

UBUNTU MUNICIPALITY
GENDER EQUITY PLAN

Gender Equity Plan

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1. Introduction:

South Africa's democratic election in 1994 was a significant watershed in our country. It brought an end to decades of institutionalized racism and paved the way for other forms of liberation. The South African Government, including local government, has been at the forefront of the battle against inequality since then. Progressive policies, laws and monitoring institution have been set up and the government has unequivocally committed itself to ending discrimination.

This task will not be accomplished overnight, but however, the newly established municipalities form part of the new vanguard against discrimination in all its forms. One of the biggest challenges in this battle is the struggle to achieve gender equity. This plan looks at the issue of gender, particularly from a local government perspective, so as to establish a gender aware perspective that shall provide a possible vehicle to the Karoo District Municipality for the implementation of gender aware actions of programmes in the district.

2. Defining gender

Gender is defined in a range of different ways. The following provide some useful definitions for the purposes of this plan.

The distinction between sex and gender is crucial when looking at the issue of gender. The term sex refers to the biological differences between men and women. The term gender refers to the different roles and responsibilities that societies and cultures impose on men and women, because of their biological differences. The term "gender" refers to the socially constructed make-up of men and women. It refers to a set of qualities and behavior expected of women and men in a particular society or cultural context. These expectations are based on a perception that certain qualities and roles are "natural" for women, whilst other qualities and roles are "natural" for men. These non-biological factors influence who we are, how we should behave and what we can aspire to. Patriarchal gender relations favor men over women. They are perpetuated and reinforced through sexist behavior and institutional practices. Government institutions are not exempt from this practice. In a developmental context, the term gender equity is about ensuring that poor women and poor men have equal understanding of, access to and control over social and political and economic resources in post apartheid South Africa.

3. Local Government's role in promoting gender equity in the community

Local government is considered to be the level of government closest to the people. Its main tasks are to ensure that goods and services are provided equally and impartially to all community members, and to give leadership to the community. However, a community is not a homogeneous entity. There are different social groups within a community, with different needs and interests. These differences are the results of people's differential access to resources and opportunities, like education and employment. In South Africa, race, gender and class have traditionally been important factors that will influence access to resources and opportunities. In most instances, unfortunately, resources are directed at those individuals and groups that have the power to influence political processes in the community.

3.1 Women as managers of community goods and services.

Because of their reproductive tasks women are at the coal-face of many community issues. In the past, South African women were actively involved in community management activities like rent boycotts, consumer boycotts and struggle to upgrade informal settlements. The lack of basic services, infrastructure, child-care facilities and recreational facilities for youth increases the physical and psychological burden on women. Women often provide these services free of charge. Like their reproductive responsibilities, these tasks are seen as a "woman's duty".

3.2 Women's involvement in community politics.

Men still dominate the sphere of community politics. Political parties have a key role to play in increasing the representation of women in local government. This imperative was recently recognized in legislation. According to the Municipal Structures Act No. 117 of 1998 "every party must seek to ensure that 50% of the candidates on the party list are women and those women and men are evenly distributed through the list.

3.3 Key challenge

The notion of development local government implies that a shift from an undemocratic, racist system to a democratic, participatory system. The new system should aim to correct the inequalities and divisions of the past. A key challenge facing municipalities is to ensure that redistribution and development does not only take place between population groups, but also between the sexes.

4. Analyzing local government through a gender lens

Local government has the potential to play a meaningful role in social transformation and the promotion of gender equality. Often, gender equality in the municipal context is associated with employment equity rather than service delivery issues. However, there are obstacles to the equal and effective participation of women in local governance at both levels. Municipalities need to critically examine two dimensions.

- ✳ The internal dimension - the structures, systems, policies and processes within the municipality
- ✳ The external dimension - a municipality's relationship with the community.

4.1 Internal dimension

Looking at the internal dimension of local government it becomes clear that there are a number of obstacles to the objective participation of women in local government structures

4.1.1 Representation

Women are under-represented in Local Government structures. Women constitute over 50% of the total population, yet less than one of five (18%) elected councillors is a woman. Similarly, women make up approximately one of five (23%) municipal employees. Internationally, 30% representation is regarded as the minimum to ensure that there is a "critical mass" of women. If the representation of women is below this figure, they are more likely to be ignored.

