


# **ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY AND GENDER**

PRESENTATION FOR IEC research Workshop

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# GENDER AND DEMOCRACY

Women's participation in public life and decision-making symbolizes a country's commitment to democracy and inclusion, and their presence in leadership positions can transform citizens' attitudes about traditional gender roles and encourage more women and girls to participate in politics and public life.



Furthermore, when different experiences and perspectives are brought to bear on government processes, policies are more likely to reflect the preferences of the public, including those of marginalized groups, with potentially positive effects on the legitimacy of political systems.

# DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT

A democratic parliament is one that is representative, open and transparent, accessible, accountable and effective.

- *Representative parliaments* are both socially and politically inclusive - free and fair elections; the presence of women and men; open and democratic systems within political parties; and guaranteed rights
- *Open parliaments* conduct their business transparently.
- *Accessible parliaments* involve the public in their work.
- *Accountable parliaments* have members who are answerable to the electorate for their performance in office, and for the integrity of their conduct.
- *Effective parliaments* have mechanisms and resources to ensure their own independence such as control of their own budgets.

## WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION - EQUITY AND EFFICACY

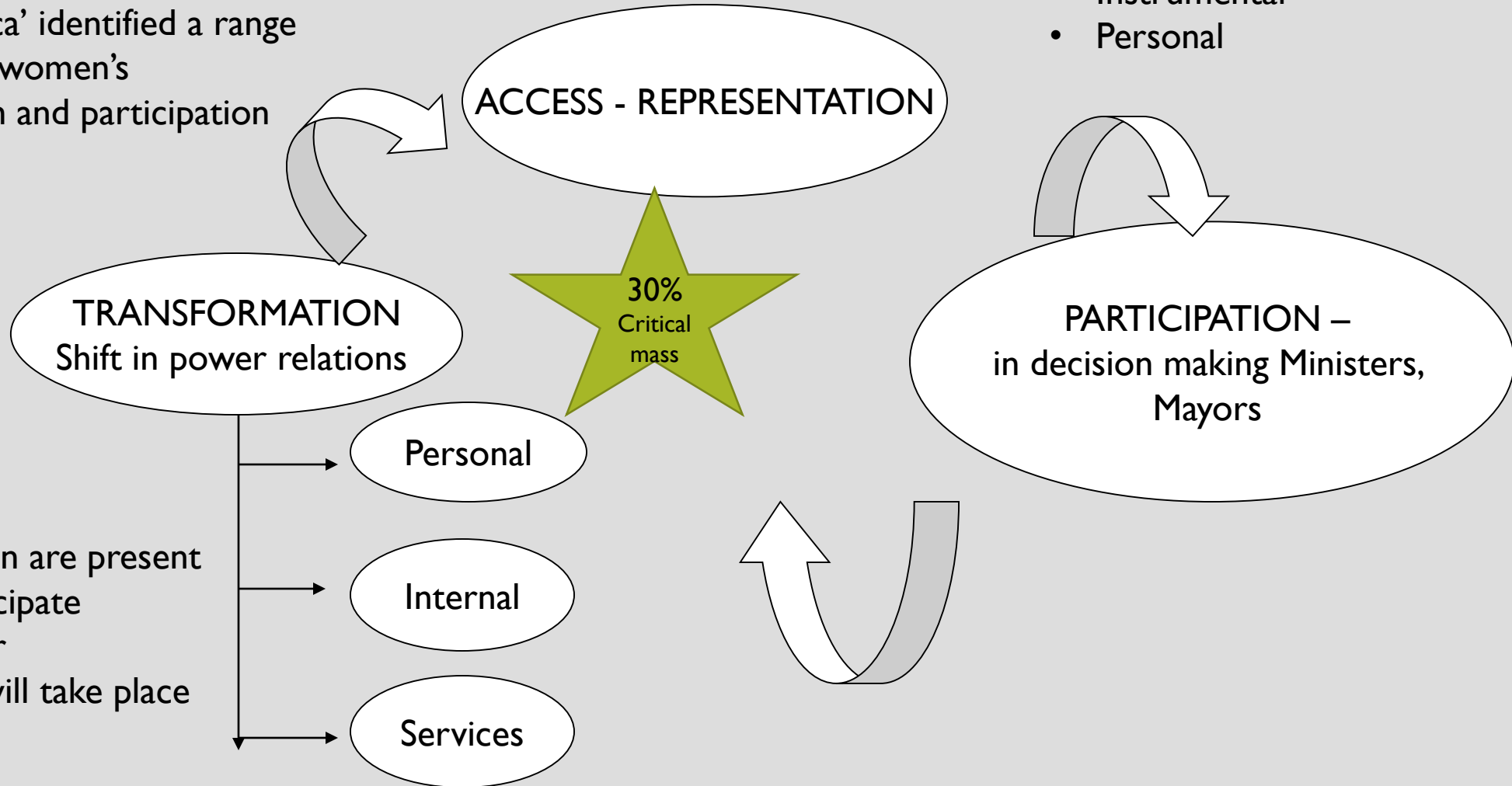
- **Equity arguments** are grounded in principles of justice and recognise that women should participate merely because they have a right to do so. This right is enshrined in the Constitution and is based on equality, democracy and legitimacy
- **Efficacy arguments** are more qualitative and take into account the fact that women and men are different and as a result bring different views, priorities, needs and expectations. A system of governance which does not capitalise on these different experiences can be considered to be less effective.

