Helpdesk Research Report: Quotas for Women's Representation in Africa
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Query: What are the key success factors in moving towards quota systems for women's participation in political decision-making in Africa? What forms have "Women's Parliaments" taken? What has been the experience with them in Africa and, in particular, what has been their role in moving toward such quota systems?

Enquirer: DFID Nigeria

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1. Overview

The vast majority of the literature and experts surveyed note that Africa has achieved greater success than other regions in increasing the representation of women in decision-making bodies. The adoption and implementation of quota systems in many African countries has been integral to this development. This success with quota systems, in turn, is attributed to:
  - strong and active women's movements, which lobbied for quotas and greater participation of women in politics;
  - regional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) that have adopted gender balanced representation within the organisation; set quota targets for member countries; and actively monitored the progress of these countries in reaching them;
  - opportunities in post-conflict and transition societies, which allowed for advances in women's representation.

It is important to note that women's movements have also been important in pushing for more balanced representation in regional bodies; and for lobbying them to adopted quota policies. Women's movements maximised on the openings in transitioning societies as well – pushing for the representation of women in peace negotiations and institutionalising greater women's representation in new constitutions.

'Women's Parliaments' have been described by one expert as "any sort of alternative organising by women, either due to their exclusion from centres of power more generally or in order to foster the articulation of 'women's interests' in the political process through women-only organising". Using this definition, 'Women's Parliaments' have taken various forms:
  - Broad-based forums: these bring together a range of women – ones from different political parties, traditional leaders, NGOs and members of the public, to discuss issues of importance to women; and to encourage women's participation in areas traditionally dominated by men. Four provinces in South Africa have held such 'women's parliaments'. They are a new development and their effectiveness is uncertain;
  - Parliamentary caucuses: these are non-partisan groups of women politicians who unite across party lines to lobby for increased representation of women in parliament; to

address issues of concern to women; and to strategise on their own before bringing ideas to the mainstream. The SADC Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus has been especially successful in pushing for 30% and now 50% women's representation quotas – by lobbying political parties and informing voters of the need for women in politics. The SADC caucus has helped other countries to develop their own caucuses.

➢ Women's manifestos: these set out demands for equal participation in politics (including demand for quotas). They are a tool through which to form alliances, promote consensus and articulate demands. They have been used in several African countries; in Ghana, for example, its manifesto was used to push for a national gender policy.

➢ Women's councils elected in women's only elections: these are innovative mechanisms used in Rwanda (which ranks number one in terms of women's representation in parliament). These councils operate parallel to general local councils. They advise generally elected bodies on women's issues; engage in advocacy; and provide skills and rights training to women.

2. Key documents

General

- Tripp, A. M. et al., forthcoming 2008, 'In Pursuit of Equal Political Representation', in 'Women in Movement: Transformations in African Political Landscapes', Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

This chapter discusses the issue of equal representation, which has been a central goal of women's movements in Africa. It outlines the impressive rise of women political leaders in Africa since the mid-1990s (the percentage of women in Africa's parliaments doubled between 1990 and 2005). It finds that the **influence of domestic and international women's movements** is the key factor behind these developments; and related to this are three other factors:

➢ **The introduction of electoral quotas for women**: the adoption of quotas accounts for many of the increases in female representation in African legislatures. Between 1995 and 2005, 20 countries adopted quotas, bringing the ratio of countries implementing quotas to 24 out of a total of 48 sub-Saharan African countries. The 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing played a key role in fostering these changes.

➢ **Opportunities emerging in the process of ending major armed conflicts**: in many countries, the implementation of quotas is linked not only to the Beijing conference but to the end of conflict. Conflicts disrupted traditional gender roles and provided opportunities for women and men to see new roles for women, including political ones. Women's movements were also able to demand increased representation in peace negotiations or constitution making exercises at the end of conflict.