However, simply "adding women on" does not necessarily mean that gender issues are addressed. It would be a misconception that women councillors by definition of their sex represent women and women's interests. Promoting gender equity is instead the responsibility of women and men alike.

4.1.2 Division of labour

A sexual division of labour is also apparent within municipal administration. Men occupy 90% of management positions (the majority of these men are white) in addition.

- ✳ Only one of every 100 women in local government is in a management position.
- ✳ One of two women working in local government is in a clerical position.
- ✳ One of every four women works as a labourer.
- ✳ Ninety percent of all labourers are men. The crucial position of Treasurer is usually filled by a man.

4.1.3 Levels of seniority

Less than 15 percent of all councillors nominated to Executive Committees are women. The bulk of these are positions as Mayor or Deputy Mayor. Even fewer women hold key decision-making positions such as EXCO Chairperson. In 1991, only 48 (5.8%) of the 822 town clerks or equivalent were women. 75% of those earning R150 000 per annum or more are white men. There are more African, Indian and white women in the lowest earning category than men from these population groups. Women are always confronted with a "glass ceiling" when aspiring to management positions. They find themselves trapped in lower paid jobs with little upward mobility within local government structures. There are also differences among women. Black women for example, are often employed on a casual and temporary basis.

4.2 External dimension

The external dimension of local government refers to its relationship with the community. It is important to examine the extent to which women are affected by the activities of local government. It is also important to analyse their participation in decision-making processes. Even if there is no specific focus on women, women are affected by all local government decisions and their implementation. Gender-blind policies may appear to be neutral, but are in reality implicitly male-biased.

4.2.1 Service delivery

Women are often the primary consumers of local government services. The effective provision of local government services can make an important contribution to increase the quality of life of women. The manner in which services are planned and provided is also important. Many women in poor communities also use their homes for income-generating purposes because it allows them to perform their domestic tasks simultaneously.

5. Why should local government promote gender equality?

5.1 Constitutional and legal imperatives

5.1.1 Equality clause

The Constitution's Bill of Rights clearly deals with the issue of equality. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken. It further states that the state may not unfairly discriminate directly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

5.1.2 Commission for gender equality

The constitution also makes provision for the establishment of a Commission for Gender Equality (CGE). The CGE was set up to ensure that gender equality will be promoted and realized. The inclusion of these provisions demonstrates that the state recognizes that gender has been (and still is) an important ground for discrimination and marginalization, and that without specific measures rectify this reality, it is unlikely to change.

5.1.3 Municipal Structures Act no. 117 of 1998

The Municipal Structures Act no. 117 of 1998 calls on councils who decide to establish ward committees to ensure that there is equitable representation of women on these committees. The Act also encourages political parties to ensure that their party list is drawn up in such a way that every alternate candidate is a woman.

5.2 Political imperatives

5.2.1 The white paper on local government

The white paper on local government specifies the National policy framework for the sphere of local government. It makes many references to the need for local government to approach its responsibilities through a "gender lens".

5.2.2 Democracy and political legitimacy

Local government is elected by the people and should make sure that all interests in the community are represented when allocating resources. Local government cannot claim to be fully representative as long as women are under-represented on councils and in administrations and their needs are not adequately addressed.

5.2.3 Redistribution and equity

Local government, like other spheres correct divisions and other spheres of the past, can contribute to greater social equality and ensure redistribution through objective planning, service delivery and local economic development, gender equity is one element of social equity.

5.2.4 Political empowerment

Local government needs to promote community. Local government needs to empower the most marginalized groups in the community and encourage their participation. Women are one of these marginalized groups! They often have fewer opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes. It is hard for women to participate in political processes. If women do make contribution it is often under-valued or ignored. As a result, women tend to have less confidence or may not have acquired the appropriate skills to effectively influence decision-making processes.

5.3 Moral imperative

5.3.1 Poverty alleviation and quality of life

Local government has to promote the alleviation of poverty in communities and ensure a safety net to the most vulnerable. The reality is that (black) women are the majority of the poor and are particularly vulnerable to poverty. Unless a poverty eradication strategy takes this reality into account, its impact is likely to be limited. Usually, local government delivers goods and services without consulting women and analyzing the gendered nature of social relations. This is likely to result in inappropriate and ineffective planning and services.

