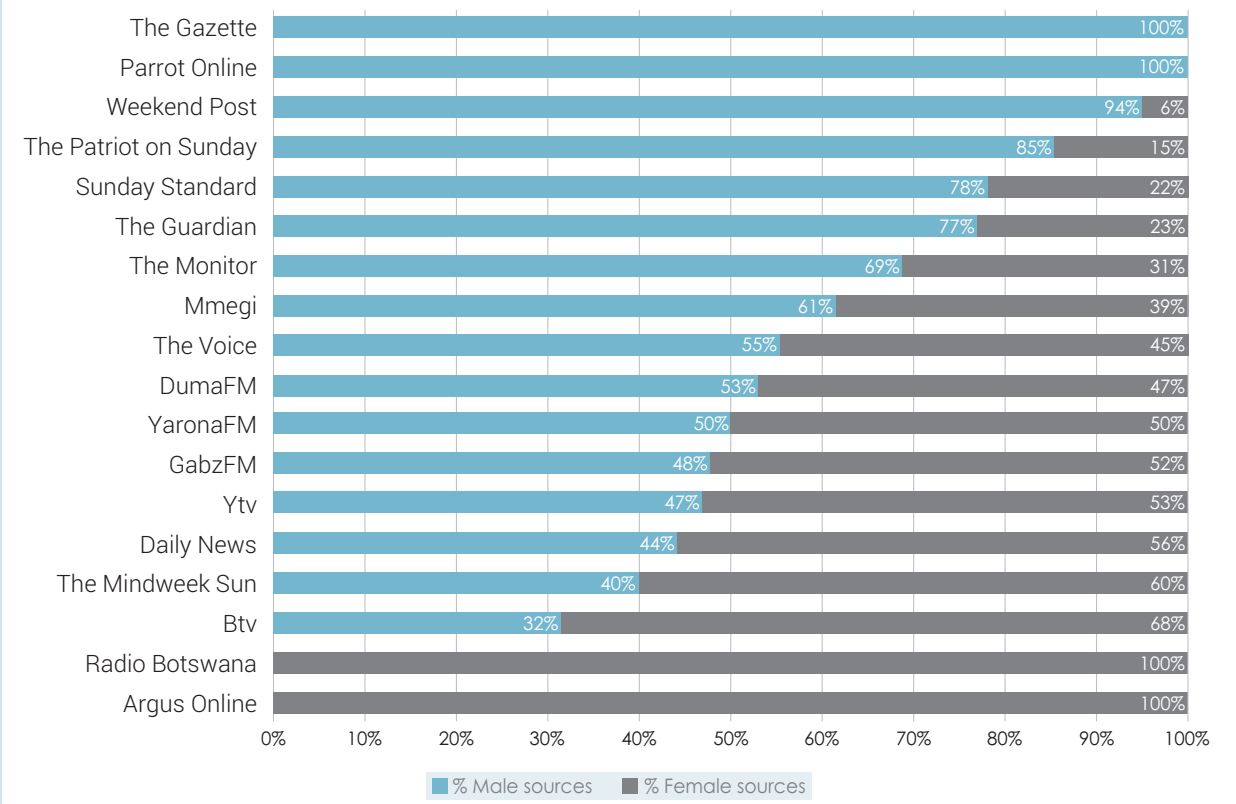
Where visible, audible or possible to determine from a name, the monitors recorded the sex of reporters and found that, in the items monitored, women reporters constituted 45% and men 55% of the reporters (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Reporters by sex



[10] Serame's appeal could open Pandora's Box | Sunday Standard
[11] Serame speaks in the eye of the storm | Mmegi
[12] Serame fights for political survival | Mmegi

