



IN SESSION



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

"YOUR SEAT IN PARLIAMENT"

Vol. 9 ISSUE 8

AUGUST 2009



Women 
in Parliament

Political parties honour struggle heroines

NCOP's

2015 Millennium Goals

SPECIAL REPORT: Parliament's gender revolution



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Black Rod of National Council of Provinces

Vision Statement

To build an effective people's Parliament that is responsive to the needs of the people and that is driven by the ideal of realising a better quality of life for all the people of South Africa.

Mission Statement

As the freely elected representatives of the people of South Africa, our Mission is to represent, and to act as a voice of the people, in fulfilling our Constitutional functions of passing laws and overseeing executive action.

Strategic Objectives

1. Increasing oversight
2. Increasing public participation
3. Building an efficient, effective institution



Mace of National Assembly

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OUR IDEALS**VISION**

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VALUES

Our values guide the management of Parliament. Our values are formed by that which we treasure and hold dear. It forms the foundation that will give rise to policies, which provide guidance in the implementation of everyday services and projects. The values of Parliament are derived from the role that Parliament plays in the context of our democracy. Therefore our values are formed by the people of South Africa, the Constitution, our cooperation with other arms of government, and our will to act with professionalism and good institutional governance.

The Tours Office of Parliament offers the following services, all of which are free

- DVD presentation on the National Symbols and the new Parliamentary Emblem in our Multimedia Centre
- Guided tours of Parliament including history, the functions of Parliament, an explanation of how Parliament works and how you can get involved in the Parliamentary processes
- Observe debates from the public galleries in the National Assembly or National Council of Provinces
- Meeting with a Member of Parliament
- Presentations on the Structure of Parliament, Committees of Parliament, How a law is made, Parliament's oversight role, etc
- Attend a Public Hearing or Committee meeting.

When do tours take place?

From 9:00 to 12:00, Mondays to Fridays, excluding weekends and public holidays.

How far in advance must I reserve a tour?

At least one week in advance
Tours for school groups during the holidays should be reserved two months in advance.

How long before the scheduled time of the tour should I arrive?

At least 15 minutes.

Which entrance to the parliamentary complex must I use?

Groups and individuals must use the entrance to 100 Plein Street (Lelie Street) and then enter the 90 Plein Street building.

What must I bring to gain access to the Parliamentary precincts?

Letter received from the Tours Office confirming tour
Passport or identity document.

Please note:

- Cameras are only allowed in certain areas
- For security reasons, video cameras and fire-arms are not allowed (These items can be safely deposited at the entrance)
- Everyone will undergo a security check before entering the building
- Handbags will be scanned
- Smoking is allowed only in designated areas.

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New features this month
**crossword puzzle
and sudoku**

editor's note

The recent presentation by Professor Nan Yeld of the Alternative Admissions Research Project to Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Higher Education was revealing. She reported on the National Benchmark Tests Project (academic and quantitative literacy and mathematics survey) conducted on 12 202 entry level university students. The results showed that more than half of the students would need interventions, in order to succeed at University. Dr Theunis Eloff, Chairperson of Higher Education South Africa (HESA) attributed the country's generally poor literacy to poor schooling, too much television, video games, use of "SMS language" and an overall lack of reading.

There is a saying that it takes a village to raise a child, and therefore the challenge posed by this situation cannot be resolved by the schooling system alone. The education system must address reading and comprehension skills, parents must attend to the challenges posed by too much television, video games and cellphones, and publishers need to come up with ways of attracting the young into reading, from an early age.

For publishers, the big task is to put fun back into reading. INSESSION is taking this challenge seriously and intends to rise to the occasion. As part of our effort to encourage reading, we are introducing a regular "edutainment" page. This edutainment page, which is about education and entertainment, is an initiative of Parliament's Public Education Office. It aims to find entertaining ways to educate and inform the public about Parliament, its structures and processes, while providing a bit of logic-based fun. It will be a regular feature with a combination of a crossword puzzle, and the number puzzle that is entertaining young and old, Sudoku.

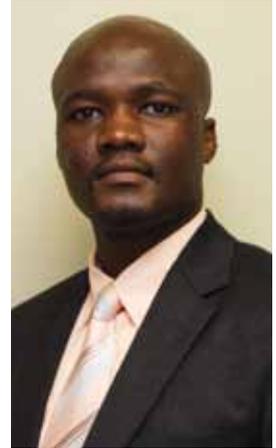
The history of crosswords can apparently be traced back to 1913 when a journalist from Liverpool in England, Arthur Wynne, published a "word-cross" puzzle. The creation of crosswords is called cruciverbalism, and its creators are called cruciverbalists, from Latin for cross and word. Content for the crosswords will be based on issues relating to Parliament, democracy and subjects covered by INSESSION magazine. The first form of number puzzle appeared in 1882 in *Le Siecle* newspaper, but not under the name Sudoku. It contained double-digit numbers and required arithmetic rather than logic to solve it. The modern number puzzle was popularised by a Japanese company Nikoli under the name Sudoku, from the Japanese for "the digits must be single" or "the digits are limited to one occurrence", *Suji wa dokushin*. This was abbreviated to Sudoku by Maki Kaji (Wikipedia). Sudoku is now a global pastime with international competitions including the Sudoku World Championships.

Crosswords and number puzzles are used to entertain and "pass time" but they carry intellectual and informative value. They are used to exercise the brain in logic in the case of Sudoku, and to pass on information and jog memory in the case of Crosswords. Just like the body, the brain needs to be exercised in order to improve its capacity. The beauty of Crosswords and Sudoku are that they appeal to young and old. INSESSION even hopes that our efforts can help to lure young video game stars and television watchers to a family time of crosswords and Sudoku, that it might just reduce the electricity bill for TV and computer games, and assist in curbing global warming, as well as helping to improve everyone's vocabulary!

Solutions will be published in the following month's issue of INSESSION.

Enjoy the read and good luck on the Crossword and Sudoku.

Momelezi Kula
editor





Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nomaindia Mfeketo

MESSAGE FROM THE national assembly



The Importance of Women in Parliament

The representation of women in political life and leadership positions and the promotion of gender equity is an integral part of developing and sustaining democracy. The representation and participation of women in the parliamentary arena plays an important role in developing and maintaining a political agenda that is illuminated by consideration of gender issues. Parliament supports the inclusion and equality of women as an important part of nation-building. It recognises that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. It is critical that women should be mobilised to enter the sphere of Parliament in order to help explode the myth of the incapacity of women to be decision-makers. Women should not only enter Parliament, they should also be agents of change of the institution, and society.

Since the first democratic elections in 1994, female parliamentarians have played an active role in mobilising women's rights and through their lobbying, have ensured the passage of several key pieces of legislation aimed at protecting women's rights, such as the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act No 92 of 1996), the Domestic Violence Act (Act No 116 of 1998), the Maintenance Act (Act No 99 of 1998), the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (Act No 120 of 1998) and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act) Amendment Act (Act No 32 of 2007), to cite but a few examples. In addition to playing a role in considering the gendered implications of legislation, female Members of Parliament (MPs) are also likely to be sensitive to the gendered implications of Government service delivery and are more likely than men to play a role in ensuring that this is built into oversight agendas. Female MPs have also been known to play a role in monitoring the appropriation of Government resources from a gender perspective.

Having said this, although women are more likely than men to take these issues up, it cannot be assumed that all women will take up women's issues as a matter of course. It is also critical that men in Parliament begin to play a more active role in ensuring that Parliament is committed to the promotion of gender equity. To this end, it is imperative that Parliament invests in gender analysis training for all Members. Experience across the world has shown that the inclusion of female parliamentarians brings about positive changes in politics, because although all Members of Parliament are responsible for promoting gender equality, the increased representation of women can create a platform for women's issues to be placed on the political agenda. Women in Parliament represent the vast and diverse electorate of women in South Africa and as representatives of this electorate; they are in the position to be agents for change through their oversight and legislative roles. Women in South Africa have been the champions of gender reform – they have played, and continue to play, a central role in our democracy and the trajectory of our country's future.

Nomaindia Mfeketo

DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Thandi Memela

MESSAGE FROM THE national council of provinces



End forced marriages now

It is my great pleasure and honour to contribute to this magazine for the very first time in such an important month. This is a special time of the year when we as women reflect on how we live our lives each day to uphold the dreams of the fallen heroes of the struggle, who against all odds braved the system of the time and marched on the Union Buildings.

As a society we can only call ourselves free and liberated if we focus on educating the rural illiterate women, who are exposed to abuse because they lack information, and often even basic education. In celebrating this month, let us all dirty our hands by being involved in community upliftment programmes, so that we may bring back ubuntu.

By educating our women, they will be better informed to make various choices in life, including taking protective measures against diseases like HIV/Aids, and TB. In this way, the issue of child-headed households will soon become a thing of the past.

A critical matter we need to address is that of young Eastern Cape girls (12-year-olds) who are being forced into marriage to older men in exchange for lobola. The saddening part of this is that our very own women are the perpetrators of this evil. Let this be a wake-up call to fight this grave injustice in our society, and make the choice of empowering our women through education.

Having said the above, I want to wish you all a happy woman's month, let it not be a once-a-year event, but an ongoing activity. Remember: Children are our future and we need to prepare them now to lead one day.

“Wathinta abafazi, wathinta imbokodo!” You strike a woman, you strike a rock!



Thandi Memela

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

“Strike a woman, you strike a rock!”



Education Ministers: Ms Angie Motshekga and Dr Blade Nzimande

Education needs shot in arm

7 August

The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training held a two-day strategic planning workshop largely focused on State organs dealing with education in the country, and how the Committee could strengthen its oversight. The workshop was occasioned by the restructuring of the Department of Education, dividing it into Basic Education, and Higher Education and Training. The Committee said there was a big need to train and teach skills to people outside the schooling system. This could be done inter alia by tapping into the funds of Sector Education and Training Authorities, which had lain dormant for years. The step would lead to improved training, and assist in alleviating poverty.

