Achieving South Africa’s vision for gender equality

In the footsteps of the women’s movement... 

By Emma Baartman

When taking media coverage on issues affecting women into account, it is interesting to note that stories on women’s empowerment have shifted from being seasonal and event driven to being more consistent and positive. This is significant in itself, but it is also a reflection of the policy environment that has been created since 1994, which has historically been a governance imperative in South Africa. Despite the significant progress that has been made on the international front, particularly in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals, there is still much work to be done to ensure gender equality and women’s empowerment are at the heart of the development agenda. However, the data suggests that media reporting on gender equality and women’s empowerment appears to be more consistent and positive, and this may be an indication of progress being made in this regard.

Women in management and employment statistics

Women’s representation in management positions in the tertiary education sector is approximately 12.3% (Q4 of 2009), while the number of women managers in the same employment category is increasing. It is important to note that women are more concerned about poverty and destitution than their male counterparts. In previous research, the same trend was observed in which women consistently scored higher than men on issues of poverty. While this may be due to the fact that women are more likely to report on issues that affect them, it is also a reflection of the fact that women are more likely to be in poor health and live in poverty. In addition, respondents identified crime as being in the top challenges (31%) and inadequate access to justice (12%) as being in the top challenges (31%).

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Significant challenges facing South Africa

The Gender Gap Report 2012 showed that there is a gender gap in education, employment, and overall socio-economic status. The report also showed that women are more likely to be in poverty and destitution than their male counterparts. In addition, respondents identified crime as being in the top challenges (31%) and inadequate access to justice (12%) as being in the top challenges (31%).

Unemployment rates

Women’s unemployment rate is higher than men’s, and this can be attributed to the fact that women are more likely to be in poverty and destitution than their male counterparts. In addition, respondents identified crime as being in the top challenges (31%) and inadequate access to justice (12%) as being in the top challenges (31%).

Living conditions of South Africans

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Women’s representation in Parliament

Women’s representation in Parliament has increased significantly since 1994, with a mere 2.7% representation of women in Parliament prior to the democratic elections of 1994. This has increased to 27% in 2011, with women now holding 26% of the seats in the National Assembly. In addition, government has put in place legislation to create an enabling environment for women, and to improve their representation in Parliament. Despite this progress, there is still much work to be done to ensure that women are adequately represented in the decision-making process. In addition, government has launched initiatives to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality, and to ensure that women have access to the same opportunities as men.

In conclusion

While there has been significant progress in terms of women’s representation in management and employment, there is still much work to be done to ensure gender equality and women’s empowerment are at the heart of the development agenda. It is important to note that women are more likely to be in poverty and destitution than their male counterparts. In addition, respondents identified crime as being in the top challenges (31%) and inadequate access to justice (12%) as being in the top challenges (31%).

Gender statistics in South Africa 2011

Female

Female

Statistical data from the South African National Medical Research Council (2011) shows that 27% of South Africans are female. This is an increase from 20% in 2001, which is attributed to the progressive policies of government that ensure wider participation by women. Despite more women having a tertiary education, the unemployment rate among them is still higher than for men. In addition, government has launched initiatives to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality, and to ensure that women have access to the same opportunities as men.

Refuse removal

Refuse removal is a challenge in South Africa, with approximately 85% of households using wood or dung for cooking. This has resulted in improved living conditions for South Africans, with poverty gradually decreasing. This highlights the disparities in society, where the burden of raising children still lies more with women as the primary care-givers, and often the case being that more households (44%) are female headed. In previous research, the same trend was observed in which women consistently scored higher than men on issues of poverty. While this may be due to the fact that women are more likely to report on issues that affect them, it is also a reflection of the fact that women are more likely to be in poor health and live in poverty.