➢ **Pressures from regional bodies like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well as pan-African organizations**: a SADC Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) was formed in 2002 to advocate and lobby for increased representation of women in SADC parliaments. As a result SADC set a goal of 30 percent female held legislative seats in its member countries by 2005. In 2005, a goal of 50 percent was set for 2015. This body also helped form women's **parliamentary caucuses** in Zambia, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe. Such caucuses are non-partisan and aim to bring women parliamentarians together across party lines to address issues of common concern. As a result of this type of regional lobbying, SADC countries have 20 percent legislative seats held by women in the lower house, while non-SADC African countries have on average 7 percent.

- Ballington, J., 2004, 'The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences', Quota Series Report, compiled from the findings and case studies presented at an International IDEA, EISA and SADC Parliamentary Forum Workshop, 11–12 November, Pretoria: http://www.idea.int/publications/quotas_africa/upload/IDEA_no3.qxd.pdf

This report is structured around the following themes addressed in the African context: comparative experiences of quotas (looking at the vast diversity of quota systems in Africa);

how to lobby for and implement quotas; the challenges to implementation and enforcement, and political party quotas. Key developments and lessons are as follows:

> ➢ Women's political representation has increased steadily over the past two decades – largely as a result of quotas. Rwanda is now the world leader with the greatest proportion of women in parliament; and Mozambique and South Africa are also among the top 15 ranked;
> ➢ Electoral system type has a strong correlation with women's political representation: countries with proportional representation (PR) have approximately twice the number of women in parliament than those with majoritarian systems;
> ➢ Gender quotas are used in 21 countries in Africa and fall under two main categories: reserved seats or appointments; and voluntary party quotas (which work best under PR systems or where there is a specific mandate to place women in winnable positions);
> ➢ Women's mobilisation and lobbying at local and regional levels, and recommendations from regional and international organisations have been critical to quota adoption;
> ➢ The political will of party leaders is integral to quota implementation; and
> ➢ The political effect of quotas and whether they lead to real decision-making power and empowerment is a subject requiring further research.

- Bauer, G., forthcoming 2008, '50/50 by 2020: Electoral Gender Quotas for Parliament in East and Southern Africa', International Feminist Journal of Politics

In mid 2007, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa in southern Africa and Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda in east Africa all had national legislatures ranging from 25 to nearly 50 percent women, placing them in the top 30 worldwide. The three southern African cases (Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa) increased the number of women MPs using a closed list PR electoral system and voluntary political party-based quotas. The three east African cases (Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) used a mix of electoral systems and mandatory 'special' or 'reserved' seats for women. This paper compares the two regional alternatives and the advantages and disadvantages of each type of quota system. It finds that impressive advances have been made in women's quantitative representation in all six countries by using electoral gender quotas. Moreover, it appears that substantive representation has been enhanced, in terms of legislative accomplishments and improved perceptions of women's roles in politics. It finds the reserved seat quotas more problematic than party-based quotas, primarily because women are often elected into the reserved seats in exchange for loyalty to the president or ruling party. The paper also emphasises that regardless of what system is used, "strong autonomous women's movements and traditions of political advocacy and mobilisation are necessary to influence political parties and national agendas. All too often actual political strategies are collapsed into a single demand for a quota" (p.23).

- Lowe-Morna, C., ed., 2004, Ringing Up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics, Gender Links, Johannesburg

This book, based on interviews with 172 politicians in six Southern African countries (Zambia, Lesotho, Seychelles, South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia), analyses the factors that have enabled women to take on decision-making roles. They include a history of struggle, a democratic dispensation, dynamic links with civil society and ways to enhance the personal agency of decision-makers. Chapter three examines the advantages and disadvantages of electoral systems and quotas in improving the effectiveness of women in politics. It reports that while electoral systems and quotas can increase the representation of women and start to challenge the barriers to their effective participation, it is still only the beginning. Other political, social, institutional and personal factors need to be addressed. Chapter four explores changes in institutional norms, procedures, culture and structures as a result of women's participation in decision-making. Some politicians have argued that a change in institutional culture is more important than quotas; this report argues, however, that the two are not mutually exclusive. The mere presence of women in significant strengths forces male dominated institutions to think and act differently. While progress has been made at the national level, obstacles exist at the local level, where quotas have been more "tokenistic" and the scale of transformation lower. The report emphasises the need to engage with civil society in order to truly impact the role of

women in decision-making: "Deliberate strategies like that of the women's movement in Zambia to get gender activists into parliament is one way of helping to ensure quantitative and qualitative change" (p.114).