# MTINTSO'S FRAMEWORK

2006 research 'At the Coalface Gender and Local Government in Southern Africa' identified a range of barriers to women's representation and participation

Barriers to access and effective participation

- Social
- Political
- Instrumental
- Personal

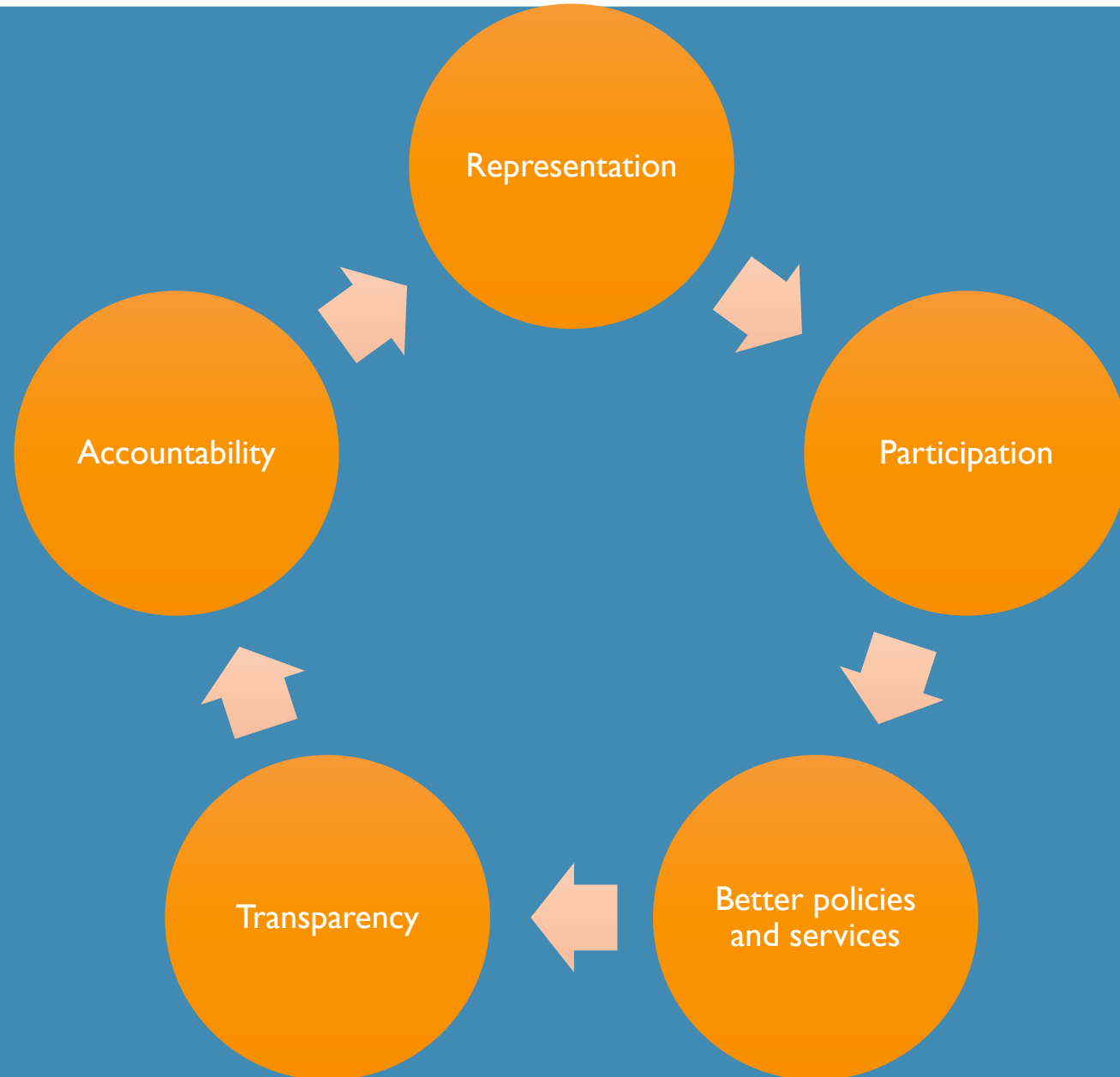


