Women's role in South Africa's Democratic Transition (1990-1998)

**BACKGROUND ON SOUTH AFRICA'S DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION**

South Africa’s democratic transition comprised official negotiations (1990–1994) between the Government, the African National Congress (ANC), and smaller parties, which produced a non-racial and non- sexier interim constitution and enabled the first democratic elections in 1994. Between 1994 and 1999, a Government of National Unity took office, parliament finalized the constitution, and a Gender Equality Commission and Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) were set up. The democratic transition dramatically reduced political violence and established formal democracy. But South Africans remain unconvinced and inequalities have not been reversed.

**WOMEN’S ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PROCESS**

Women achieved a high level of representation in the first parliament

The women’s movement’s efforts to set up a national ‘gender machinery’ as an institutional framework to promote gender equality

Parliament declared non-racist as a constitutional principle, and the constitution excluded gender equality, in spite of opposition from traditional leaders

**Official Negotiations 1990–1994**

- Women as equal partners in a new democratic order
- A gender quota for candidates in the first democratic election was introduced
- The Women’s National Coalition set up. The democratic transition dramatically reduced political violence and established formal democracy. But South Africans remain unconvinced and inequalities have not been reversed.

**Case Examples**

- First Democratic Elections April 1994
- Achieved a high level of representation in the first parliament
- Women’s movements’ efforts to set up a national ‘gender machinery’ as an institutional framework to promote gender equality
- Parliament declared non-racial as a constitutional principle, and the constitution excluded gender equality, in spite of opposition from traditional leaders

**Women’s Achievements**

- Women formed a powerful multilateral coalition to get a place at the negotiation table and mobilize support
- The Women’s National Coalition was able to ensure that their common demand for gender equality was enshrined in the new constitution
- By insisting on a gender quota for candidates in the first democratic election, women achieved a high level of representation in the first parliament
- The women’s movement’s efforts to set up a national ‘gender machinery’ as an institutional framework to promote gender equality
- Parliament declared non-racist as a constitutional principle, and the constitution excluded gender equality, in spite of opposition from traditional leaders

**FACATORS ENABLING WOMEN’S INFLUENCE**

- Structural and technical support
- Gender quotas
- Women’s networks and leaders

**FACATORS CONSTRaining WOMEN’S INFLUENCE**

- Pacification and societal attitudes
- Women’s participation in the process

**People Involved**

- Women
- Men
- Political leaders
- Activists
- NGOs, think-tanks
- Academics
- International organisations

**Cases Analyzed**

- Afghanistan
- Burundi
- Libya
- Myanmar
- Philippines
- Colombia

**Prevalent Factors Leading to Women’s Inclusion and Influence**

- Structural and technical support
- Gender quotas
- Women’s networks and leaders

**Prevalent Factors Constraining Women’s Influence**

- Pacification and societal attitudes
- Women’s participation in the process

**Women’s Achievements**

- Women achieved a high level of representation in the first parliament
- The women’s movement’s efforts to set up a national ‘gender machinery’ as an institutional framework to promote gender equality
- Parliament declared non-racist as a constitutional principle, and the constitution excluded gender equality, in spite of opposition from traditional leaders

**Infographic**

This infographic is based on a case study published by the Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative (IPTI) as part of the series “Women in Peace and Transition Processes” that analyzes the conditions under which women participated in and influenced peace, political reform, and constitution-making processes worldwide. To discover other infographics and our case study series, visit our website: www.inclusivepeace.org