

FEMINIST VIEW OF POLITICAL PARTIES

WOMEN FOWARD

MAY 2019

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Womxn and Democracy Initiative is based at the Dullah Omar Institute at UWC. We identify as feminist, taking an intersectional approach to our work on realising social justice through active political participation of the public in the context of a participatory and deliberative democracy.

With this project we hoped to translate four political party's manifestos into information that womxn and gender non-binary people can access which is capable of informing their capacity to hold political parties accountable and punish or reward them, through their vote now and through holding them to account in future for commitments proposed in their manifestos and action on delivery.

We hope that this analysis will serve more than just at this time of the election, but will initiate deeper public discourse on these issues from a feminist perspective to deepen the idea of what a feminist agenda for political parties looks like, and through that increase pressure on political parties to do better on their manifestos, policies and programmes in future and importantly the action that we as womxn and gender-non binary expect from government and opposition parties in the future.

We considered the three top performing political parties in the last national election – the ANC, the DA, and the EFF as well as Women Forward (WF), a small women-led party that is contesting the elections for the second time on the basis of a women's agenda.

This research was done through analysis of party manifesto's coupled with desk top research on a sample of candidates put forward as representatives to parliament, and on track-records in their term as parliamentarians and other structures of leadership and governance where relevant.

Using a feminist framework which prioritises patriarchy as a system of power which undermines gender and sexual determination in particular, together with other key social justice issues raised through a feminist intersectional lens, we considered if the manifestos and track records translate in practical ways for ordinary people, womxn and non-binary people in particular. Great care was taken to put into context the parties offerings overall. To allow our intended audience to interrogate specific positions of the party on issues of concern to them and make a decision from that vantage point.

The project aimed to provide a feminist perspective on key political party manifestos – taking the questions beyond only what the parties are saying on issues that are commonly defined as gendered or 'women's issues' such as gender based violence and womxn's representation further, into questions of how parties have addressed a gendered or womxn's agenda throughout their manifestos from their plans to address unemployment, wages, land and home ownership, social security, education from ECD through to higher education, and health.

We have looked at how parties recognise and respond, through their manifestos, to the layers of

exclusions and discriminations faced by different groups of womxn, Black womxn, poor and working class womxn, womxn living with or caring for other people with disabilities, LGBTIQ people, womxn living in rural contexts and in urban poor contexts. We've focused further in on the question of if parties have specifically addressed the context of groups such as farm womxn, sex workers and domestic workers.

Our analysis then turns to internal party issues such as the track record within parties on womxn's leadership; on misogyny, GBV and sexual harassment within the party; and of the quality of people on their lists.

We attempted to provide information on track record so that we do not rely on political grandstanding of the manifestos alone – this was made particularly difficult in terms of the EFF and WF where information related to the track records of the party and their employees, and on the positions they've taken on many policies is largely inaccessible. We've looked at the question of populism and lip-service, trying to assess through the quality of what's written and promised, if the commitments are backed up by a depth of understanding of the context of womxn and if they are specific and targeted.

We looked at the following thematic issues to ground our analysis and overall assessment:

- Party track record in advancing and advocating for gender justice. This was particularly difficult owing to the lack of data/info with regard to previous and current structures of governed where possible as well as the difficulty of accessible public records in all 3 spheres of government.
- The quality of their analysis in their manifestos, particularly where patriarchy is concerned; are the promises they make backed up by recognition of what the challenges have been to past plans to implement those promises?
- The specificity and clarity of the promises / plans. Are they detailed and target specific?
- Are budgets allocated or is an indication given of how the promise will be resourced?
- Are there commitments to mechanisms for transparency, monitoring and accountability?

The team: Motlatsi Komote; Alicestine October; Ashley Nehrebecki; Zukiswa White; Sam Waterhouse; Vivienne Mentor-Lalu.