The availability of bursaries was raised. The Committee said there was still a lot of unspent money in the National Student Financial Aid Scheme and this had to be distributed to deserving students, preferably in January before institutions of higher learning reopened. During the two days, Members looked at various skills-retention mechanisms that would help curb the exodus of skills from South Africa. The Committee would approach the Executive to speed up its interventions, to make the best use of available funds and to strive for excellence. The emphasis should be on citizens in rural areas and marginalized groups.

parliament in-brief

A selection of online news

New laws to curb Illegal Mining

11 August

The Portfolio Committee on Mining went on oversight visits to four provinces to investigate the recent incidents of illegal mining and the deaths of mineworkers. The Committee visited Harmony Gold's Eland Shaft in Welkom where 86 illegal miners died early this year. They also visited the Impala Platinum Mine in Rustenburg where nine mineworkers were killed in an underground accident. Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal were next on the list. Committee Chairperson, Mr Fred Gona said they would meet with the task team set up by the Minister of Mineral Resources to look into ways of addressing illegal mining, which was reportedly costing the industry billions of Rands a year.

Parliament visits Prisons

5 August

Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services has embarked on its oversight visits programme, with visits to two Western Cape correctional facilities. The visit to Pollsmoor Correctional Centre and Malmesbury Correctional Centre generated interest in the current state of the Correctional Services.

Chairperson Vincent Smith said that the Committee had identified seven key projects to engage in this term. Some were overcrowding in prisons, the separation of children from adults and the plight of awaiting-trial detainees.

Mr Smith said the Committee would be meeting with the Department later this month.

Outsourcing costs queried

26 August

The Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services has raised its concern about the high cost of outsourcing when the Department of Correctional Services acquires some of its services from external parties. The 886 contracts approved in the 2008/2009 financial year amounted to more than R1.1 billion. Committee Chairperson Vincent Smith said the Department "cannot spend in excess of R23 million a month on outsourcing catering. Who is the service provider?" He said the Department had been given a fortnight to give a detailed explanation of its expenditure, which included R5 million a month for maintaining television sets, bought for R159 million.

Twin focus on transport

5 August

While other Committees of Parliament were out in the field doing oversight work, the Portfolio Committee on Transport was seeking answers from the Department of Transport on challenges encountered with the implementation of the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme, and the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT). The Director General of the Department, Ms Mpumi Mpofo, presented the status update on both programmes. The South African National Taxi Council was also present during the update.



Quilters at work for Parliament's Millennium Project

guest column

Quilting a Voice for the Voiceless

SA women helped to lobby Parliament

by Ms Jill Merckel, Parliamentary Millennium Project

The vast majority of South African women have long faced circumstances obstructing them from steady progress within society. In the past, harsh structural measures denied women the opportunity to empower and develop themselves. A lot has changed under the new Constitution, bringing new freedom and opportunities, but women still face many crippling realities, ranging from marginalisation, poverty and abuse, to not being fully integrated within the support structures of society. The problems stem from a lack of basic systems such as social and emotional support from family, neighbours and broader communities. Many of our women are still unable to read and write and therefore cannot contribute effectively towards the political, social and economic development of this country.

The Parliamentary Millennium Programme (PMP) has responded to this challenge by launching Amazwi Abesifazane (Voices of Women), in collaboration with Create Africa South (CAS), Provincial Legislatures and Local Government structures.

Through the Voices of Women campaign, the PMP seeks to tap into the rich source of knowledge and wisdom that exists throughout communities in our country, to bring communities closer together and provide a platform for women to share their views on matters relating to policy and how it impacts on their lives.



At each workshop, the personal accounts of women are being captured through story-writing and quilting using the theme "What Democracy Means to me." Through this process a relationship between society and creativity is established where women can share hidden experiences of personal, cultural and political history. Another important outcome of this project is the extraction of social and political themes that gets formulated into written submissions for the attention of Members of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures. This will ensure that the voices of these women get filtered into the legislative system, ultimately giving "voice to the voiceless".

Six of the nine workshops have been successfully completed. The campaign was launched in Douglas in the Northern Cape in August 2007 to coincide with national Women's Month. This was followed by a workshop in Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape in September, and the final workshop for

2007 was held in the Western Cape in December. In 2008, the PMP proceeded with the fourth workshop, hosted in Hazyview, Mpumalanga in March 2008, the fifth was held in Makhado, Limpopo in July 2008 and the sixth workshop was in Mafikeng, North West Province in August 2008.

The first report, containing the stories of three provinces, was launched in Parliament in August 2008 by the former Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Baleka Mbete. The event was supported by an exhibition in the Marks Building, showcasing some of the quilts produced by these women. The second report, containing the stories of women who participated in the Mpumalanga, Limpopo and North West Province workshops, was launched in August 2009 by the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mr Mninwa Mahlangu, and the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms. Nomaindia Mfeketo, as part of Parliament's celebrations during national Women's Month. An exhibition of artwork produced by the women can be seen in the Old Assembly Foyer. 🗨️

For more information on this campaign, contact Ms. Ilana-Loren van Louw on ivanlouw@parliament.gov.za





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Hail the heroines

political parties honour women

by Jackie Adriaans



Stand for progress: feminine focus in the National Assembly

each year, in recognition of the countless sacrifices and crucial contributions women have made in the liberation of South Africa, we celebrate Women's Month. In this issue, political parties represented in Parliament pay tribute to our very special women.

Party views on Women's Month

ACDP: The ACDP believes that Women's Month is a time to appreciate and celebrate wives, mothers, gogos, sisters, daughters and aunts. The ACDP is convinced that by upholding and promoting family values, South Africa can become

a strong, healthy and prosperous nation. Together with men, women have a critical role to play in this regard.

ANC: Women's Day is a day on which all South Africans come together, united in their diversity, to celebrate and salute the courageous struggle waged by women 53 years ago against the apartheid regime's oppressive pass laws. On 9 August 1956 an estimated 20 000 women of all races and creeds marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to oppose the pass laws being extended to African women. This defining action was a microcosm of women's struggles against the autocratic

policies perpetrated by the minority regime. It is this fearlessness and selflessness that contributed to the liberation of this country and towards the free people that we are today.

APC: This is an important time in our calendar that refocuses our attention on the important issue of the struggle for gender equality. It is about the past, as much as it is about the present and the future.

AZAPO: Women's Month is crucial to focus the collective mind of the nation on issues that affect women. If correctly used, the month can play an important role in the advancement of women in our country.



COPE: We at COPE and the COPE Women's Movement are committed to ensuring that during Women's Month the economic and social empowerment of women across a broad spectrum is recognised and upheld, and that specific women's issues are highlighted both in government and the private sector. We have initiated a number of programmes to actively improve the quality of life of the women and children in our country. Our specific focus for August is the aged and orphans. In honouring our mothers and children, women members of COPE undertook to visit old age homes and/or orphanages throughout the country to offer their time, expertise or financial assistance, to provide for specific needs. These programmes will continue beyond Women's Month.

DA: The DA regards this as an important opportunity to highlight the special role played by women in society. Women are usually the rock or foundation on which the family is based, and often in South Africa they are both breadwinners and caregivers. They are the ones who inspire and encourage their families and those around them to fulfil their responsibilities and play a meaningful role in their homes, families and communities. Women are often taken for granted and this is an opportunity to affirm, encourage and recognise their contribution. This period can and should be used to assist or support those whose circumstances are not ideal, to improve their lot in life.

ID: For the ID, Women's Month is a very important month. Although our struggle for women's rights goes on 365 days a year, Women's Month is important because it highlights the challenges that we still face in achieving equality between men and women.

FF PLUS: The FF Plus views Women's Month in a very serious light. It is on the calendar to remind all of us of what we have achieved and what still needs to be done.

IFP: The IFP views Women's Month as a month to acknowledge the achievements made by women in different political spheres. On 9 August 1956 women from all walks of life marched to the Union Buildings in protest against the oppressive pass laws, which were affecting everybody.

MF: Women's Month is a constant reminder that as a nation, we have to be sensitive to women and mother-and-child issues in terms of budgeting and the implementation of legislation, policies and programmes of government.

PAC: The PAC supports Women's Month. It highlights the social, economic, cultural and other forms of gender oppression. However, legislation falls short of addressing the liberation of women because oppressors tend to hide under the banners of religion or tradition.

UCDP: We view Women's Month as a celebration of our achievements over the years, as well as an important time to reflect on all the important issues that women still need to deal with.

UDM: The UDM supports the concept of Women's Month because as a democratic society, we have a moral responsibility to heighten awareness about the rights of women and celebrate their contribution to the nation.

Parliament's achievements in improving the quality of life and status of women

ACDP: The ACDP notes that following this year's election, South Africa has risen from 17th to 3rd place in the global ranking of women in Parliament. Congratulations go to the political parties and to the people of South Africa within those parties for recognising the potential of our South African women to carry this great

responsibility. Certainly Parliament has made every effort to facilitate an improvement in the quality of life and status of women. On some levels it has succeeded, but the results do not reflect the effort that went into this. Legislation has been passed that has strengthened family values. However, that same legislation includes clauses that severely undermine families.

ANC: A great deal has been achieved to promote and improve the quality of life of all women since democracy dawned in South Africa 15 years ago. About 50% of Members of Parliament from the majority party are women, while over 40% of the portfolios in the national Executive are held by women. Since the establishment of the first democratic Parliament in 1994, Parliament and the ANC have continued to advance women's issues within the national legislature through platforms such as the annual *Women's Parliament*, the multiparty Parliamentary Women's Caucus and the ANC Women's Caucus. In the legislative sphere, the past decade of democracy has seen the enactment of women-friendly Acts, such as the Maintenance Act and the Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy Act.

APC: Parliament has championed a number of positive developments that range from passing progressive laws that seek to enhance the quality of life of women, to establishing a special committee to monitor government policies and programmes on gender. Since 1994 women have played key roles and occupied key positions in the institution, thus raising and enhancing their standing not only in Parliament, but also in society.

AZAPO: Parliament has achieved a lot in promoting the quality of life of women in South Africa and in the Institution itself. Parliament has passed a number of laws to improve the status of women and has ensured that they are well represented in its structures, especially in leadership positions.