Premise: If women are present and able to participate effectively gender transformation will take place

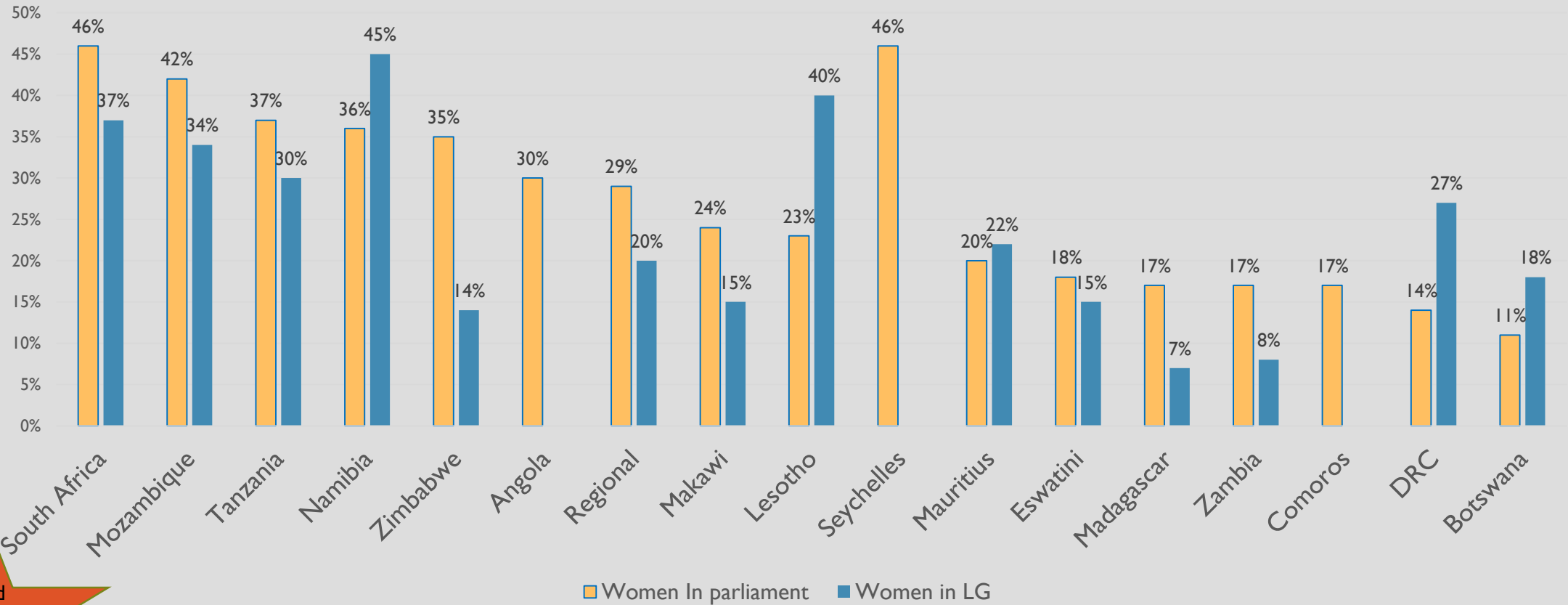
# MAKING THE LINKS

What the various arguments suggest is that women have a *right* to equal participation in political decision-making, whether they make a difference or not.

