

THE ANC – more of the same; lip service to womxn

The manifesto overall - The glaring gap in the ANC manifesto is the failure to explain, how it will shift its approach to the economy, and to fiscal and budgeting decisions, to meaningfully change the situation – the regressive 2019 Budget tells us that here we have more of the same, a refusal to engage with questions of the tax mix that favours the rich and punishes the poor, through increasing corporate and wealth taxes or lowering VAT and fuel levies. How can the ANC deliver something radically different or innovative while remaining committed to its regressive budget approach?

Overall the manifesto is weak in its recognition of or strategies to address the systematic and structural discrimination of womxn, patriarchy, sexism and male dominance, more information on this is provided below.

The ANC list their achievements of the past 25 years, and also recognise they've 'made mistakes' and that some areas are in 'crisis', but they've hidden the stagnation and regressions of the past five years in their claims of success over the past 25. The increased poverty, unemployment, and income inequality; the failure of their targeted strategies to improve basic education to deliver results, the unmitigated levels of gender based violence coupled with a disinterested criminal justice system are obscured.

Unlike other parties, with 25 years under its belt as the ruling party, the ANC has access to public resources, and has experience in the strategies and challenges that have bedevilled the delivery of programmes addressing social justice across sectors. This should come through in the party's Election Manifesto. At this point, we would expect to see the ANC grappling in different ways with the rights violations, exclusions and failures of social justice that have persisted. It does not.

While the ANC demonstrate some new ideas and specific strategies on corruption, youth employment, and free higher education, overall their promises are more of the same, repackaged and renamed, there's little that is new. Their introduction of ideas on land expropriation and GBV may be new to the manifestos, but both of these lack specificity and leave questions open. In basic education, social security and renewable energy, there's neither new thinking nor any detail about the ANC's plans. In health the ANC provide more specific targets, plans and timeframes for its current strategies. The ANC acknowledge that both health and education are in crisis and 'still need radical improvements', but the manifesto's proposals are not radical, and lack innovation.

Promises to address the monopoly of big business, including in agriculture, don't weigh up against recently past laws that ignore the interests of small farmers in favour of large-scale plant breeders and while the ANC undertake to address apartheid spatial planning, this doesn't follow through to addressing apartheid police resourcing models. Throughout, the ANC takes its traditional low approach to increasing regulation and requirements on the private sector, incentives, engagements and leveraging will not create the kinds of reforms needed in the private sector.

The ANC on womxn, patriarchy, gender and women - Unlike past manifestos, in this manifesto the ANC introduce the concept of patriarchy, and the words 'women' or 'gender equality' come up at various points. But consistently, the words are used as part of lists of other groups, and without any specifics of the context or directed strategies that it will take to give meaning to this word use. This is contrasted against the use of the words 'youth' or 'corruption' where the manifesto does demonstrate more specific thinking of context and strategy. Many sections of the manifesto, such as housing and education make no gendered reference at all.

In this year's manifesto we welcome the ANC's stronger approach to gender based violence than previously – but even there the commitments made are more of the same, broad with few specifics that fail to address

known barriers to delivering on prevention, policing and justice. Patriarchal, sexist and womxn-blaming norms pervading the criminal justice system are unaddressed. The ANC commitment to the 2018 GBV Summit outcomes are positive but given similar high level commitments by the ANC over the past twelve years we'll wait and see... noticeably the February 2019 Budget didn't follow through on those commitments.

The ANC have stood by the commitment to increase gender equality in government and the private sector over the past 25 years, it has improved women's representation in government positions, this is good, but still far off a demographically driven target of 51%. Government reports on progress don't tell us how many of the womxn in senior positions are Black womxn. BEE is all that is offered to address the dismal progress in the private sector on womxn's representation. The manifesto makes no commitment to step this up, or to address the patriarchal, misogynist and sexist norms that limit womxn's influence once they're in positions.

The manifesto does not recognise womxn's unpaid labour and is silent on the persistent gendered wage gap between men and womxn. The ANC celebrate the new minimum wage act which reinforces the lower value placed on 'women's work'; sectors targeted for economic investment are all sectors dominated by men, with no commitment to increasing womxn's representation in those. Plans to increase the number of community health workers are presented, but the low wage is not addressed.

Targets and priorities for womxn are absent on land and home ownership, restitution claims or title deed strategies. There is some focus on rural womxn's access and tenure on communal land but the question of farm womxn and womxn's access to urban land is left open. The social factors that keep girls out of school are ignored in the manifesto, as is the extremely high proportion of children with disabilities who are not in school. Responses to sexism, womxn's academic advancement, or GBV in higher education are missing. The manifesto is silent on decriminalising sex work and increasing protections and services to sex workers.

The ANC make no commitment to re-build South Africa's gender machinery, and although they commit to mainstream gender equality in planning, budgeting and monitoring, this is not new and despite past commitments it hasn't been done – will it be any different this time?

Internally, the ANC do not take a strong, consistent and demonstrated stance against sexism, misogyny, sexual violence or harassment in the party; there's strong evidence of the ANC protecting people accused of sexual misconduct in the past, and the party still has no specific policy on gender based violence or harassment, sexism or misogyny.

The ANC's party list has only three womxn in the top ten, and nine in the top 20. The top 20 is peppered with female candidates who have all been in positions where they could have made a significant contribution in mainstreaming gender and reframing the feminist discourse within government and the party structures. Sadly, their track records show they mostly failed in doing so and that women's representation on party lists alone does not necessarily translate into a sound feminist agenda for the party. The men on the ANC's top 20 list generally fail to inspire confidence in their commitment to address the structural violence and inequalities women face beyond just gender-based violence. In framing their positions narrowly around GBV and "real men" as protectors of women, they run the risk of falling into the trap of benevolent sexism. The top 20 also includes womxn and men, who have made seriously problematic victim-blaming statements in the past.