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This in turn has influenced the entire country in the right direction.

COPE: It may be a little premature to comment on the contributions made under the current administration but the previous administration should be acknowledged for its contribution to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Parliament has set standards in all sectors for the equitable representation of women. The promulgation of the Domestic Violence Act as well as the recognition of inter-denominational marriages has advanced and improved the quality of life of many South African women. However, the lives of the vast majority of ordinary women have not yet significantly improved. Considering that women are the primary custodians of young children, they are directly and severely affected by the lack of adequate service delivery in terms of healthcare, education, water, sanitation, etc. There is, therefore, an overwhelming amount of work still to be done by Parliament to ensure that the views of politicians are translated into policies that can be implemented at grassroots level in ways that positively, tangibly and directly improve the lives of women.

DA: There have been some improvements. The election of more women to Parliament, the civil service and other positions, has helped to create a greater awareness of the needs of women and their families and to dispel some stereotypes about the place of women in society. So there is greater gender sensitivity in legislation and administrative processes than in previous dispensations. However, while there are many excellent laws, the greatest challenge lies in implementing them successfully. They are often not taken seriously and people merely pay lip service to them. There is also not sufficient accountability. Theory needs to be put into practice.

ID: Since 1994 we have ensured that the laws passed by Parliament, which is its key mandate, are gender-sensitive. One key piece of legislation, namely the Domestic Violence Act, was an attempt to address the abuse of women and children. The Equality Act also assisted South Africans to begin to be more gender-sensitive by articulating in legislation what equality means in terms of people's daily lives.

FF PLUS: We believe that Parliament has succeeded in making a difference. No one today who has contact with Parliament can claim that they are not aware of the importance of gender issues and the need to improve the quality of life and status of women.

IFP: There has been progress by Parliament in addressing and improving the quality of life and status of women. Some of our government departments are led by female Ministers and Deputy Ministers, some are Speakers and Deputy Speakers of Provincial Legislatures and some are Chairpersons of Portfolio and Select Committees. Opportunities have been provided in Parliament for women to express themselves through debates on domestic violence, abuse of women and children and human trafficking, etc. A Bill is in the pipeline for 50/50 representation of women in politics and decision-making. This is a very good development.

MF: In terms of sensitising the health, social, education and economic budgets, which affect women, there have been vast improvements.

PAC: There have definitely been improvements but these improvements tend to be classed-based. Elitist, professional women have benefitted more from legislation and changes. For women from deep rural areas like KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, conditions have not

improved much and they are still oppressed. In the Eastern Cape some women are still arbitrarily forced into marriage. Broad-based black economic empowerment excludes those at grassroots level. That means class division undermines the good intentions of legislation.

UCDP: We believe that over the years Parliament has tried to improve the lives of women, but a lot of work still needs to be done.

UDM: Over the years Parliament has played a meaningful role in improving the quality of life and status of women. This is aptly demonstrated by the numerous women who have served in Parliament as the leaders of political parties, Presiding Officers, Committee Chairpersons and outspoken contributors to the work of the institution.

The most important contribution of Parliament to empower women

ACDP: No issues are exclusively women's issues but women must be heard on all issues. Parliament contributes significantly to ensuring that the voices of women are not drowned out and that women have access to Parliament and its processes to the same extent as men. Parliament contributes to the empowerment of women daily, in diligently investigating and interrogating all possible solutions to the critical challenges of poverty, unemployment, education, land, housing, health, justice, crime, etc.

APC: The passing of progressive legislation that seeks to empower women and end statutory discrimination against them, has been the most significant achievement.



“ Women have shown they can break the glass ceiling ”

AZAPO: We have had women Presiding Officers for three Parliaments.

COPE: The targeting of a 50/50 quota on representation of women in Parliament has greatly advanced the women's agenda. However, it is vital that all women in these positions are adequately trained and equipped to understand the many pressing issues that face the majority of South African women and thus fastidiously and diligently carry out their additional responsibilities in this regard. The celebration of Women's Day and Women's Month has also been an important contribution with regard to a national concentrated focus and awareness of women's issues.

DA: The single most important contribution has been the adoption of the Constitution of South Africa which recognises human rights (also women's rights) and which created the Chapter 9 Institutions as watchdogs against abuse. However, the laws are not properly enforced or implemented so there are many shortcomings. The appointment of women as Cabinet Ministers, Premiers, judges and Parliamentarians amongst others, has helped show that the glass ceiling can be broken. Young women now have important role-models and unlimited opportunities if they have the will and ambition to make something of their lives, and not accept second best as their lot.

ID: When we became Members of Parliament in 1994, Parliament was not women-friendly at all, even though the parliamentary programme continued until late at night. Since then Parliament has changed. The

parliamentary programme has been revised to finish earlier and special arrangements are made when working after hours. This has assisted women a great deal. Years ago, Parliament had a crèche which was utilised by MPs and staff. It is a pity that facility was discontinued and perhaps it needs to be reconsidered.

FF PLUS: The fact that Parliament became a platform which created equal opportunities for women to compete with men in their own right, was the key. The women did the rest.

IFP: Women fought for a government department that would directly manage the affairs of women, children, youth and the disabled. We have succeeded; the Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities was established for this purpose.

MF: Parliament has increased the quota for representation of women in Parliament from 30% to 50% currently. The voices of women in Parliament shape the debates and outcomes of decisions, which affects the growth and direction of South Africans in a positive way.

PAC: Parliament will always change laws and these laws are meant to address any issues of gender inequity. Oversight of the implementation of these laws is important. For instance, laws that governed inheritance were male-dominated for a long time. Parliament has passed groundbreaking legislation towards women's emancipation. However, legislation must be accompanied by a shift in people's mindsets.

UCDP: An important contribution made by Parliament to empower women was the appointment of more women to leading positions in government, as well as the establishment of the new Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth, Children and Persons with Disabilities.

UDM: The single biggest contribution that Parliament has made to the cause of women is the gender-sensitive legislative framework it has crafted, in particular those legal amendments that have ensured that women are treated as equals in the work and political environment. Another major milestone has been the crafting of a healthcare system with maternal care at its core.

Challenges facing women that still need to be addressed

ACDP: There are more orphans in South Africa now than seven years ago and these numbers will increase proportionally, as adults die from HIV/AIDS. Also linked to HIV/AIDS is the increased number of child-headed households and the fact that a great many children live in poverty, especially in rural provinces. Other problems are high levels of teenage pregnancies, unmarried motherhood and the increasing number of absent fathers. The roll-out of the programme to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, as well as expanding access to anti-retrovirals for people living with HIV, both face grave challenges which impact negatively on women. Maternal, child and women's health are also concerns.



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



ANC: Despite the achievements we have attained as a country, the process towards total emancipation of women is never complete. Women bear the brunt of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and violence, perpetrated mostly by men. These challenges warrant a collective effort from every sector of society. We can never call ourselves a free nation if our mothers and sisters are not free. Both men and women have a challenge of ensuring that a harmonious environment is created that will ensure equal opportunities for all in society. OR Tambo once said: “[women also] have a duty to liberate us men from antique concepts and attitudes about the place of women in society.”

APC: Whilst a lot has been achieved, much more needs to be done. Women still bear the brunt of unemployment, HIV/AIDS, skills, education, violence, poverty and much more.

AZAPO: Violence against women is the single most important challenge facing South Africa and its women. How safe women feel in their homes and in society generally, is a measure of their freedom and status.

COPE: The present challenges include teen pregnancies, the serious drop-out rate of girl children from school, and implementing a decent minimum wage for domestic workers, along with compulsory retirement policies. Women in urban and rural areas are often left in a predicament with regard to the care of their babies, and young children, should they have to work and/or further their education. The development of adequate and cost-effective day care centres for pre-school children within all communities, which could be based in and run by local churches, could help. They could also be used for adult education classes in the evenings.

Media centres to develop literacy could also be a useful step in the empowerment of our women.

DA: The greatest need is for education and training, to prepare women at all levels to play a more meaningful role whether in government or business, or in their families and the community. Women need to be encouraged to assert their individuality and their right to make decisions for themselves and their children. The high incidence of rape and abuse amongst women and children, and astonishing levels of domestic violence, indicate that the human rights culture enshrined in our Constitution, has not yet been internalised. This remains a challenge for the future. Schools and religious institutions should assist in teaching respect and consideration for one another. Many women are not able to make choices about their lifestyle or sexuality, and need to be educated about this and to assert their rights. Boys and girls, and men and women, need to be taught to show mutual respect towards one another and to make the raising of a family and the creation of a home, a joint responsibility. Responsible parenting is something that needs to be taught.

ID: Women face a major challenge within their own political parties. When issues of national importance are debated in Parliament, you seldom find that the list of speakers proposed by political parties is inclusive. I am the only female leader of a political party in Parliament, and often I find that I am the only female speaker. A serious challenge is for political parties to make sure that women participate equally in all debates.

FF PLUS: The biggest challenges include men who are not taking these issues seriously, as well as certain cultural beliefs that do not recognise women as equals.

IFP: Women have not been totally liberated but I am hopeful that we will achieve it. Assistance has to be provided in rural areas for women who live under terrible conditions. In most rural areas, there is a scarcity of basic resources such as water and electricity. Women, who are primarily responsible for looking after the household, often still have to collect wood to prepare meals for their families and rely on water from nearby rivers, which is not clean. There are also still areas in the Eastern Cape without electricity. In some of these rural areas more attention has to be given to the provision of services. That said, there is a lot of good happening.

MF: Women are still vulnerable to crime because safety is a huge challenge. The rural bias has to be improved to ensure progress for rural women.

PAC: It is not just about the liberation of women, but also about the liberation of men. With the liberation of women, men stand a chance of liberation. Hence, men must be supportive. A greater challenge is to break some of the stereotypes that exist in traditional communities. For women to be liberated fully, this has to be recognised in all spheres of life.

UCDP: Many women, especially in rural areas, are still treated with disrespect by their husbands. We need to arrange workshops to empower these women and equip them with the necessary skills so that they will start to believe in themselves and not merely be “slaves” in their homes.

