

SA is ranked 3rd for women's representation in parliament



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This is according to Gender Links, a Johannesburg-based NGO that focuses on research, training and advocacy for achieving gender equity.

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The results also put the South Africa firmly on course to achieve the Southern African Development Community (SADC) target of 50% women in political decision-making by 2015.

Gender Links says that the increase in women's representation is the largest seen in South Africa since the first democratic election in 1994, in which women's representation jumped from 2.7% to 27%.

"Gender Links attributes the increase in numbers to the African National Congress (ANC's) and Congress of the People (COPE's) 50/50 election lists as well as improvements in women's standing in other opposition parties.

"[We] congratulate the ANC and COPE for being the only parties in SADC to date to have heeded the targets set by the region. We hope that this will set a precedent for other parties and other elections, notably those soon to take place in Botswana, Namibia and Mozambique," said the NGO in a statement.

Other factors that helped to advance the standing of women in the 2009 elections, include the great representation of women voters who comprised 55% of registered voters as well as the Independent Electoral Commission's successful running of the free, fair and exemplary elections under the leadership of two women, IEC Chair Brigalia Bam and CEO Pansy Tlakula.

While lauding the ANC's commitment to gender equity, Gender Links warned that there are still some significant issues that remain problematic within the ruling party. Among them is Jacob Zuma's polygamy, a practise Gender Links regards as "evidently patriarchal, unfair and in all likelihood unconstitutional;" and the failure of the ANC, even its Women's League, to promote the possibility of a female leader during its leadership struggle.