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STATE OF THE PARTY ASSESSMENT

Years active	10 (est. 2008)
Present share of the vote	0%
Political orientation	Unclear
Top 6 composition by gender	100% women
NEC break-down by gender	Not applicable
Top 6 composition by race	100% Black
Current MP break-down by gender	Not applicable.
<p>How they propose to govern: Feminist Manifesto? Women Forward are successful in addressing most issues that relate to women’s lived realities and provide a gendered analysis on all matters. They speak to gender parity and the leadership of women at all levels, although there is no mention of quota systems, there is a clear indication that they are for women.</p>	
<p>Overview / Feminist Manifesto Breakdown: How do they fair?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does their manifesto support and promote national strategic plan on GBV and VAW? No ▪ Gender mainstreaming with respect to all their policy considerations? Yes ▪ Gender mainstreaming and sensitivity with respect to their key focus areas? Yes 	

- Do they consider promote gender responsive budgeting and resource allocation? **Partly**
- Intersectional approach in their policy considerations? **Yes**
- Do they support sexual and reproductive justice including decriminalization and abortion? **No**
- Do they support sexual freedoms and the protection and advocacy of LGBTQAI+? **Yes**
- Do they recognize and safeguard womxn’s access to Land and ownership? **Yes**
- Do they support and promote womxn’s representation and participation in key decision making structures? **Yes**

How they govern: Their Track-Record

There is no record of their governance, as they have never been in power.

1. Overview

Women Forward is one of the few womxn led political parties contesting the upcoming 2019 elections. The party was established in 2009 and received 5000 votes in the previous national and provincial elections that they contested. From the onset, Women Forward aims to be an intersectional party that names patriarchy and recognises the challenges facing LGBTQI, disabled women and poor women. However, it is to be noted that it fails to make specific mention of capitalist norms that hinder women’s access to basic services and their living standards.

Overall the party promises to ‘promote women’s rights at all levels of leadership’. Plans on how to act on the party’s commitments on many issues remain vague though. The Women Forward manifesto reads more like a call on government to do certain things and not necessarily as a party who sees itself in government. The party only provides timeframes in two sections throughout the manifesto. Women Forward acknowledges and prioritises crimes against LGBTQI persons.

2. Women Forward on womxn, patriarchy, gender and women

There is a brief mention of patriarchy and other forms of oppression against women in the manifesto. Unfortunately there is no recognition of the structural impediments the prevailing capitalist system impose on women in realising their rights. Although the manifesto mentions women and gender throughout, it is at times used interchangeably with words such as citizen, person or all. It can be argued that this inclusive approach to the gender question may possibly weaken the much needed focus on women who are traditionally often grouped together with children and not championed as a single issue or cause in its own right. Although there is notably, a call to action to dismantle all systems of oppression.

The party correctly implies that the current national gender machinery is not effective, as it misses the mark on 'influencing, formulating or analysing gender policy' and goes further to assure voters that they will review and reassess these institutions when implementing gender policy. Furthermore, there is a commitment to create community development forums at grassroots level which reflects the party's intention to see women as active participants in decisions affecting their lives. Women Forward recognises that decisions that affect women must include women.

3. Womxn, the economy and the world of work

a. Unemployment

Women Forward commits to end poverty and to ensure that women are active participants at all levels of economic decision-making. The party also commits to review economic policies to promote the wellbeing and economic security of women. Despite this the party fails to explicitly prioritise young black women who often face the highest unemployment rates as young graduates from poverty stricken households. There is a general commitment however, towards ensuring that women have jobs with dignity that are consistent with their living costs.

b. Womxn in informal and insecure employment

Failing to recognise women farm workers or sex workers and the injustices that are experienced by the women in these sectors, remain one of the glaring omissions in the party's manifesto. There is no clear regulatory framework on how the party aims to ensure job security for women in informal sectors.

c. Womxn's ownership

Women Forward purports to ensure that women participate in all policy decisions and represent their own interests.

