

Making gender equality in local government more than a box-ticking exercise



Despite significant advancements in women's participation in social, economic, and political life, women continue to be underrepresented in the workforce, with this underrepresentation growing in senior positions.

This holds true for political and professional leadership roles in local government. The 2022 Non-Financial Census of Municipalities (NCF) reports that women occupy just 32% of mayoral positions, compared to 68% held by men; women occupy 30% of Section 54A and 56 managerial positions, compared to 70% held by men; and women make up only 38% of councillors, while men make up 62%, and this falls short of the 50% target outlined in the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill.

Globally, according to United Nations Women (UN Women), only 3 million women (35.5%) have been elected to local deliberative bodies; only three countries have achieved 50% of elected women, and 22 have more than 40% of women in local government.

Promoting greater diversity and inclusion in local government in a way that would see more women in these roles, a gender perspective will be applied to important decision-making processes and policies that affect citizens and communities.

What is SALGA doing about it?

The SALGA Women's Commission (SWC) was formally launched in 2010 to institutionalise advocacy and process the voice of women in local government and to ensure progress at a local level as well as supporting the national, regional and global goals of women empowerment and gender equality and equity.

What actions can political parties and municipalities take?

In order to ensure that men and women are equally represented in municipal councils, political parties should work to increase women's participation in politics. Municipalities can also significantly contribute to the advancement of gender equality in the sector by incorporating gender criteria in their hiring and recruitment policies, which will provide women with equal opportunities to develop and advance their careers.

Promoting gender equality and inclusion in the make-up of the local government workforce should not be merely treated as a box to be checked but a reflection of a genuine commitment to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion remain at the centre of South Africa's national identity.

SALGA Joint Sitting of Council of Speakers and Council of Mayors

Mayors, Speakers of Councils, Councillors, and Senior Members of the National and Provincial SALGA leadership, Local Government representatives, and representatives of Provincial government and Parliament will gather at the Botes Hall in Polokwane, Limpopo from 7-8 August 2024 for the two-day Joint Sitting of the Council of Mayors and Speakers.

Policy priorities, best practices in service delivery and local governance, and insights into the dynamic local government environment will be shared by leaders in local, provincial, and national government.

SALGA National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of SALGA will convene on August 6 in Limpopo to discuss important organisational matters, programme issues, and municipal and policy priorities.

Commemorative events

- Every year, in August, our country marks Women's Month, where we pay tribute to the more than 20 000 women who marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956 in protest against the extension of Pass Laws to women. The National Women's Month programme is based on the ongoing interventions across the work of government, civil society and the private sector within the context of the national priorities outlined by government.

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