Regional Bodies

- Tripp, A. M., 2005, 'Regional Networking as Transnational Feminism: African Experiences', Feminist Africa, issue 4:
  http://www.feministafrica.org/index.php/regional-networking

This article asserts that regional movements have a greater impact on domestic politics than global movements and international instruments. It explores the key mechanisms through which regional movements influence domestic movements and national policy. These include:

- ➢ direct diffusion between NGOs and NGO coalitions from one country to the next: for example, the replication of the South African Women's Charter by women's *manifestos* elsewhere in Africa. In Ghana, the Women's Manifesto was developed to push the government to implement a comprehensive national gender policy.
- ➢ the promotion of gender balance within sub-regional organisations: women's organisations pressed for gender representation within sub-regional organisations (e.g. SADC, the East African Community, and Economic Community Of West African States). In turn, these institutions became mechanisms through which to promote gender representation in member countries.
- ➢ sub-regional pressures for improved gender representation in government and parliament: as a result of pressure from women's movements, these sub-regional organisations have set targets, particularly electoral quotas, for member countries to improve gender representation. They also assert pressure on countries that lag behind.
- ➢ pressures for gender balance at the pan-African level: similar dynamics to those found at the sub-regional level have occurred at the pan-African level – with the African Union.
- ➢ comprehensive networks: sub-regional advocacy networks for female representation; pressures from national networks on sub-regional organisations; and Africa-wide advocacy and networking to promote women's leadership.

The combination of these movements and activities have advanced gender campaigns further in Africa than elsewhere: "Today, active "50/50" movements are pushing for full equality in gender representation in the legislature in countries as diverse as South Africa, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and Senegal. [They] … are most prominent in Africa compared with other world regions, with only a handful found in the North"*.*

- Kandawasvika-Nhundu, R., 2004, 'Implementation of Quotas: Experiences of the SADC Parliamentary Forum', Paper presented at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)/ Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA)/Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum Conference, 11-12 November, Pretoria:
  http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_SADC_Nhundu_27_7_2004.pdf

This brief paper discusses the efforts of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum to promote the representation and effective participation of women in its member states. The 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development committed SADC countries to ensure the 'equal representation of women and men in the decision making of member states and SADC structures at all levels', and set targets of at least 30 percent representation of women in political and decision making structures by 2005 (now 50 percent by 2015). SADC heads of state and government committed themselves to this. The Forum also promotes the empowerment of women parliamentarians through the SADC Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC). As noted above, this is a regional body comprised of women parliamentarians, united across party lines. It creates a space for women parliamentarians to strategise on their own before bringing their ideas into the mainstream. The RWPC's key focus has been the minimum 30 percent representation. They worked towards achieving this by engaging and 'asking' political parties to nominate at least 30 percent of women on their lists for

election to parliament and other decision-making positions; and by informing voters of the need to have women in politics and decision-making.

Country Case Studies

- Powley, E., 2004 'Strengthening Governance: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Transition', Paper for Expert Group Meeting on 'Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes in Post-Conflict Countries', 19-22 January, Glen Cove: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/meetings/2004/EGMelectoral/EP5-Powley.PDF

This paper documents women's leadership in the reconstruction process in Rwanda and the progress that has been made in increasing women's participation in government. At the national level, women are visible with high-level appointments. Further, innovative structures have been created to promote women's participation in governance at all administrative levels—from the smallest cell to the sector, district, provincial, and national levels. They include:

- ➢ **A triple balloting system**, whereby each voter selects one person from each of three ballots - a general ballot, a women's ballot, and a youth ballot. This system has guaranteed that women constitute at least 20 percent of district-level leadership and has provided room in the system for women who were not comfortable challenging men directly in elections.
- ➢ **A parallel system of women's councils and women-only elections**, which guarantees a women's mandate for all elected bodies. These 10-member councils (with representatives for legal affairs, civic education, health, and finance) are grassroots structures elected at the cell level *by women only* (and then through indirect election at each successive administrative level). They operate parallel to the general local councils and advise the generally elected bodies on issues that affect women. They have an advocacy role as opposed to a policy implementation function; and ensure that women's views and concerns on education, health, security, and other issues are heard by local authorities. They are also involved in skills training and making local women aware of their rights.

- Geisler, G., 2006, 'A Second Liberation: Lobbying for Women's Political Representation in Zambia, Botswana and Namibia', Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 69-84: available for purchase via Sage publications: http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/40/5/521

This article looks at the experiences of women's lobby groups in Zambia, Botswana and Namibia from 1990 to the present. Women's movements in all three have led campaigns for greater political representation of women in formal politics. In the three countries, the author finds a common progression in lobbying strategies - from persuading or begging presidents to appoint women and persuading and begging women to stand for office; to popular appeals for greater voter education, reinforced by women's *manifestos*. Manifestos are used as a tool to form alliances, reach consensus, and articulate demands. In addition, the article highlights the following two strategies as having been successful in bringing about political change:

- ➢ an inclusive strategic alliance between women in formal politics and in the women's movement; and
- ➢ the promotion of women's advancement and gender issues within political parties. In Namibia, for example, lobbying moved beyond appeals to the head of state and potential women candidates to political parties -- persuading party leaders to facilitate women's greater representation, to change party policies to include gender equity goals and to initiate gender mainstreaming, such as through gender budgeting.

- Bauer, G., 2004, 'The Hand that Stirs the Pot Can Also Run the Country: Electing Women to Parliament in Namibia', Journal of Modern African Studies, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 479-509: available for purchase via Cambridge Journals: http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=257559

In early 2004, more than 40 percent local councillors were women, as were many mayors and deputy mayors of major towns and cities, and 29 percent of voting members of the National

Assembly - placing Namibia fourth in continental Africa and seventeenth worldwide in terms of women's representation in a national legislature. This article examines how this high percentage has been achieved since independence in 1990. It highlights three critical factors:

- ➢ A closed list proportional representation electoral system, combined with mandatory quotas at the local level and voluntary quotas on the part of political parties at the national level (with a campaign underway to make those higher and mandatory as well). With independence, a new constitution and the need to completely overhaul the legal system provided the opportunity for Namibian women activists and politicians to successfully push for such a system.

- ➢ A unified women's movement. Namibian women from various backgrounds (including those within government and outside) have mobilised around the issue of their representation in politics. This movement has been further reinforced and enhanced by regional organisations and practices and a global women's movement and international conventions. In September 1999 the Namibian Women's Manifesto was launched, and a year later – the Namibian Women's Manifesto Network (NWMN). It launched the 50/50 campaign, which has become linked to the global effort sponsored by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) in New York City, calling for 50% representation of women in all areas of politics and decision making.

- ➢ The timing of Namibian independence and Namibian women's significant contribution to it. Women in Namibia have built upon the experiences and training they received in the course of struggle, and the support they garnered as a result of it; they have been able to push a forward-looking gender agenda, which includes a greater representation of women in political office.