d. Womxn's seniority, leadership and control

Women Forward commits to a significant change in gender parity by the year 2025 on boards, institutions and other bureaucracies. The party offers no clear plan or legislative changes or any emphasis on Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) or the quota system in South Africa that would provide a clear roadmap for implementing this

change. Although there is a call for community development forums led by women, it is unclear what role they will play and in what capacity.

e. The gendered wage gap

The party promises to work towards jobs with dignity and salaries that are consistent with the current costs of living but fails to mention the current wage inequality between men and women.

f. Economic reform generally

The manifesto promises to include women in the 'mainstream economic policy decision-making processes'. There is no analysis on the need for economic reform for women in the public and private sectors or how measures can be monitored in the long-term.

g. Social security

Women Forward aims to introduce a 'universal basket of social provision' for women. The manifesto identifies the challenges that women face in accessing adequate and safe transport, primary healthcare, education and water and sanitation. The party fails to unpack the barriers in accessing social grants such as birth registrations, UIF, identity documents and means tests. The manifesto does however, mention how illegal deductions from grants will be alleviated. Achieving a 'universal basket' would require an understanding on how this affect's women's livelihoods and a proposed strategy that is unfortunately lacking in this manifesto.

4. Land, agriculture, environment, housing, services

a. Womxn's ownership, control and access to land

The manifesto identifies the lack of adequate land ownership by women. There is a promise by the party to work towards providing lease security and stabilising rent control. However there are no set targets for monitoring the security of tenure for women on communal land.

On agriculture, Women Forward does not address the security of tenure for women on farms or those in the agricultural sector, even though studies have shown that these women face incredible human rights injustices.

b. Womxn's ownership, control and access to houses

Women Forward advocates for low cost housing and specifically target the land ownership issues affecting marginalised women or families. There are no set targets for the transfer of ownership to women or public reporting on this process.

c. Human settlements

There is a commitment to eliminate informal settlements and homelessness as well as discriminatory bank lending practices which affect women. Women Forward wants to actively secure equal, safe, hazard free and affordable housing in the public and private housing sector. However, there is no actual policy or timeframe for this. The party also fails to address the rise in gentrification or lack of proper housing in rural areas.

5. Electricity, Water, Sanitation

a. Electricity and renewable energy

Women Forward commits to best environmental practices for all citizens, especially the poor. In addition, they will work 'towards the improvement of the environment in all communities with a focus on home grown community solutions that aim to protect and support the environment'. However, there is no mention of access to electricity.

b. Water

Women Forward commits to ensuring that women participate in decisions relating to access to water through a universal basket of social provision.

c. Sanitation

Women Forward commits to ensuring that women participate in decisions relating to access to sanitation using a universal basket of social provision that will improve the living standards of women.

6. Safety and Justice

a. General

Women Forward commits to fostering a society where women feel safe and protected. The party acknowledges that women must have a voice in decision-making processes that speak to their safety. They foresee women working with government in this regard. The party also acknowledges the dangers that women face during war, conflict and further acknowledges all forms of violence against women but falls short in providing timeframes, budgets and innovative ideas on how to tackle this. They only commit to demand that government enforce existing laws and sanctions against perpetrators of domestic violence.

7. Gender Based Violence

a. General

The party aims to ensure that there is an end to all forms of physical and sexual violence against women and eradicate gender-based violence due to high levels of crime. The manifesto intends to break silence on violence whilst rejecting all forms of language that promotes hatred and fear.

b. Prevention

Women Forward commits to demanding that government enforce existing legislation and sanctions against perpetrators of domestic violence and ensure that government works with women to ensure that there are safe spaces for women in their homes and in spaces that they occupy.

c. Policing

Women Forward are silent on policing.

d. Psychosocial support and health

There is no mention of psychosocial services that will support all survivors of gender based violence and the trauma that women have to consistently relive from the effects aftermath of violence.

e. Courts and Justice

Women Forward calls for a reform of the criminal justice and prison system and aims to implement 'community-based models of justice and accountability'. There is however no clarity on what these community-based models would consist of and how they would have an impact on our current criminal justice system.