Figure 10: Sex of reporters by media house in the 2024 Botswana elections



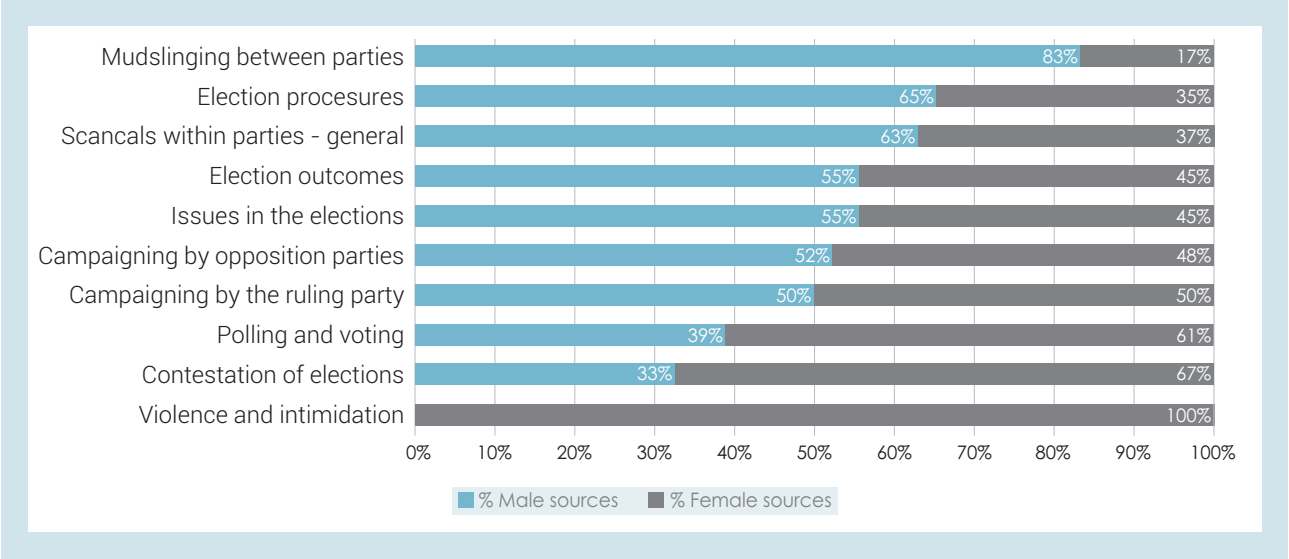


Ndinaye Tabengwa, BNF participant of the WPP Academy in Palapye, interviewing the late Director GL Botswana Chigedze Chinyepi.
Photo: Mboy Maswabi

Only two media houses, state-owned Radio Botswana and smaller digital media platform, Argus Online, had an all-woman election reporting team. Other media houses with a strong representation of female reporters covering elections (over 50%) were The Midweek Sun, YTV, GabzFM, and Daily News. The majority of media houses had mainly male reporters. The Gazette and Parrot Online had only male reporters.

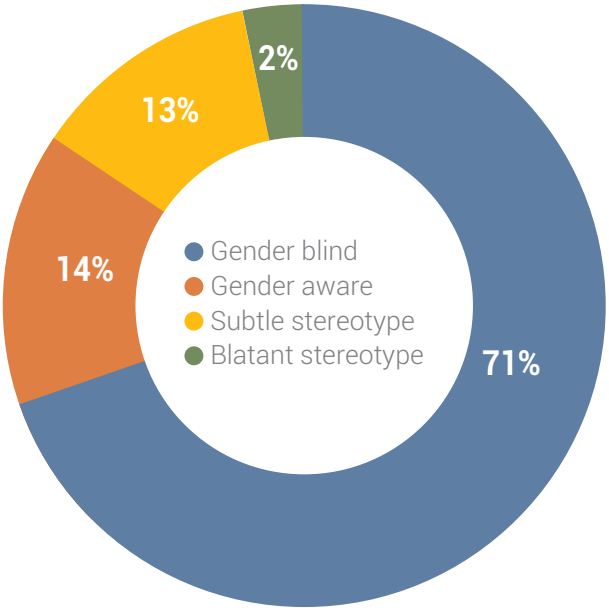
The study showed that women journalists were slightly more likely than men to consult female sources (5% compared to 4%). The lack of a distinct difference reflects the deeper structural gender biases in the media, that are not resolved by simply having more women reporters.