5.4 Economic imperative

5.4.1 Economic development

Local government has to promote economic development in communities. Unless economic growth strategies are closely linked to anti-poverty strategies and are inclusive of the less formalized economic activities, economic growth will be limited and will only benefit a privileged minority. Women's contribution to the economy has been largely overlooked and under-valued.

6. Promoting gender sensitive municipalities

Strategies to make local government more gender sensitive will have to address gender imbalances at various levels: in council, the administration and in terms of the impact local government has in the community.

Municipalities need to critically review their organizational structure, policies, culture, approaches to service delivery and community participation methods. The "checklist for a gender sensitive community" below gives some indication of the different aspects of gender transformation in local government.

However, local government transformation should be done strategically - or one runs the risk of feeling overwhelmed by the extent of the change required. Small, targeted, incremental changes can be very useful to bring about broader transformation. It may be useful for municipalities to develop a programme of action indicating how it would prioritize gender concerns, and where responsibility lies. Developing municipal policy without resources for implementation will ultimately not result in meaningful change. Gender transformation is not a "quick-fix" solution, but an on-going process. It should not be seen as a separate issue or burden. Rather it is part of the overall transformation process to make local government more representative, accountable, effective, redistributive and development-oriented.

Checklist for the promotion of gender equity

Based on the above gender diagnosis, the Ubuntu Municipality will adopt the following checklist of key actions to ensure the promotion of gender equity and poverty reduction in its IDP process.

Table X: Promoting a gender sensitive municipality

Checklist Of Key Actions To Ensure The Promotion Of Gender Equity And Poverty Reduction
◆ Building a common agreement of how gender and poverty will be defined and used in the IDP process.
◆ Make sure that there is a strategic vision for the Karoo District Municipality and that gender and poverty have some explicitly mentioned in this IDP.
◆ To encourage full representation of women in all aspects of the IDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ In public participation ☞ In technical staff ☞ In political committees ☞ In the implementing workforce
◆ Train officials and Councillors responsible for public liaison in issues of gender sensitivity.
◆ Where public meetings are held care must be given to ensure sensitive advertising, presentation and facilitation that will encourage the participation of the poor. Devising alternatives to large public meetings (e.g. key information interviews, focus groups, etc.) as an important part of inclusive and effective public participation among the poor and women.
◆ Prepare information in advance of the participation process to inform poor stakeholders of the options, so that they can make informed and realistic decisions about their priorities
◆ Ensure that the terms of reference for a baseline study done for the IDP includes a brief to focus on gender and poverty.
◆ Reduce the complexity of issues covered in the baseline survey to areas of key local authority service delivery to allow for concentrated assessments of the social impacts of proposed actions. Where the budget is constrained, issues of gender are often most effectively addressed through an emphasis on priority.
◆ Develop the data base in collaboration with other institutions (province, national departments, local authorities, etc.) to ensure that expenses are minimized.
◆ Identify legal requirements generated by national policy frameworks that will impact on the municipality's management of the local environment (e. g. the minimum water standards of the constitutional commitment to gender equity that might affect land tenure).
◆ Define the impact of the service delivery approach advocated in the IDP on poor men and on women.

Checklist Of Key Actions To Ensure The Promotion Of Gender Equity And Poverty Reduction
◆ Set key performance indicators that encourage integrated planning for the poor.
◆ Draw up a scheme that details resource flows and development initiatives in the municipal area that emanate from other tiers of government, the private sector, NGO's and donors.
◆ In the IDP give priority through the budget to proposals that make poverty reduction and gender equity part of our community building objectives, vision and mission statement.
◆ Councillors (politicians) can insist on the finance department developing a gender and poverty policy that becomes the basis for the performance evaluation of senior finance staff.
◆ Make it Council policy that all Terms of Reference for consultants and contractors to specify the imperatives of of defining the gendered and pro-poor nature of their work.
◆ Require business plan to explicitly pro-poor and give gender differentiated objectives. Offer rewards to those who propose pro-poor, gender sensitive integrated developments.
◆ Require business plans to define targets, outcomes and milestones for the pro-poor, gendered projects to reach.
◆ Require business plans to links the pro-poor gendered projects to the budget through revenue and expenditure.
◆ Ensure that the key performance indicators identified in the IDP of the municipality are pro-poor and gender sensitive.