8. Education

a. Early Childhood Development

There are no specific targets around early childhood development and the impact on women who are often primary caregivers.

b. Basic Education

On basic education the party does not make any distinction between the schooling of boys and girls which is interesting because the lived realities of these learners differ. The party also does not mention violence, including sexual violence in schools as a priority area. Other than providing robust sex education to boys and girls to reduce teen pregnancies, there is no mention of support programmes for pregnant girls and young mothers. The framing around teen pregnancy is more around health hazards and not how it affects girls' access to education once they are pregnant.

c. Higher Education

There is nothing in the manifesto on the challenges women face in institutions of higher learning be it sexual assault and rape or the broader transformation of the higher education sector.

9. Health

Women Forward demand the right to affordable and easily accessible primary healthcare for women. The party's understanding of sexual and reproductive health is limited judging by its manifesto. They confined it to a plan for "robust" sex education to prevent teen pregnancies and other health hazards. There is nothing mentioned about access to abortion facilities and standards in maternity and obstetric units.

10. Womxn experiencing multiple exclusions and discrimination

a. Womxn living in rural areas

Although the party does not explicitly refer to women living in rural areas, they recognise that specific cultural practices are discriminatory towards women. Forced marriages, child betrothal, child labour practices, banishment of womxn and unequal inheritance rights all affect women in rural areas.

b. Womxn living in mining affected communities

The manifesto does not mention women living in mining affected communities.

c. Womxn and traditional leadership

The party do recognise the challenges faced by women in the context of tradition and cultural practices as a form of structural violence. In this sense they commit to ensure that government work with traditional leaders to evaluate traditional customs that undermines the rights of women. On something with clear constitutional implications, one would expect a clearer plan of action. Also, especially since the issue of traditional leadership and practices has always been a political hot potato. (We commit to ensuring that government should urgently start the process of working with the institution of traditional leaders to undertake an evaluation of traditional customs and practices, in South Africa that undermines the human rights of women.) They take no position on controversial pieces of

legislation such as the Traditional Courts Bill and the Traditional and Khoisan Leaders Bill that was passed by the National Council of Provinces earlier this year. Interestingly they also do not explicitly carve out a role for women to be included in these review process between government and traditional leaders.

d. Gender non-binary and LGBTQI people

The party acknowledges the LGBTQI context albeit limited. "...the people of the LGBTIA community still continue to be brutalized and marginalized in our country." They then commit themselves to the protection of every person no matter their sexual orientation and endeavour to ensure that the perpetrators of ritualistic hate crimes such as 'corrective rape' face the full might of the law. Albeit a bold and welcome intention of the party, they offer no proposals on how and by when and what this full might of the law entails.

e. People with disabilities

People with disabilities are grouped under the same title as widowed, elderly women and single mothers. There is limited if any recognition of women's burden of care for people with disabilities save to say that they aim to tackle issues of access to resources and opportunities for self-advancement through proposing policies that will enforce constitutional provisions. Women Forward rightfully acknowledges that there are policies in place but do not speak to their success or failures and how these can hinder the lives of women with disabilities.

f. Sex workers

Women Forward is silent on sex work and its decriminalisation.

g. Non-South African nationals

The manifesto fails to expressly name xenophobia. However, there is a broad discussion in the manifesto about working towards peace and stability and ensuring that 'the vulnerable and the most threatened' women in conflict areas who are faced with migration and various forms of violence stemming from this are protected by government.

h. Governance and political participation

The party have no track record in government and their public profile seems limited to elections. They have never won any seats. Comparing manifestos over time proved difficult as previous manifestos were difficult to access. The party propagates for women's active participation from bottom up starting at community level in decisions affecting them.

11. Internal performance on womxn's rights

a. Representation

Women Forward is a fairly new political party that does not have enough information available on its memberships representation.

b. Sexism, gender based violence and sexual harassment

The manifesto does not include a discussion on sexism and sexual harassment specifically save for mentioning sexual violence against women.