Democracy is more than just equal representation, it is about transparency and accountability



# WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING IN SADC (2022)



# OVERVIEW OF WOMEN IN ALL AREAS OF POLITICAL DECISION- MAKING IN SOUTH AFRICA 2004-2019

	2004	2009	2014	2019	Comment
<b>Women in cabinet</b>	42%	41%	41%	50%	Highest proportion in 2019, 50% cabinet for the first time
<b>Women MPs</b>	33%	43%	40%	46%	Highest proportion of women in Parliament in 2019.
<b>Women deputy ministers</b>	60%	39%	44%	46%	Falls short of the 50% mark.
<b>Women MPLs</b>	30%	41%	37%	46%	Highest proportion of women in 2019.
<b>Women LG councillors</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>After peaking at 40% in 2006 representation has regressed in the last two elections.</b>
	<b>29%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>37%</b>	
<b>Women in the NCOP</b>	41%	30%	28%	36%	Proportion of women in the NCOP, need substantial increases moving forward.
<b>Women premiers</b>	44%	55%	22%	22%	Dropped from 2004 and 2009, 22% in the last two elections, needs urgent action to achieve the 50% mark.
<b>Women are under-represented in all areas of decision making yet they make up more than half of the voters</b>					
<b>Women voters (national)</b>	55%	55%	56%	55%	Consistently at around 55%
<b>Women Voters (local)</b>			58%	58%	Turnout was very low for the elections (46%), but higher voter turnout for women than at the national level
<b>Women as news sources</b>	22%	24%	25%	20%	Lowest proportion of female sources in the last four elections.



# ROLE OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND QUOTAS

## National level - PR system

- PR system is more conducive to increasing women's representation, but poor on accountability

## Local level - Mixed PR and FPTP

- Best of both worlds but women are still under-represented in constituency seats

# AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

- Electoral systems and quotas create an enabling environment for increasing women's representation
- But representation doesn't necessarily mean effective participation
- This requires breaking down the barriers that continue to exist
  - Traditional, cultural and patriarchal beliefs
  - Political parties and institutions
  - Social and community
- Participation and inclusion of and in all sectors of society

## MOVING BEYOND NUMBERS

- South Africa has done well in terms of women's representation - steady progress since beginning of democracy and equality – but is the gender agenda being advanced – still extremely high levels of GBV, unsafe abortions, feminization of poverty, feminization and impact of HIV and AIDS to women, reemergence of xenophobic attacks.
- Now that we have the numbers (at least critical mass) how do we advance a democratic state and institutions
- Move beyond quantity to quality of leadership and decision-making
- SA has good and bad examples of women's leadership
- Deepening democracy means that all politicians including women should be held accountable by the electorate to strengthen democracy

# LESSONS FROM COVID 19 GENDER RESPONSES

UN Women and UNDP report - *Government responses to COVID-19: Lessons on gender equality for a world in turmoil*. Emerging evidence from the pandemic also

- Suggests a strong association between the state of a country's democracy and the adoption of gender sensitive measures. This is because democratic processes and institutions provide an enabling environment for the aggregation and channelling of societal demands, including by marginalized groups, and for holding decision-makers to account.
- 82% of COVID-19 task forces across 130 countries dominated by men - Roughly 87% of countries with higher levels of democracy had task forces with high levels of women's representation compared to just 5 % of those with lower levels of democracy
- On average, countries with higher levels of women's representation in parliament adopted 4.5 more gender-sensitive measures than those with lower levels of women's representation

## **NEW ELECTORAL SYSTEM AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

- What will the new electoral system mean for women's political representation?
- At local level women's representation reached a high of 40% reduced to 37%

# ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES AND GENDER

- While legislation defines the scope of work undertaken by EMBs, the internal policies and processes of EMBs can advance gender quality and encourage women to **participate** in all electoral processes, not just as voters and candidates but as election observers, ballot counters and analysts.
- Legislature and the executive's job to initiate legislation, but EMB's can support changes in legislation. - involve leadership and support in legislating for electoral procedures that do not discriminate against women.
- All indicators should be disaggregated by sex

# EMERGING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Decrease in women's representation – seen at local level
- Will this happen at national level with the change in electoral system – will change from PR result in regression at national level

THANK YOU