UDM: One of the biggest challenges currently is to address the gender violence and abuse that continue to permeate our society. Incidents of domestic violence and abuse, as well as the shockingly high rate of rape in this country, are of deep concern to the UDM. We believe that it must be a major priority of Parliament and the Executive to address this issue.



Annual celebration of Women's month

ACDP: Women in South Africa should celebrate August by appreciating and supporting each other, recognising that every woman is unique and our changing circumstances are never the same. Most importantly, women must learn to value themselves and recognise their worth, not only collectively, but individually. If they do, men will begin to do the same. South African women are all mothers and potential mothers, not just of their own children, but of all children in this country. The ACDP would like to see women stand up for what is right, uphold family values at home and in the community, and pray for a better South Africa.

ANC: The theme of the ANC Women's League's celebration of Women's Month this year is, "Working together to empower women for development and gender equality." As we celebrate this year in recognition of the brave struggle led by our forebears, let us do so in action rather than in empty platitudes, so let us speed up the process of attaining women's freedom by amongst others, eradicating gender-based discrimination, violence, and exploitation. We also need to elevate the women's struggle to higher levels and consolidate the gains already achieved in pursuit of the establishment of a truly democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa.

APC: August should always be celebrated with a firm sense of history and purpose, which is to know the historical context, where we come from and also what we seek to achieve. It should also be celebrated by educating the public.

AZAPO: AZAPO would be happy to see the women of South Africa engaging the rest of society in educational programmes for the whole month. In this way, we would move quickly to a society that respects the status of women through knowledge and education.

COPE: Every South African woman should find a way of improving or enhancing the life of another woman, through giving their time, nurturing, expertise or finances. The ripple effect offers limitless rewards down the line.

DA: Women should be recognised for their strength, fortitude and multi-tasking skills, and should be given the opportunity to celebrate their achievements. Workshops and training sessions should be conducted where women can be given the opportunity to learn and improve their situation in life, but also to relax and enjoy some leisure time, and celebrate their womanhood.

ID: Those women who are already empowered, including successful businesswomen and women who have achieved success in their careers, should ensure that we empower our sisters who have been left behind. Women in villages and towns need to be informed about their rights. You cannot claim your rights unless you know your rights. I would like to see Women's Month celebrated in a practical manner. There needs to be less talk, and more action.

FF PLUS: Women should celebrate every August with pride in what has been achieved.

IFP: We would like the women of South Africa to remember their past, their role in their families, communities and the nation. Women have to unite, irrespective of political affiliation, because we experience

the same suffering. We must ensure that we practice democracy in the process. Women need to be open with their children about sex. HIV/AIDS is rife in our country because we are not free to talk to our children about sex.

MF: Women in South Africa should invest more in praying and cultural activities to strengthen the moral fibre of society.

PAC: Women's Month and Women's Day should not be commercialised. Women should celebrate this time without necessarily having to spend money. It is not enough to know about Women's Day without knowing the history behind it, such as the roles played by Helen Joseph and Lilian Ngoyi of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) in the Women's marches of the 1950s. Women should strive for solidarity across religious and political lines. Their experience as women cuts across national solidarity. All women should set aside the artificial barriers separating them.

UCDP: We as women of South Africa should celebrate this month by being positive about the future. We have come a long way and we have the right to stand proud. It is now time to help other women who are in need, to be an example to our daughters and teach them the way forward.

UDM: The UDM hopes that women will be celebrating this month in partnership with men. It is important that we emphasise the fact that gender equality is not a female preoccupation, but a constitutional imperative, irrespective of gender. We hope all of us will celebrate the progress we have made, and the great women who are in our midst, but that we will also frankly discuss the challenges that women still face. 🌟



MILLENNIUM GOALS: (From right) Chairperson Mr Mninwa Mahlangu, Deputy Chairperson Ms Thandi Memela and Acting Secretary Adv. Modibedi Phindela of the National Council of Provinces, at a three-day Strategic Planning workshop

2015 Goals loom!

Millennium development deadline for NCOP

by Sakhile Mokoena and staff

One of the biggest tasks of the fourth Parliament is to ensure that South Africa meets its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) deadline of 2015. That's the word from the Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Ms Thandi Memela. Speaking at the NCOP's Strategic Planning Workshop, she reminded Members of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures that it was in this term of Parliament, in the next five years, that South Africa had to show its commitment to the United Nations' goals.

"This term of Parliament is very important, because in this term the MDGs have to be met. Parliament must strengthen its oversight work to respond to the challenges facing government, especially at local level, in order to meet the 2015 deadlines. The (current) service delivery protests imply

that something is wrong, and we need to act swiftly," Ms Memela said.

NCOP Chairperson Mr Mninwa Mahlangu told the delegates that oversight should focus on service delivery as a government priority. The MDGs form part of government's priorities, and Parliament's Committees should use their capacity to conduct oversight to ensure that relevant government departments meet their goals. The goals comprise eight targets that countries have set for themselves to address the world's development challenges by 2015.

South Africa is among countries that have committed to address hunger and poverty, universal education, child health, maternal health, to combat HIV/AIDS, and to strive for gender equity, environmental sustainability and global partnership.

End poverty and hunger

The 2015 target is to halve the number of people who suffer from hunger. This is a commitment to halve the number of people whose income is less than \$1 (about R10) a day, and to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people. The recession, rising food prices and low-paying jobs leave many people in developing countries mired in poverty. Poverty also leads to stressed relationships and results in unacceptably high levels of violence.

Universal primary education

The target is to ensure that all boys and girls are able to complete primary education. The United Nations reports that poverty still keeps children out of school in many developing countries. In

terms of the South African Schools Act, every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which the learner reaches the age of seven years, until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first. However, an estimated 400 000 South African children have either dropped out early or never attended school, and it was estimated last year that at least one third of the children of refugees in this country did not attend school at all.

Child Health

The target is to reduce the number children who die under the age of five, by two-thirds. According to the World Health Report of the World Health Organisation, the leading cause of deaths of children under five are neonatal complications, acute respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, malaria, measles and HIV/AIDS transmitted from mother to child. There have been big strides in child health and South Africa has become the first country in Africa to demonstrate that childhood morbidity can be reduced significantly with vaccines. The focus has been on infectious diseases, with research centred on the role of new vaccines in preventing pneumonia and diarrhoeal disease, two leading causes of death in children. The new pneumonia vaccine has helped to protect infants and children against a disease that claims 780 000 children worldwide each year, 40% of whom are in Africa. Each year half a million children die from diarrhoeal disease caused by rotavirus. South Africa is the first country in Africa to introduce the two conjugate vaccines into its immunisation programme, and this step could reduce childhood mortality in South Africa by 10% to 15%.

Maternal health

Too many mothers are dying in pregnancy or childbirth worldwide. The risk is still very high in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. One key way to reduce maternal deaths and achieve

universal access to reproductive health is to have skilled health workers present at delivery, but the shortage of skills in our region makes this difficult to achieve. Young children and pregnant women are also the groups most affected by malaria. Malaria can affect a person's health in multiple ways. As Southern Africa witnessed recently during the cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe, where the health system suffered from mismanagement, corruption and neglect, the disease had a devastating effect on the local population. As with HIV/AIDS, not taking action leads to devastation.

Combat diseases, including HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS, TB and other diseases continue to ravage sub-Saharan Africa. The triple target is to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, achieve universal access to anti-retrovirals (ARVs) for all who need it and reverse the occurrence of malaria and other major diseases. South Africa has a new dispensation on treating HIV/AIDS, but it has been calculated that for every person that is now able to get access to anti-retroviral medication another seven will become infected, so the battle is far from over. Poor availability and high prices are barriers to accessing essential drugs in developing countries. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, the world seeks to provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.

Gender equality

Women still occupy insecure and low-paying positions. Improving gender equity means empowerment, including steps to end gender disparity at all levels, in primary and secondary education, by 2015. Intervention is needed to get girls in poor and rural areas to remain in school. The Minister for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, Ms Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya, says she also wants to put an end to forced marriage. At a joint Parliamentary sitting under the theme Together Empowering Women for Gender Development and Equality,

to debate National Women's Day, the Minister said she was investigating the issue of "ukuthwalwa kwabantwana" (forced marriage of girls, who are "kidnapped"). This would include preventive measures, empowering women to report cases of abuse and mobilising community action against such incidents. A firm commitment and legislative framework was required to achieve gender parity, and the women's movement should continue to strive for unity, to sustain the struggle and to advance towards a non-sexist, non-racist, inclusive and caring society, according to Ms Mayende-Sibiya.

Environmental sustainability

By 2020, governments globally must reduce the number of people without access to safe, sustainable drinking water and sanitation and improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers. Countries have also made commitments to reverse the loss of environmental resources, to contain rising greenhouse gas emissions and to limit ozone-depleting substances. If successful, this would help to mitigate climate change by reducing total global warming. The aim is to address the needs of least developed countries and deal comprehensively with developing countries. South Africa's focus has been, among others, on working for secure supplies and distribution of water.

Global partnership

An equitable global partnership requires an open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory trading and financial system. This means commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction, both nationally and internationally. The special needs of the least developed countries need to be addressed, in particular to get tariff and quota-free access for exports, to address debt relief for heavily-indebted poor countries (HIPC) and to cancel official bilateral debt. This includes offsetting of debt for countries committed to poverty reduction, and introducing national and international measures to make long-term debt sustainable. 

Through the lens

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES





National Council of Provinces Members, delegates and staff at a Strategic Planning Session were addressed by Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe



Women First: (Standing) Ms Denise Robinson, Ms Ipuseng Ditshetelo, Ms Patty Duncan, Ms Barbara Thompson (Chairperson), Ms Patricia Lebenya, (Seated) Ms Pearl Petersen-Maduna, Ms Grace Tseke and Ms Hope Malgas serve on the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

Women's Committee five-year action plan

Mandate, identify, network, set goals and budget

by Jackie Adriaans

action stations: *The Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth, Children and Persons with Disabilities, has approved a plan of action for the next five years. A recent workshop identified its steps: GET A MANDATE, IDENTIFY ISSUES, NETWORK WITH PARTNERS AND FINALISE THE GOAL AND BUDGET.*

Members of the Committee met in Parliament from 11-12 August to explore how best to tackle and execute its quadruple mandate. The packed two-day programme included presentations by a number

of important stakeholders; the Ministry for Women, Youth, Children and Persons with Disabilities and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) presented their draft strategic plans to the Committee. Chapter 9 Institutions such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) briefed the Committee about their work and key programmes. And finally, there were presentations on legislation that impacted on the different portfolios.

