GENDER: AN ELECTION ISSUE?

Piercing the Promises: Election Accountability Pack
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During the last national elections in 2009, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) research showed that gender issues featured in just 1% of election stories.

- Women make up 51% of the population
- A South African woman’s average income is less than half that of a man
- Women get paid a third less than men for similar work
- 45% of female-headed households live below the poverty line
- 400 in every 100,000 women will die in child birth or from pregnancy related complications
- 1 in 5 women aged 15-49 are HIV positive
- Interpol ranks South Africa as the world leader in rape
- 1 in 4 men have admitted raping a woman
- 2 in 5 men have admitted physically abusing their wife or female partner
- 68,332 sexual assaults were reported to police last year
- Only 1 in 9 rapes are reported to the police
- Only 4% of rape complaints result in a conviction
- Human Rights Watch describes so-called ‘corrective’ rape as an epidemic
1. Leading by example? What are the plans for 50/50 representation in your party?

What steps is your party taking to attain 50/50 women’s representation in political leadership, and to enable women’s full participation in politics? What measures are you taking to encourage and support the representation of young women and women with disabilities? According to the Southern African Development Community goal, SA must achieve a 50/50 gender representation in government by 2015. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) says female representation is especially poor at a local level, so much so in fact, that it is calling for the introduction of a quota system.

2. Struggle has a female face. How will you tackle the feminisation of hardship in SA?

What programmes will your party put in place to respond to the issues that disproportionately impact on women, such as access to energy, access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and ensure that municipal planning and service delivery interventions respond to the particular needs of women in this regard?

3. How will your party protect women from violence, from their partners and from HIV?

Research carried out by Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre found that none of the party’s local election manifestos touch on the prevention of gender-based violence specifically but instead refer to crime in general. ½ of SA’s women¹, that’s ¼ of SA’s population, have been victims of violence at the hands of a partner. An estimated 16% of all HIV infections in women could be prevented if women did not experience domestic violence from their partners.² What programmes will your party put in place to address the impact of gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS on women? What prevention and awareness-raising measures do you intend undertaking at community level? How do you intend to improve access to treatment and services for women affected by gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS?

¹ Preventing Rape and Violence in South Africa: Call for Leadership in a New Agenda for Action. Medical Research Council
4. What’s your party’s plan to tackle so-called ‘corrective rape’?

What particular steps will you take to raise awareness around the increased incidence of so-called corrective rape and hate crimes committed against gay and lesbian community members? What measures will you undertake to ensure that these crimes are adequately investigated and prosecuted?

5. Patriarchal & prejudicial attitudes lead to problems – what are your solutions?

Women need to know their complaints will be heard by those in authority, but too frequently we hear from women who have instead been turned away, ignored or further abused. What steps will you be taking to counter patriarchal and prejudicial attitudes to women displayed by local councillors, municipal officials and police officers? What gender equality awareness interventions will you champion to address these discriminatory perceptions?

6. Men and boys must be part of the solution – what are your plans for positive male engagement?

What are your party’s plans to positively engage with men and boys to achieve gender equality, and to tackle gender-based violence? What initiatives will your party put in place to create awareness about gender issues among men in local communities, and educate people about the negative impact of inequality?

7. What’s your plan to improve women’s representation in business?

What measures will your party put in place at the local level to ensure that local economic development and Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) interventions benefit women? What interventions do you have planned to build the capacity of women-headed Small, Micro and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMMEs), and ensure that they have access to tender opportunities? Does your party intend putting in place a quota for municipal tenders, to ensure that a ring-fenced percentage of these is granted to women-headed businesses?

8. What’s your record in combatting violence against women? Be specific!

In the last five years, what is the most important practical contribution your party has made to combating violence against women?
9. Women’s biggest challenge in your area? And your plans to help?

What has your party identified as the greatest challenge facing women in your community? How will your party address this challenge?

10. Give us your top three steps to promote gender equality!

Please list the three most important steps your party needs to take to promote gender equality in your community. How does your party define and understand ‘gender equality’?

11. Enough promises – what proof of positive change will we see in 5 years time?

By the time you leave office in five years’ time what concrete and tangible changes will you have brought about to improve the quality of life and status of women in your community?

Stats Sources:

- Statistics South Africa Mid-year Population Estimates 2010
- World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap 2009 report
- Statistics South Africa
- Countdown to 2015 - Decade Report 2000 - 2010
- Preventing Rape and Violence in South Africa: Call for Leadership in a New Agenda for Action, Medical Research Council
- SAPS Crime Statistics 2010
- 1 in 9 Campaign