Figure 11: Election topics by sex of reporter in the 2024 Botswana elections



Disaggregation of topics by sex (figure 11) reflects a difference in the kinds of issues covered by male and female journalists. Women reporters covered all the stories on violence and intimidation, while male journalists covered the bulk of stories on mudslinging in elections (83%); election procedures (65%) and party scandals (63%).

Figure 12: GEM classification of news items in the 2024 Botswana elections



Monitors classified all news items into GL's Gender and Media (GEM) classification. They found that 71% fell in the gender blind category - that is, missed the opportunity to consult women source or to give a gender perspective on the topic at hand, with only 14% classified as gender aware (the opposite of gender blind). Thirteen percent of stories conveyed subtle stereotypes, for example identifying women according to their personal relationships; or tending to cast women in traditional roles. An encouraging finding is that only two percent of stories conveyed blatant stereotypes about women, for example as not belonging at all in politics.

The Media Monitoring findings did get media coverage, with some media and political commenters going on radio and television to analyse the preliminary results. The media also publicised the GL press releases and commentary around the elections.

The following are some of the reporting on GL press statements:

1. Botswana Media Neglects Women's Voices - Botswana - Africa Press Net
2. Botswana Media Neglects Women's Voices - Botswana Gazette
3. Women in Botswana Make up 54% of Voters, but Less than 10% of Parliament: Political Parties can Change that - Botswana - Africa Press Net
4. Women in Botswana watch from sidelines as country prepares for election - Voice of America
5. (3) Facebook Live | Facebook - Ytv interview with GL on elections and media monitoring
6. Botswana: Activists Want More Women in Botswana's National Assembly - allAfrica.com

Conclusions and recommendations

Despite Botswana's reputation as one of the countries with a stable democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is in a state of "democratic erosion" when it comes to women in political participation.

President Duma Boko has consistently emphasised the importance of reviewing Botswana's Constitution to reflect modern democratic values and address contemporary challenges. In his inauguration speech and subsequent statements, Boko has highlighted the following points:

- **Inclusive Process**: He advocates for a comprehensive and inclusive constitutional review process, ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to participate and express their views.
- **Criticism of past efforts**: Boko has criticized previous administrations for not adequately addressing constitutional amendments, particularly pointing out the lack of meaningful public consultation.
- **Timelines and priorities**: The president has committed to initiating the constitutional review process within six months of his tenure, aiming to strengthen governance frameworks and better align them with Botswana's current and future needs.
- **Enhancing democratic principles**: Boko sees the constitutional review as a critical step in bolstering democratic principles, promoting good governance, and ensuring that the government is more accountable and responsive to the people.

His administration has pledged to make the constitutional review a cornerstone of its governance reforms, signalling a commitment to deepening Botswana's democratic foundations. This provides an opportunity for the women of Botswana to revive their campaign to get gender meaningfully integrated into the new Constitution. Some of the key recommendations made during the Botswana WPP Project include:

Constitutional Review

The Constitutional Review process of 2023, and the failure to pass the Constitutional Review Bill of 2024, is an opportunity to revisit the process of the new government. The ruling party had during the campaign, promised to do a comprehensive constitutional review. Days into the 13th Parliament, the UDC, as well as the main opposition, BCP, was making overtures to revisiting the process.

Electoral Law Reform

The Electoral system, of the FPTP, while generally accepted as the best in ensuring legislators' accountabilities to their constituencies, it is unfriendly to disadvantaged groupings - women, youth, people with disabilities, and ethnic and sexual minorities. During the Dibotelo Constitutional Review, an overwhelming call was made to review the electoral system. The majority, including the GL-led women's coalition, 'Molao-motheo, Buang Bomme' recommended a mixed system of FPTP and PR. The multi-party and civil society

Task team which worked with Gender Links to develop and submit the recommendations to the Dibotelo Constitutional Review Commission have started engaging, albeit unofficially, to revive the process.

