



**Commission for Gender Equality**  
A society free from gender oppression and inequality

## **Media Release**

**For Immediate Release: 03 November 2021**

**To: Editors, Producers and Reporters**

### **Commission for Gender Equality's Preliminary Statement on the 2021 Local Government Elections in South Africa**

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) is pleased to announce that it has carried out and completed successfully its observation of the country's Local Government Elections on Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021. The Commission had fielded a Team of about 50 gender-diverse Election Observers across the country, ensuring that among areas included were rural villages, farming communities, informal settlements, as well as major urban areas and big cities in all the nine provinces. The mission of our Observers was to witness and observe the unfolding voting process throughout the country during voting day to ensure that men and women, and boys and girls eligible to vote, were afforded opportunities to exercise this democratic right, free of gender discrimination or any other gender related impediments.

Based on the experiences and feedback received from our Observers throughout the country, the CGE wishes to issue this preliminary statement indicating that we have found no evidence of systematic and/or systemic discrimination or impediment against any South African citizen based on gender. The Commission also wishes to laud the Electoral Commission of South Africa on fielding a sufficiently gender-diverse Team of election officials under the leadership of Presiding Officers in voting stations observed by the CGE Team throughout the country.

We wish to remark with appreciation the efforts of the staff of the Electoral Commission of South Africa, at the various voting stations observed, for assisting and prioritising pregnant women, elderly, persons with disabilities including women and men with small children, to move ahead of the queues to minimise and alleviate the inconvenience of standing for too long in queues before casting their votes.

The CGE also notes that women continue to make up the majority of the registered voting population in South Africa. For instance, available figures for registered voters in South Africa show that, overall, women comprised 55.17% of voters registered in the country's voters roll, with men comprising 44.83%. We believe that these figures auger well for the CGE's long standing and ongoing campaign to encourage greater gender equality in the participation and representation of women in politics, governance, leadership, and decision-making structures.

However, the CGE desires to signal no complacency with these voter registration figures that appear to show higher levels of interest and willingness among women to participate in choosing their public representatives, as challenges persist. We note, for instance, that overall women continue to be significantly under-represented among public



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representatives at local government level, particularly among Ward Councillors, as well as within the leadership structures of some of the major political parties in the country. We therefore await with great expectation the results of the recent local government elections to assess the extent to which these inadequacies will be addressed.

While the CGE is generally pleased with the absence of significant gender-related impediments during the voting process, we do wish to express our concern with the lower voter turnout that has become the major talking point of these elections. Such lower voter turnouts in the past have tended to be to the detriment of women's representation among elected public representatives. We have also noted reports of isolated incidents at some of the voting stations observed by the CGE where, during the vote counting process, the application of strict rules to control the movements of individuals in and out of the vote counting venues, including regulation of comfort breaks and use of restrooms and ablution facilities, resulted in some discomfort and distress to some of the women affected.

Finally, the CGE wishes to reiterate that this is a preliminary press statement on our election observation work, based on the feedback and experiences of our Team of Election Observers throughout the country. A more substantive report on the outcome of the elections will be released at a later stage, containing the findings of the CGE's gender analysis of the results of the 2021 Local Government Elections.

**END,**

**Issued by Commission for Gender Equality**

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The Commission for Gender Equality is established in terms of Section 181 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development, and attainment of gender equality.

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