Get a mandate

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth, Children and Persons with Disabilities, Ms Barbara Thompson, believes that the workshop achieved what it set out to do. "Initially we were concerned that as a Committee, we did not have a new mandate. Through the workshop, we were able to develop a proposed mandate, which has been referred to the House Chairperson of the National Assembly, Mr Obed Bapela, for consideration. The proposed mandate relates to the Committee's

power to initiate and amend legislation; a power not enjoyed by its predecessor, the Joint Monitoring Committee on Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women. For Ms Thompson, it is important to balance the execution of the Committee's four-part mandate. "It is important that matters pertaining to women, youth, children and persons with disabilities each receive proper attention", she said. "It is also important to achieve a balance between the time dedicated to the Parliamentary programme and addressing issues facing the respective groups, while attending to important issues that might arise," she said.

Identify issues, loopholes

The workshop also proved fruitful because the stakeholders brought issues to the Committee's attention that it had been unaware of. These issues related to treaties that had not been signed and/ratified yet, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).

Key legislation passed by Parliament has still to be implemented, like the Children's Act, and the Committee was alerted to flaws in legislation like the Law of Succession and the Communal Land Rights Bill. "The Committee will have the power to consider and amend legislation such as this. So though the time allocated for the workshop was limited, I believe we achieved a lot," Ms Thompson said.

Network with partners

One of the Committee's priorities would be to develop a closer relationship with stakeholders. "They should be our real friends and partners as they are going to assist us a great deal in terms of some of the issues. We are Members of Parliament and are involved in passing these Acts, we can never claim to know whether all of them are being implemented and helping

the beneficiaries they are supposed to." The work of the Committee is not without its challenges, including its broad mandate. The establishment of the new Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities has also brought with it several changes that relate to its own mandate. The financial and operational implications of the transitional arrangements as the Ministry gets up and running, present a further test. "Originally the Youth Portfolio was located in the Ministry, but has since been removed and placed under the jurisdiction of Minister Collins Chabane, Minister in the Presidency responsible for Performance, Monitoring, Evaluation and Administration," Ms Thompson said.

Finalise goals and budget

The new Ministry is expected to present its final strategic plan and accompanying budget to the Portfolio Committee in October or November this year. Until this happens, however, the progress of the Committee's oversight function in relation to the Department is limited. Acting within the principle of the separation of powers, the Committee will not be involved in the development of the Department's strategic plan. The Committee will, however, discuss the plan when the Department presents it

for consideration. It will scrutinize the priorities contained in the Department's strategic plan, and closely monitor progress.

The Committee has a number of expectations from the Ministry, including but not limited to, delivery on its mandate and the development of realistic and achievable goals, in particular those relating to the mainstreaming of vulnerable groups. The Ministry would also be expected to ensure that it remains visible and accessible to civil society through successful marketing. Resources would have to be utilised efficiently and effectively.

According to the Chairperson, "The fact that the highest office in the country was previously involved in the mainstreaming of issues relating to women, youth, children and people with disabilities under the auspices of the various bodies and the Youth Desk, means that the Presidency is in an ideal position to provide guidance, support and direction. Furthermore, now that the Youth matters fall under the ambit of Minister Chabane, collaborative engagement between the NYDA and the new Ministry is imperative. The new National Planning Commission, led by Minister Trevor Manuel, has an important role to play in this regard," Ms Thompson said. 🌍

Global player: SA Parliament ranks 3rd in female MPs, after Rwanda and Sweden



Window *on a legend*

Stalwart recalls epic march of 20 000 women

by Abel Mputing

fifty-three years ago, who could have imagined that women would unite and tilt the scale of the revolution in favour of their cause? They did. Ms Bertha Gxowa, a Member of Parliament, is living testimony of resistance to that male-dominated part of South Africa's history.

She is one of the galaxy of luminaries including Ms Lilian Ngoyi, Ms Helen Joseph, Ms Rahima Moosa and Ms Sophie Williams who against all odds conceptualized, organized and led from the front in the 1956 Women's March to Pretoria. Her story, like many of her contemporaries, epitomizes the axiom "You touch a woman, you touch a rock."

"Each year at this time I feel very emotional because I vividly recall the enthusiasm and the determination of women who were organizing that march, against all odds. How they sacrificed everything they had, for it to happen. Remember, we had no funds, transport or access to the media, nor the organizational or political machinery: things we take for granted today. We pulled it off, because we thought we had nothing to lose except the repressive policies of apartheid," she said.

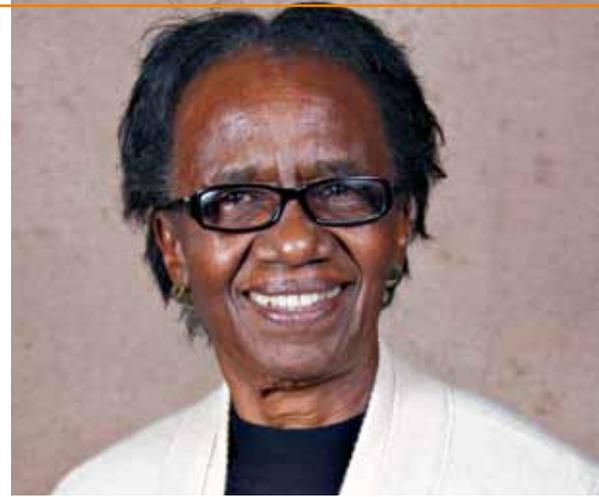
Ms Gxowa is able to open a window on the ethos of resistance by the women of the late 1950's. In 1956 she was just 22, but already held twin political posts as the Transvaal secretary and the national organizer of the Federation of South African Women, which spearheaded the march. This historic march was triggered by the introduction of the Extension of Reference Book Act, which was aimed at extending reference books (the pass system) to black women. The Federation of South African Women immediately voiced their displeasure: "According to the Act, only black domestic workers could live in urban areas. This meant that

women who were not domestic workers could not live with their husbands who migrated to urban areas to secure employment. On the one hand, that led to the breakdown of families. On the other, it further curtailed the employment opportunities of women in rural and semi-urban areas who headed their households, and thereby a chance to improve their own lot and that of their families," she says.

In 1955 the Black Sash, the advocacy organisation that championed the cause of black women in urban areas, held a night vigil in Pretoria protesting against the Act. Ironically, they did not invite black women to be part of the vigil, choosing instead to champion the concerns of white women. "Their concern was that black nannies and domestic workers would, due to the new Act, constantly run a risk of being turned away, or arrested for not having renewed or for possessing expired reference books, and that was going to disrupt the day-to-day life of white working women who depended on black women to take care of their domestic chores," Ms Gxowa said.

"At our Federation's conference in Transvaal in October 1955 black women took the Black Sash to task for not inviting them. Ms Margaret Gazo stood up and asked 'Why you are wasting time blaming the Black Sash for snubbing you. Why don't you organise your own march?' " she said.

What followed was a turning point in the struggle for self-determination of black women. "At the National Conference of the Federation of South African Women a resolution was taken that we march to Pretoria. The question was how? We had no money, no resources. But women resolved that 'come what may, we are going to



Against all odds: Ms Bertha Gxowa, MP, helped organise the 1956 march to Pretoria

Pretoria.' We set up an organizing team in each province. Some team members had to take long unpaid leave and risked being fired. We went to every farm, to every village, and women were very enthusiastic about it and they committed themselves selflessly to the cause," Ms Gxowa said.

The march took full advantage of the anger that accompanied the wave of uprisings by women in various parts of the country, without which it would have been difficult to assemble and convince 20 000 women across the country to march to Pretoria. She is happy to be able to witness the fruits of the march in her lifetime and regrets that many of her colleagues did not live long enough to observe that their sacrifices were not in vain. She still believes that the seeds of that march bore fruit that the current crop of young women can utilise: "The march consolidated women's rights. Today, women have a right to advanced education. A right to land. A right to property. A right to self-determination. A right to be recognized as heads of households. A right to be granted the rights enjoyed by men. The young women of today should take full advantage of these gains and consolidate them."

She realizes that the women's struggle did not start nor end with the march: "Not as long as there is still domestic violence, or while there are still rural women who are destitute, who live in abject poverty and who are devoid of the most basic necessities. Until that is resolved, the struggle continues."

She says fortunately Parliament is conscious of the disadvantages of women and has mainstreamed their plight through introducing laws on equality, among others.

Looking at Women and Art in Parliament

by Abel Mputing

In the democratic dispensation since 1994 many of the traditional roles and interpretations of what it means to be a woman have been reconfigured, laying bare misgivings about conventional and stereotypical gender politics. Women have been elevated to central political positions, and charged not only with assuming, but also dispensing power. The successive election of Dr Frene

Ginwala, Ms Baleka Mbete and Ms Gwen Mahlangu-Nkabinde as the first three female Speakers in Parliamentary history bear testimony to that. Ms Sue Williamson's Art Portfolio entitled: *A Few South African Women*, which currently graces the Speaker's office, is a poignant reminder of the immense contribution of women to both our liberation struggle and democracy.

The 17 women on display include struggle stalwarts such as Ms Winnie Madikizela Mandela, Dr Mamphela Ramphele, Ms Miriam Makeba, Ms Helen Joseph, Ms Jennifer Curtis and Ms Lilian Ngoyi, to name a few. The subjects are as interesting as the concept, says Ms Williamson: "*A Few South African Women* is an art portfolio portraying the visible history of women who in some way or other made an impact on the struggle for freedom."