Botswana should review the electoral system currently in use and consider either Mixed electoral system or Proportional Representation (PR).

Recommendations by Molao-motheo, Buang Bomme'

- **Provide a general authorisation for the use of gender affirmative action, including quotas and preferential treatment**, whenever inequalities are identified for both public and private actors and state that in these circumstances, temporary special measures are not discriminatory.
- **Replace nominated MPs with a PR system for women and men**, constituting at least one-third of the seats at the local and national levels.
- **Introduce gender parity candidate quotas for all electoral systems and at all levels of decision-making** (for example parliament, local councils, the appointment of judges of High Court, Ambassadors, or High Commissioners, Ntlo ya Dikgosi membership). As noted although the effectiveness might differ in the FPTP and PR systems, the principle is fair, easily understood and consistent with democratic values.
- All political parties should adopt gender-sensitive policies and Constitutions that promote gender equality and women's human rights.

Political Parties

Political parties should:

- Set quotas for equal representation of women within their structures.
- Be required to develop succession plans that will stipulate mentorship by political veterans to the young and aspiring politicians. This should indicate the political retirement age from start for both Council and Parliamentary positions.
- Develop a Code of Conduct for political parties that can be used to hold political parties accountable especially during the election campaigns.
- Provide part funding to party candidates. Women to be considered for a higher percentage than men because they have less resources compared to men; this will enable a fair campaign.
- Have party wings/leagues for all structures. Current set up allows women's and youth wings only. In the absence of "men's wing" the interpretation is that men are the "PARTY", women and youth are their subordinates hence referred to as "wings".
- Be encouraged to take more deliberate steps to adopt affirmative action measures aimed at increasing participation of women, youth and people with disabilities in decision-making structures.

The IEC

The IEC, tasked with important task of delivering free and fair elections, should:

- Produce well-informed and truthful reports on the elections and democracy processes.
- Provide timely statistics and information. During the voter registration, the IEC captured the voters' information, including gender. But the IEC failed to capture such when registering and admitting parliamentary and local government candidates. Almost two months since the October 30 general elections, IEC could not deliver the reports to the relevant authorities, as data collectors were still, manually recording the gender of candidates.

- Develop and implement a gender policy, which failed to happen in the run up to the 2024 elections, despite repeated overtures. Gender Links would need to re-engage the IEC to help develop a gender policy and influence processes of transformation and gender mainstreaming.
- Run training on WPP (workshops, public (Kgotla) meetings, media campaigns) to empower not only leaders, but the voters. A consistent public campaign is critical to demonstrate women's abilities and strength in politics.
- Advocate for legislative reforms to address violence against women in elections, including in the media.

Media

- The Code of Conduct for broadcasting should be amended to provide for equal coverage of women and men (voters and politicians) during elections.
- Continuous Media training for journalists and editors on gender responsive coverage.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

Civil Society Organisations should:

- Work collaboratively to strengthen their monitoring and lobbying and advocacy roles.
- Begin advocacy and lobbying for Constitutional review as early as now for the 2024 elections.
- Increase fundraising efforts for lobbying and advocating for the equal representation of women and youth in politics.
- Begin advocacy campaigns and lobbying for quotas and electoral reform well in advance of the 2024 elections.
- Build capacity of women candidates to campaign and take up political decision-making positions.
- Lobby political parties to develop and implement quotas within their parties.
- Conduct political and voters education about the 50/50 campaign and the importance and benefits of electing women into political decision making.
- Build capacity of Women legislators and councillors ensure their leadership is exemplary.
- Fund and support the Botswana Caucus for Women.
- Run HE-for-SHE champions in politics. Partner with men's organised groupings, Boys to Men, MenENGAGE, and Men's Sector. Gender Affairs department, and the Gender Commission should be engaged to take lead.
- Provide regular Media training on gender sensitive reporting throughout the electoral cycle. Branding and media training and usage for WPP is critical, especially in the era of digital and social media.
- Counter sexual harassment for women, especially young women, in politics.

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