- • Women's Environment and Development Organization, 'Experiences in the Last Decade on Fostering Women's Political-Participation in Kenya' Country Reports: Kenya, WEDO, New York: http://iknowpolitics.org/en/node/2297

This report describes efforts to increase women's political participation in Kenya, focusing on the Gender and Governance Programme (GGP). It outlines programme objectives and activities that took place in GGP Phase 1 2004-2005. They include identification at the district level of women leaders of different generations to serve as lobbyists, training of opinion leaders on gender and leadership and development of training manuals. In addition, the women's political manifesto was adapted to the local governance context: "The manifesto represents a set of demands built around equal access to opportunities and involvement in leadership at all level, with special emphasis on leadership at the Local Authority level. They have the structures through which women can participate in decision-making at the local level and sharpen their leadership skill through existing committees. The revised manifesto can help women to become more politically aware of their ability to occupy leadership positions and to bargain for such positions" (p.2). The report also highlights some key lessons that women organisations in Kenya have learnt in their political endeavours; as well as recommendations. These include:

- ➢ the need for structural and institutional barriers to be removed;
- ➢ the need for legislation (affirmative action) to permanently reduce the gap in women's representation;
- ➢ the importance of constitutional review as a window of opportunity for change (the old constitution is not favourable to women);
- ➢ the need for the law to address cultural issues that undermine women's participation. Presently there exist various gaps on matters relating to women and this reinforces negative practices;
- ➢ the need for technical and financial support for potential women candidates; many have been unaware about electoral regulations and procedures; and
- ➢ the scrutinisation of all education material to eliminate any messages which promote the idea of the superiority of men over women.

Further Country Studies

The Quota Project has a 'Global Database of Quotas for Women' website (www.quotaproject.org), which provides an overview of the use of electoral quotas for women worldwide. It contains information on the various types of quotas in use globally, and details on the percentages and targets in relevant countries. The following are case studies on countries in Africa from the site:

- Morocco
  http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_Morocco_tahri_27_7_2004.pdf

- Namibia
  http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_Namibia_Frank_10_6_2004.pdf

- Rwanda
  http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_Rwanda_Kanakuze_2004.pdf

- Senegal
  http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_Senegal-Aminata_Kasse-final%202-6-2004.pdf

- South Africa
  http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_South_Africa_Manzini-final2-6-2004.pdf

- Tanzania
  http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_Tanzania_Meena_27_7_2004.pdf

- Uganda
  http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_Uganda_Tamale-6-6-2004.pdf

3. Additional Resources

Women's Parliaments
- Four provinces in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal, North West, the Western Cape Province and the Capricorn District Municipality have held *'Women's Parliaments'*. They are designed to empower women - bringing women (from different political parties, traditional leaders, NGOs and members of the public) together in parliament to discuss issues of particular relevance to women. They are also designed to encourage them to participate in areas previously dominated by men. More information can be found in the following news articles:
  http://allafrica.com/stories/200708270552.html

  http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?sf=6&set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20070807114334718C985389

  http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2006/06081016151002.htm

Women's Representation Rankings
- The Inter-Parliamentary Union maintains the rankings of countries based on the proportion of women in national parliaments. This list is available at: http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm

Relevant Books

- Bauer, G and Britton, H, eds., 2006, 'Women in African Parliaments', Lynne Rienner, Boulder: available for purchase at:
  http://www.rienner.com/viewbook.cfm?BOOKID=1537&search=bauer

- Drude Dahlerup (ed.), 2006, 'Women, Quotas and Politics', Routledge, London: available for purchase at: http://www.routledgepolitics.com/books/Women-Quotas-and-Politics-isbn9780415375498

Authors and contributors

This query response was prepared by **Huma Haider** huma@gsdrc.org

Contributors were:
Dr. Lisa Bardez (Dartmouth University);
Dr. Gretchen Bauer (University of Delaware);
Dr. Lucy Ferguson (University of Birmingham);
Keboitse Machangana (IDEA);
Chana Majake (Commission on Gender Equality);
Nomcebo Manzini (UNIFEM);
Colleen Lowe Morna (Gender Links/ Gender and Media Southern Africa Network);
Dr. Aili Tripp (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars/ University of Wisconsin-Madison);
Dr. Georgina Waylen (University of Sheffield).

Websites visited

Genderlinks, Google, Google Scholar, GSDRC, IDEA, iknowpolitics.org, Ingenta Journals, Inter-Parliamentary Union, SADC Parliamentary Forum, Sister Namibia

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