Highlighting struggle: Ms Mariam Makeba, Ms Helen Joseph, and Ms Jennifer Curtis are among stalwarts displayed in the Speaker's Office



“many unknown heroines contributed to the struggle”

The ‘Few’ in the title refers to the fact that they were a small band among the many who were involved in the struggle. At that time little was known about them. “Some were sourced from banned books in university libraries, some elsewhere,” Ms Williamson said. There is one anonymous woman in this portfolio whose name is just a number: her anonymity represents many unknown if not unsung heroines, who all contributed to the struggle.

Another remarkable display, the Keiskamma Tapestry Exhibition by rural women, which currently adorns the walls of the Old Assembly Foyer, succeeded in framing a women’s visual narration that brings to bear the trials and tribulations of our past and the monumental achievement of our democracy: “In this exhibition the South African story is told from grassroots up, rather than top down. It deals with the coming of the settlers, and moves through the 19th and 20th centuries; it also deals with apartheid and ends with the first democratic elections in 1994. In its own way the tapestry is rewriting if not re-imagining history from the

perspectives of its makers,” said a source of the Keiskamma Tapestry Exhibition. Most of all, this project from Hamburg on the banks of Keiskamma River in the Ngqushwa region of the Eastern Cape, is a vivid depiction of the prevailing notion of our constitutional democracy: it says that everyone’s voice counts: a notion reflected by Parliament’s mission and vision and underpinned by Parliament’s constitutional obligation to promote participatory democracy. “The vision of Parliament states that *Parliament is a People’s Parliament* and the Keiskamma tapestry is an art work which illustrates this vision. That this work is displayed at Parliament also affirms that women’s art has value,” according to the publicity brochure on the Keiskamma tapestry.

Curator Dr Rayda Becker and Mr Siphon Ndabambi, assistant curator of Parliament’s art collection, agree that one of the aims was to acquire both *A Few South African Women* and the Keiskamma tapestry, in order to address the absence of women’s imagery and voices at Parliament. Since then another five images by Peter Magubane of the

1956 Women’s March have been acquired, as well as portrayals of female Speakers and Chairpersons of various Portfolio and Select Committees by George Hallet, for the 2008 Women’s Parliament exhibition. The convergence of art and socio-political experiences in the *Voices of Women* exhibition heralds a fresh approach to Parliament’s oversight mandate.

The objective is to extract draft submissions from the exhibition, to be presented to Members of Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures. The stories are clustered in themes, and issues are extracted to give a clear impression of the kind of challenges that continue to confront women in this country. The project was conceived by the Parliamentary Millennium Project (PMP), and it first showcased the craft and artefacts of women from three provinces: Western Cape, Northern Cape and Eastern Cape. Eventually, it is hoped to include works from women of all provinces. The quilt exhibition embodies more than just woven stories: it illuminates what democracy means to South African women. 🌍



Mandela & women walked together

Emancipation as part of national struggle

by Abel Mputing

Part of Nelson Mandela's legacy has been to ensure that South Africa's women enjoy their full humanity, not restricted by men's views of what they ought to be, or can become. At the 1996 National Conference of Commitments on Gender and Women Empowerment in Johannesburg he stated that women's emancipation was a part of the national struggle against outdated practices and prejudices: "It is a struggle that demands equal effort from men and women alike. Just as the fight against apartheid liberated all South Africans, the struggle for gender equality will benefit both men and women. The prosperous future to which we aspire, calls for a united front of all South Africans across gender divides."

Not only did the country's first democratic President insist that women be recognized as equal to men, he also ensured that they became major role players in forging the new democratic dispensation. Women were elevated to positions of power in the South African Parliament for the first time in history, during his tenure. Despite that, he readily admitted nine years later at the 46664 Concert in George that there was much more to be done: "We must be honest and open about the power relationships between men and women in our society, and we must help build a more enabling and supportive environment that puts the role of women at the centre stage of this struggle. Not tomorrow or next week, but now."

Mr Mandela regarded the gender-biased equity laws as vital in his quest to improve the lot of women: "We regard it as one of our priorities that this session of Parliament should adopt the legislation needed to establish a nation on the needs of women, mobilizing the



Focus on women: Mr Nelson Mandela, Ms Naledi Pandor and Dr Frene Ginwala view artworks

resources of government into systematic programmes to address those needs," he said in 1996.

The former President constantly singled out poverty as the biggest problem facing women, because poverty subjected them to all forms of repression: "Today there are millions of women living on their own Robben Islands, struggling against terrible odds, alone, and often without much hope. You and I can say: 'we are here to help give you hope and strength.' But we have to say more than that. We have to say 'this must be a turning point.' We are here to say that justice will not be achieved until every woman is in full control of her own life, and that control is practically implemented via her human rights."

The grave effects of domestic violence and abuse also did not escape his attention: "For every woman and girl violently attacked, we reduce our humanity. For every moment we remain silent about it, we conspire against our women," he said.

He praised the relentless spirit of women who contributed to the struggle. When the United Nations Development

Fund for Women, (UNIFEM) celebrated its 20 years of commitment to the world's women, it presented its anniversary award to South Africa in recognition of its pioneering efforts in advancing women. Nelson Mandela proclaimed that it would be fitting to hand over the award to a woman who embodied the ethos of the new government and the public life of South Africa. That chosen woman was Ms Albertina Sisulu.

"Mama Sisulu personifies the demanding years known as the roaring fifties, including the march to the Union Buildings. She had a share of the hazardous times in the underground and the repression of the early sixties. She was always available to the young lions during the 1976 uprisings. When the United Democratic Front was formed in 1984, she was an automatic choice for co-President. We salute you, you belong to the category of people we cannot do without." (Johannesburg, 1996)

The Mandela Foundation has also concerned itself with the plight of women. It hosts Malibongwe, an annual women's symposium, which applauds all those who, in either a big or a small way, have contributed to democracy. 🌟

A matter of choice

Unsafe abortion still causes deaths

by Sakhile Mokoena

Statistics show a drop in maternal mortality since the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act came in to effect, but illegal abortion still abounds. Reducing maternal mortality and improving women's health is a public health goal in South Africa and a key Millennium Development Goal (MDG)

After realising that many women were undergoing backstreet termination and attempts to terminate pregnancy at home, the democratic Parliament passed legislation in 1994 that granted women the choice to terminate unwanted pregnancies in safe and authorised institutions. It did so to curb a practice that had claimed many lives and left others scarred for life. Unsafe termination of pregnancy had already been identified as a major cause of

Millennium Goal: Reduce maternal deaths



maternal deaths. Excessive and high-risk pregnancies were also impeding progress to safe motherhood, and causing life-threatening complications. The law allows Provincial Health MEC's to approve institutions that carry out the termination of pregnancies, in all the provinces. It allows all private and public institutions that have a 24-hour maternity service to terminate pregnancies of up to 12 weeks, without the approval of the MEC.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health, Mr Bevan Goqwana, says the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act has met its objective of reducing loss of lives due to backstreet abortion. "The law has cut down on the number of backstreet terminations and there has been an increase in the number of people who use the legal facilities provided by government," he said.

The law makes it an offence for any person to terminate or allow termination of pregnancy in a facility that has not been approved. Only registered nurses and midwives who have undergone prescribed training are permitted to perform termination of pregnancy but it remains a huge challenge to police backstreet abortion, and termination of pregnancies of up to eight months in "surgeries" surrounding South African cities. Media reports have exposed this unlawful activity and its perpetrators, but the practice persists.

Mr Goqwana said it was worrying that there were people who still used unsafe backstreet facilities, thus endangering their lives. It was a mystery why women and

teenagers still preferred to pay a fee to endanger their lives, while there were free and safe options. He attributed this to a mixture of religious beliefs, and feelings of shame about public perceptions.

The Portfolio Committee on Health in the third Parliament called for renewed efforts to improve maternal health, in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals deadline by 2015. In a parliamentary debate last year it was said that South Africa provided safer health care for new born babies and their mothers than many other developing countries, but more is needed. Many women in South Africa, especially in rural areas, had no skilled health care workers present at birth..

The Portfolio Committee said it was satisfied with the current law and there was no need to amend it. "We just need to correct the perception of society and to stop stigmatizing people known to have terminated pregnancies," Mr Goqwana said. He urged people to plan pregnancies, and takes steps to avoid the decision of terminating. "I'd advise our people to avoid unwanted pregnancies, especially with all types of contraceptives available, and more seriously, the HIV pandemic," he said.

Research reports had shown that most maternal deaths happened in rural areas where people had to travel long distances on poor roads to get to health facilities. Although current trends were bad, he hoped that the new Department of Rural Development would help meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goal of improving maternal health.



Youth agenda: 2010 Summit to showcase skills and explore common ground

Weaving scenarios

Youth campaign for a united future

The socio-economic challenges facing South African youth today have a direct impact on nation-building. Therefore, as Parliament's primary nation-building initiative, the Parliamentary Millennium Programme (PMP) has designed a project to place youth development issues on the legislative agenda. The project will create platforms for open and honest dialogue about these challenges, to explore the underlying factors that give rise to them and to jointly seek out solutions. It further aims to encourage young people to unite in building a common vision for the future.

The "Bokamoso Ba Rona" (Our Future) national youth campaign, is premised on the belief that the Youth play a key role in creating and realising a positive vision of a future

South Africa, united in its diversity. The campaign employs various tools to encourage young people to identify, prioritise and discuss the issues that confront them in their daily lives, to explore commonalities in their experience, find creative solutions to challenges and to share their dreams and aspirations for the future. Throughout the campaign, it is hoped to generate a broader awareness of the scope and severity of the social challenges faced by South African Youth. Each activity is designed to help empower the young to address these issues. Expertise and tools will be made available to help young people find creative responses to the challenges they face.

The campaign is scheduled to be launched in September 2009, with a series of social surveys distributed through a range of multimedia

activities, mainly supported by platforms created on popular social networks. This will be followed by three national Dialogue Forums, to encourage discourse around the results of the social surveys, and possibly produce scenario maps for the future. These scenario maps will then be presented at the 2010 Youth Summit, where the youth will have an opportunity to engage with Members of Parliament, senior officials of various government departments and representatives of civil society.

