

EDGING TOWARDS

# 50/50

THE FINAL SCORE

This year's elections marked a step forward for women's representation in local government, but still stopped short of the goal of equal gender representation set out in the *White Paper on Local Government*.



Cover: Gwen Ramokgopa (City of Tshwane), Helen Zille (City of Cape Town) and Nondumiso Maphazi (Nelson Mandela).

That said, however, the number of women councillors elected has increased from 29% in 2000 to 40% in this year's election. Significantly, this places women in local government ahead of the representation of women in the national assembly, where the figure stands at 33%. This was due largely to the ANC, 48% of whose election candidates were women. The conversion of candidates to councillors was impressive, as 46% of all ANC councillors elected were women.

## Ward and proportional representation seats

A significant feature of this election was the improvement in balancing the representation of women in ward and proportional representation (PR) seats. Women now constitute 37% of ward and 43% of PR councillors. There has been a general increase in women's representation across the provinces. Northern Cape boasts the most representative tally, with 48% of its councillors being women, while in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape only 30% are women.

## Metro equality

Of the six metropolitan mayors elected, three are women: Gwen Ramokgopa (City of Tshwane), Nondumiso Maphazi (Nelson Mandela) and Helen Zille (City of Cape Town). In the other metros, Amos Masondo, Duma Nkosi and Obed Mlaba retained their positions as executive mayors of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Ethekwini metro councils respectively.

## Independents

Independent councillors were not a major force in this election. Indeed, only 2.68% of the ward votes cast were for independent candidates. However, independents organised into political parties achieved a relative degree of success, particularly those of the Independent Civic Organisation of South Africa (ICOSA), which won the same number of seats as the ANC in Beaufort West, only to be ousted by a DA-ANC coalition in that municipality. Nevertheless, ICOSA proved to be quite a force in the Western Cape outside of the Cape Metro.

## Comment

The increase in the representation of women in local government is welcomed. The ANC's progressive approach in attempting to bridge the divide is commendable. However, the other political parties should show more faith in women and more commitment to encouraging the role of women in local government and its leadership. The sooner they do this, the better.

Despite the general increase of women in local government, their representation in executive leadership positions is still low. However, the final figures are not yet available and as soon as current research on women's representation in executive leadership positions is complete, we will report on this vital aspect of women's empowerment.