

THE EASTERN CAPE COMMEMORATES THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Zamikhaya Nkonzo reports

The Gender Governance and Admin Cluster in the Office of the Premier hosted the Commemoration of the International Women's Day in the Eastern Cape. The event was held at the Global Life Centre in Bhisho on Friday, March the 7th, 2008.

Done in the spirit of "ensuring equal participation in decision making", the purpose of the event was to reflect on the process of mainstreaming gender equity in government planning, policies and practices. Given government initiatives to promote gender equity, statistics however still show that the rate of change in the women against men ratio in government is going at a relatively slow pace.

According to the Director General, Dr. Sibongile Mutwa statistics indicate that indeed there is no change in gender balance between now and the 90's. In her welcoming note, the DG went on to say, "If we try to address women issues outside the PGDP we will loose track. We must ensure that women issues are high in the provincial policy and strategy planning. That is the only way we can make a difference in our struggle against marginalisation of women in our province and country at large."

The backlog in the progress of gender equity in the province is partially caused by the lack of support from senior management of most departments. "Gender mainstreaming initiatives desire better support systems from members of senior management in all departments." Those were the words of the Honourable H. Malgas, who is the Chairperson of the portfolio committee in Youth, Gender, Disability, Children and Elderly. Honourable Malgas went on to say, "We have noted that the equity target is 50%, it has then to be verified as to which levels that is occurring." After reflecting on the statistics on the equity status, Hon. Malgas concluded her speech by saying, "Great women leaders are an inspiration to women of all creeds and backgrounds to reach their full potential"

The following table illustrates the current % summary of Provincial Equity Status Quo vs. Provincial targets

YEAR	TARGET	STATUS
2004/05	30%	24%
2005/06	40%	26%
2006/07	50%	30%
2007/08	50%	34%

Ms Immelda Diouf who is a Gender Specialist highlighted that mainstreaming of gender is a process rather than a goal in itself. Gender issues need to be part of the core business and key decision-making processes within government. Likewise it is necessary to integrate or mainstream gender issues within the work of senior management who play an important role in determining the rationale for allocation of resources, capacity utilisation, developmental planning and service delivery.

"Over and above the 50/50 target, we are looking for a better society in all spheres of life where there is a better life for all, therefore we must move beyond the numbers." Said Ms Diouf

In an advisory note, Immelda presented programmes that government has put in place as vehicles to promote gender equity:

- ✓ Lobbying in terms of the Public Finance Act (1999)
- ✓ National Treasury creating an enabling environment
- ✓ National Gender Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality
- ✓ Office on the Status of Women
- ✓ Department of Public Works' Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within Public Service