Jill Merkel, Parliament Millennium Project

For more information on the Bokamoso Ba Rona Youth Campaign, please contact Alex Benkenstein at the Parliamentary Millennium Programme on 021 403-8141 or go to www.pmpsa.gov.za



Parliament's gender revolution

“Representation in the Pan-African Parliament was fiercely disputed”

When the democratically elected legislature met for the first time in May 1994, South Africa could be proud not only of a new non-racial Parliament, but a non-sexist one as well, with a high proportion of women members. This marked a major shift from the past, not only in terms of numbers (a ten-fold increase), but also in the future influence of women in the corridors of Parliament.

The first white woman in South Africa's Parliament was Margaret Ballinger, in the 1930s. For decades after apartheid was formalised following the 1948 election, the indomitable Helen Suzman served as the lone representative of the Progressive Party. The creation in 1983 of the tri-cameral Parliament saw the introduction of a further 80 seats in the House of Representatives for Coloureds and 40 seats in the House of Delegates for Indians, taking the total number of Parliamentary seats to just under 300. By the 1994 election, only three percent of members were women. With the advent of democracy in 1994, 111 women were elected to the 400-seat National Assembly (NA), with 27% of the country's public representatives now women.

Suddenly, South Africa's legislature ranked seventh in the world in its representation of women, and second in Africa, after Seychelles. No wonder the National Assembly was filled with the sound of ululating women, who were particularly well represented within the African National Congress. The ANC had led the way not only in adopting a quota system to ensure that at least a third of its electoral list was women, it also featured strongly in the multi-party Women's National Coalition.

The strong focus on women and gender issues began during the negotiation period that was initiated on 2 February 1990. In 1992, sixty organisations, representing women of all races, came together under the banner of the Women's National Coalition. The coalition led a campaign to ensure that the needs of women

were considered in the negotiation process, and these were set out in the Women's Charter for Effective Equality. Through the Women's National Coalition gender issues were placed firmly on the national agenda, influencing the content of the interim Constitution and the creation of national structures to take forward gender issues. Women's Parliaments have helped to bring together women from all over South Africa.

A remarkable aspect of South Africa's young democracy has been the growing representation of women in most aspects of public life. The remarkable 1994 figure of 27% of Parliament grew in 1999 to 30%, and following the 2004 elections it increased to 32,8%, representing a steady growth in each democratic election.



Thank you, Mr President: Dr Frene Ginwala salutes Nelson Mandela

In 2004, women's representation in the executive reached a new milestone with 12 of the 28 Cabinet members (43%) and 10 of 19 Deputy Ministers (53%). The appointment of Deputy President, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka in 2005, marked another first for women, and showed what was possible. Since 1994, the representation of the legislature has compared well with other public offices. In 2003 only 20% of judges, 21% of ambassadors and 24% of the senior managers in the public service were women.

There are a number of reasons for the growing representation of women in South Africa's Parliament. One is that our national electoral system, based on proportional representation, favours the participation of women above other electoral systems. Internationally, systems which include the direct election of candidates tend to result in a much higher proportion of male public representatives. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, of which South Africa is a member, agrees that proportional representation favours women, but this alone does not suffice. A commitment to the representation of women is also required when political parties draw up their lists of representatives.

Not all parties favour the quota approach in this regard, but it is widely acknowledged that the 30% quota applied by the ANC has brought women into the mainstream of legislative life. Sheila Camerer, who represented the National Party in the



Madiba magic: Could I become a leader?

“Often attended conferences where people looked first to the men accompanying me before realising that I was in fact the Speaker. In this respect the South African Parliament was an inspiration to women parliamentarians in other countries, particularly in Africa.”

- Dr Frene Ginwala, 2004

pre-1994 negotiations, says that Dr Frene Ginwala was an inspired leader of the initiative, and this made it inevitable that other parties would follow. “Women have the skill to be elected on merit as candidates”, said Janet Semple of the Democratic Alliance. The DA’s approach is to develop candidate lists that are “appropriately representative and diverse, inter alia of race, gender, geographic spread and areas of competence.”

“The ANC must be credited; for years they have been at the forefront of the empowerment of women. Both men and women from the ANC are sensitive to discrimination against women”, says the leader of the United Democratic Movement, Mr Bantu Holomisa.

The Pan Africanist Congress also favours the use of quotas, while other parties have adopted policy to ensure that women are represented on the list at national, provincial and local levels.

Role Played by Women in Parliament

While the representation of women in Parliament continues to increase, there is some debate whether more women on the benches of the National Assembly and the National Council of Province necessarily translate into a better deal for women outside Parliament, particularly the poor and disadvantaged.

The Inkatha Freedom Party’s Prof

Harriet Ngubane is unequivocal: “The presence of women in legislatures makes a qualitative and quantitative difference in the type of legislation... proposed and passed into law. There is evidence that the presence of women decision-makers does influence the outcome or even the issues debated... Women bring different and more humane qualities to the political process and they are

more committed to women’s and children’s rights. Our experience in South Africa has demonstrated that women in Parliament have fought for and managed to obtain positive outcomes on issues such as public health, nutrition, equality in education and employment, child care and other related family-friendly policies.” Although there is no absolute

Women Veteran: Former Free State Premier Ms Winkie Direko broke the glass ceiling



guarantee that having women in Parliament will translate into gains for women outside it, experience to date indicates that female parliamentarians are more likely to be sensitive to the practical needs of women as they relate to the provision of services such as housing, water and electricity. The presence of a critical mass also assists in what has been referred to as the strategic needs of women – including the need to challenge gender imbalances at a systemic level – such as the three spheres of government.

Pregs Govender, the first Chairperson of the Joint Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women, believes that the women have made a real difference: “We’ve made changes to the law in the area. It is a solid vindication of the quota system.”

For Speaker Baleka Mbete, the role that women have played in

Parliament has changed the way South Africans view women and brought women’s perspectives to policy discussions and processing of laws. “Those who engage in producing certain policy would obviously fashion out of the process a product that reflects where they come from. So it’s very important that women are here, because women would bring to bear their own sensitivities, their sensibilities, their unique insights into life. When we talked security, they would think of things differently from men, you know. I think that’s very important.”

After the April 2009 National elections, our fourth Parliament ranks third in the world (after Sweden and Rwanda) in its percentage of female parliamentarians. The Gender Links group in South Africa is concerned that representation of women in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) has dropped from 40% to 30%.

At the executive level, representation of women in the cabinet is 42%, up from 31% in 1994. There are currently 14 female ministers and 12 deputy ministers in the Cabinet. Since 1994, the position of Speaker was held by women until the appointment in 2009 of Mr Max Sisulu as Speaker of the National Assembly (NA).

Following recent appointments, women are also well represented in the Presiding Officers’ posts in both houses of Parliament, with female deputies in the National Assembly and National Council of Provinces. The Independent Electoral Commission said 55% of voters in the 2009 national elections were women. The percentage of female MPs has increased from 27% in 1994 to 45% in 2009. This means that South Africa is moving towards the SADC’s 50% target for decision-making posts in politics. 

An end to Sexist Language

One of the procedural developments was to remove sexist language from legislation, and this spilled over into parliamentary life. A significant indicator of the challenging mood within Parliament was the insistence on non-sexist terminology. But this shift was not always uppermost in the minds of long standing members, as this Hansard record of a National Assembly debate in May 1995 presided over by the then Speaker Dr Frene Ginwala shows:

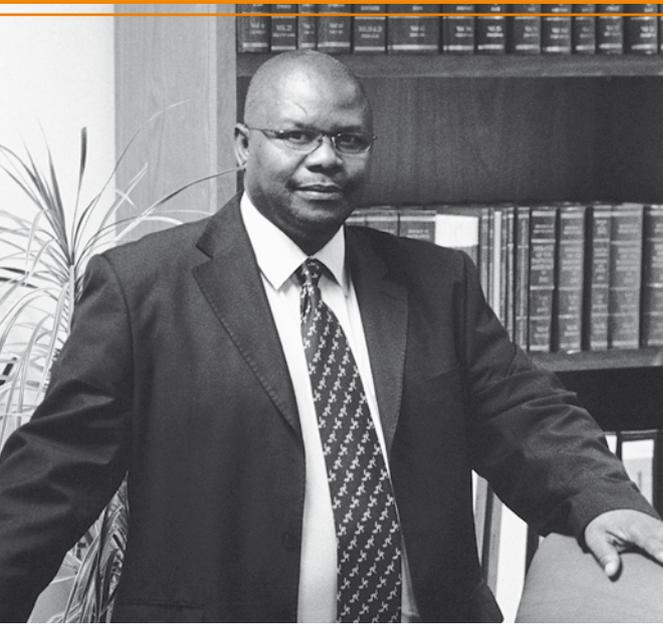
Madam Speaker: *“Order! Hon member, I need to remind you that there is a lady sitting in this chair. You do not persistently address her as Mister or Sir. Kindly note who is in the chair.”*

Mr Andre Fourie: *“Madam Speaker, with respect, I shall try to do that...all we have from this Minister, Sir, is a lot of smooth talk.”*

Madam Speaker: *“Order! I do not know if you are persisting in this deliberately, but I think that after a year you should be able to address me in the correct manner.”*

Mr Andre Fourie: *“Madam Speaker, I ask you to bear with me. This is how it happened through the years. I am not used to it, but I shall try to get used to it, so please bear with me.”*

More reports can be found in the printed version of *Parliament since 1994*, available from Parliament.



At the helm: National Assembly House Chairperson for Committees and ICT, Mr Obed Bapela

Oversight for overseers

by Abel Mputing

The consolidation of parliamentary democracy hinges on its ability to subject itself to scrutiny, says National Assembly House Chairperson, Mr Obed Bapela. In his view, the reports of the Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament and the Chapter Nine Institutions Commission, which were sanctioned by the third Parliament, clearly demonstrate the institution's commitment to that.

"We may be an oversight mechanism, but who oversees us? These reports by our peers are but one way of accounting to the public and of being receptive to constructive criticism," Mr Bapela told INSESSION.

"The self-assessment reports were an extension of the African Union (AU) African Peer Review Mechanism, to assess how efficient State institutions were. The Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament's brief was to ascertain how Parliament could best improve or uphold the letter and spirit of democracy.

"The assessment of Parliament was meant to gauge the accountability standards of both the representatives and the Executive. The report also touches on enhancing participatory democracy which is a cornerstone of South African democracy. Through it, people can have access and a say in our law-making processes," he said.

The report proposed that the electoral system be changed because proportional representation system placed more emphasis on parties than on the individual voters. Once elected,

MPs who neglected their constituents could not be recalled. Moreover, the current system ensured that a majority party became a dominant party with many seats in Parliament, which did not augur well for democracy.

"The report proposes a constituency system as the best model for people to get to know their MPs and where to go when things don't happen, in that the report deems the current system to be ineffective in effecting proper accountability."

Mr Bapela said both systems had advantages and limitations. "We view the proportional representation as an electoral system that enhances multiparty democracy; it affords even the smallest parties seats in Parliament, while in a constituency-based electoral system smaller parties would disappear completely. As a result, we would end up having a bi-partisan situation like America where there are only two dominant parties."

He agreed with the recommendation that Parliament needed to enrich its public participation.

"For instance, we have to ensure that public hearings are sufficiently resourced to reach the remotest areas of our country. Ordinary people outside Cape Town have no means of reaching Parliament, and as a result those with means dominate public hearings. In a broader sense, people do not contribute to law-making as they ought to. Parliament also needs to remodel its petitions processes. It is hoped that the inception of Parliamentary Democracy

Offices will help in this regard."

The reports have yet to come before Parliament, although the Chapter Nine Institutions report was recently noted by the National Assembly. While one recommendation was adopted by the Assembly, the Commission's brief was also to ascertain whether all Chapter Nine Institutions were needed, or if some institutions could perhaps be combined into one agency. Most importantly, it examined how Parliament could be their accounting centre and if so, how institutional capacity could be built to achieve that: "It also looked at what kind of Committee can best scrutinize their activities, and how Committees can utilise their reports as a tool to enhance their oversight mandate," Mr Bapela said.

According to the report, oversight was not happening as required by the Constitution: "MPs are not exercising their rights in overseeing the Executive in action. Committees are not discharging their responsibilities as they should. It's hoped that their recommendations will help enrich Parliament's new oversight model."

Following the adoption of the reports they would become policy, because Parliament itself was not beyond reproach, he said.

"From time to time, it is important that we assess our capability to deepen our democracy. Democracy is evolving and Parliament as its champion needs to constantly find ways of adapting to this," he said.





Editor-in-Chief: Luzuko Jacobs

citizen's forum

Who says that learning can't be fun?

We are pleased to introduce in this issue our first 20-minute Crossword puzzle and Sudoku numbers game, both of which will feature in future editions of INSESSION. The crossword is focused on learning about the business of Parliament. The solution to the August crossword and Sudoku will be published in the September edition of INSESSION.

Rules of crossword

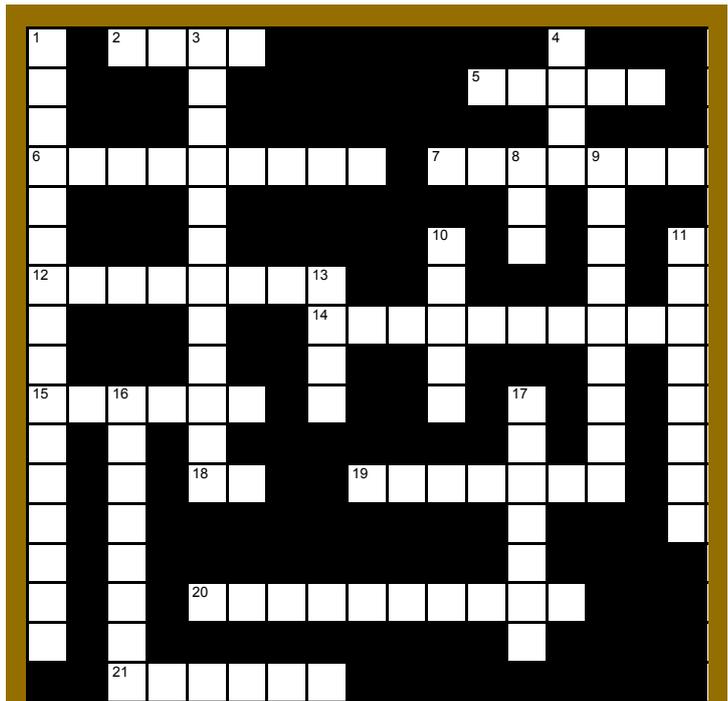
A crossword puzzle is a group of words that have been arranged across and down, so that each word crosses at least one other word at a common letter. The puzzle itself doesn't show the words, only the spaces where the words should be written. A list of numbered clues is matched to numbers placed in spaces on the puzzle where each word starts. You must find the correct word, in order for the clues to match up down and across, otherwise the puzzle does not work out.

Rules of Sudoku

Sudoku is played on a 9 by 9 board, divided into 3 by 3 cells. The solution of the puzzle is to place numbers on the board so that each row, column or cell contains each number, 1 to 9, exactly once, without moving the initial clues. The idea is to see where the numbers 1 to 9 will fit in. Each cell (or block) must contain the numbers 1 to 9, and each row vertically and horizontally must also contain 1 to 9.

Keep this INSESSION and check your answers in next month's issue.

6						4	8	
	3		4			9	7	
	8				9	5		2
			6		7			
		1		3		8		
			5		4			
8		3	2				4	
	4	6			3		2	
	1	9						3



Across

- 2 Symbol of authority of the National Assembly (page 2, INSESSION) (4)
- 5 They crack the whip to help parties run smoothly (5)
- 6 This monthly newsletter of Parliament (9)
- 7 Debates are observed from here by the public (7)
- 12 Parliament is in this city (4,4)
- 14 Political parties nominate _____ for election (10)
- 15 Debates in the two Houses are open to the _____ (6)
- 18 Abbreviation of National Assembly (2)
- 19 Nominated by political parties to sit in Parliament (7)
- 20 _____ are said to be the engine room of Parliament (10)
- 21 When MPs discuss issues they are said to _____ them (6)

Down

- 1 Organised groups who canvass votes (see 14) (9,7)
- 3 The highest law governing South Africa, passed in 1996 (12)
- 4 An Act in draft form is a _____ (4)
- 8 A Bill becomes _____ when it is signed by the President (3)
- 9 National _____ are called to elect Members of Parliament (9)
- 10 The Speaker is responsible for restoring _____ in the National Assembly (5)
- 11 The National _____ consists of 400 members (8)
- 13 Abbreviation of National Council of Provinces (4)
- 16 Symbol of authority of the National Council of Provinces (page 2, INSESSION) (5,3)
- 17 Max Sisulu is the _____ of the National Assembly (page 5, INSESSION) (7)

citizen's forum

Did you know...

Getting involved in Parliament

Attending meetings & house plenary debates

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa stipulates that the National Assembly and National Council of Provinces must conduct their business in an open manner, and hold their sittings, and those of their Committees, in public. Our constitutional democracy, based on the principles of accountability, responsiveness and openness, is not only representative but also contains participatory elements. The Houses may not exclude the public, including the media, from a sitting of a committee unless there is a justifiable reason to do so. In line with this constitutional provision, Parliament invites public participation in its processes. The onus is on the public to make the most of opportunities granted by Parliament to try to influence the many decisions that our political representatives make, and that impact on all levels of government.

Attending Committee meetings

A significant proportion of Parliament's work is undertaken by Committees. The Constitution provides that Parliament or any of its Committees may receive petitions, representations or submissions from any interested

persons or institutions. Committees are the extension of the Houses. They comprise members representing the various political parties in the House, undertake work on behalf of the Houses and regularly report on their activities to those Houses. The main functions of Committees include monitoring and overseeing the work of government and holding government departments accountable; initiating, considering and amending Bills; considering international agreements; and facilitating appointments to statutory bodies.

Meetings of committees are open to the public but there may be occasions where the specific Committee has a justifiable reason to meet in closed session. A member of the public must obtain permission from the Chairperson beforehand to speak in a meeting or to make a presentation to a Committee.

Attending house plenary debates

Issues of national importance are debated and discussed in Parliament. A debate is a formal discussion by Members of Parliament during which different parties are given the opportunity to put their views on any matter before the House. Plenary debates

are a means to bring important information to the attention of the Executive, regarding specific government programmes, for example, or legislation required to improve service delivery. In plenary debates, certain mechanisms are used to facilitate oversight. These include question time, the consideration of Committee reports, showcasing, scrutinizing and debating the implementation of policy and budget votes, and Members' statements, which draw the attention of the Executive to the concerns of Members' constituents.

Debates in the two Houses of Parliament are open to the public and can be observed from the public galleries of the National Assembly and National Council of Provinces on any day when Parliament is sitting.

Tickets can be obtained, free of charge, from the Public Relations Office. Contact Martin Tsheole on (021) 403-2197, fax (021) 403-8219 or e-mail mtsheole@parliament.gov.za

ERROR: In the July issue of INSESSION we referred to Mr Oladimeji Sabur Bankole of Nigeria, as Ms Bankole. We apologise for this error.
-Editor



OUR SOUTH AFRICA – THE SUN

The sun heals the divisions of the past, improves the quality of life of all South Africans, frees the potential of each person and builds a united and democratic South Africa, taking its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.



OUR PEOPLE – THE PROTEA LEAVES

Our people, building on the foundation of a democratic and open society, freely elect representatives, acting as a voice of the people and providing a national forum for public consideration of issues.



OUR PARLIAMENT – THE DRUM

The drum calls the people's Parliament, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, to consider national and provincial issues, ensuring government by the people under the Constitution.



OUR CONSTITUTION – THE BOOK

Our Constitution lays the foundation for a democratic and open society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. It is the supreme law of our country, and ensures government by the people.