

## **GENDER INEQUALITY WITHIN SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPAL PLANNING SYSTEM: A REVIEW FROM INTERSECTIONALITY**

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### **- Abstract-**

*Prior 1994, South Africa planning was characterised by discriminatory planning, separate development and oppression. South Africa promulgated the Constitution of South Africa as a Supreme Law that promote inclusivity, decentralisation of planning and good governance. However, the contemporary planning systems post 1994 demonstrate an antagonistic picture in pursuit to effectively inculcate gender into the planning to resolve the developmental challenges confronting the country. The complexity of intersectionality demonstrate that the societal interactions have created social categories which relegated women to the lowest societal hierarchy, thus deter their full participation in local government planning. The embedded ideology that identify men superiority and women inferiority construct unequal power relations and conditions limited women influence in planning. In 2015, women constitute only 39% of all municipal councillors in South African municipalities which demonstrate male domination in politics. The paper is purely a conceptual in nature, and thus reviewed various literature such as government reports, academic journals articles and legislative framework which were analysed through content analysis. The article concludes that there is an urgent policy requirement to resolve an 'inequality regime' within local government in order to foster inclusive participation in planning and the promotion of good governance.*

**Key Words:** *Inclusive planning; gender; intersectionality; local government; participation*

## 1. Introduction

Prior 1994, the apartheid government was characterised by a central planning system, discriminatory planning and separate development which marginalised women, black people and most non-whites (The Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) (Henceforth referred to as The Constitution)); Masenya and Mokoele, 2015). Centralisation was an embodied character of South Africa's planning practise during the apartheid administration. The contemporary planning practice can be attributed to a colonial planning systems that the incoming government was unable to dismantle (Ogbazi, 2013). This was due to the inability of the ruling government to implement the new planning systems enacted during their independence. However, the manifestation of discriminatory planning and unequal involvement in decision making within local government cannot only be blamed on the adverse effects of the apartheid regime. Traditional and cultural patriarchies fuelled the manifestation of gender inequality (Jewkes, Levin and Penn-Kekana, 2003; Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna, and Shai, 2010). Additionally, African traditions also played a pivotal role in deepening the social inequalities both within the household and society (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010). The complexity of the traditional and modern marriage setup has fuelled the categories of difference (Healy-Clancy, 2014) within the societies and organisations. Therefore, understanding the entrenched character of social inequality is more complex than just the fact that men are superior to women. Some social science scholars have argued that the contemporary social construction of inequality which is emblematic at a micro level of a households (Jewkes *et al.*, 2003; Jewkes *et al.*, 2010), is coined to the underrepresentation of women in local government planning. According to United Nations, women constitute only 22.8% of all national parliamentarians as of June 2016 which demonstrated a slow increase from 11.3% since 1995. The underrepresentation of women in political spaces limit their influence in planning. The social patriarchies and hierarchies which are embodiment of most African societies continue to marginalise women in decision making, and thus remain at the peripheries in the planning arena within local government.

Intersectionality, as advocated by Crenshaw (1991), is a social theoretical discourse that helps to explain inequality (Crenshaw, 1991; Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013; Woodhams and Lupton, 2014), and its perpetual visibility in the

new democratic dispensation (Maseya and Mokoele, 2014). The social categorisation of people remain very discriminatory in nature, and women bear the brunt of such inequality. The manifestation of inequality which is further constructed by what is termed an “inequality regime” (Anker, 2006). The creation of inequality regimes makes the representation of women in decision making position within local government planning a huge task to achieve. The underrepresentation of women in planning within local government inhibit addressing the gendered or feminine face which poverty reflect. The dawn of democracy in South Africa that harboured vast amount of possibilities, continue to demonstrate a very uneven representation in local government planning. The social position that women occupy within the society, condition the continuous occurrence of inequality in planning. However, the interaction between men and women within household and society takes place in a more complex manner. Therefore, a comprehensive understand of gender inequality in local government planning needs to be analysed through complexity of intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality provides a clear understanding of inequality and how it has constructed years into democracy.

## **2. Contextualising Intersectionality**

Intersectionality as a theoretical discourse helps to explain the construction of inequality within various organisations. Etymologically, intersectionality is coined in the American legal field by an American feminist lawyer advocating for equality in legal fraternity (Crenshaw, 1991; Cho *et al.*, 2013; Woodhams and Lupton, 2014). Intersectionality was conceived in the late 1980s as a heuristic term which redress vexed dynamics of difference and sameness within a political and legal context (Cho *et al.*, 2013). This concept was used to refer to the complex relations between various construction of social categories, such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, age and nationality (Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta, Leinonen, Nikkanen and Heiskanen, 2015). Through inequality regime, intersectionality provides an important view on how inequality in constructed within these social categories. The object of intersectionality is to critically explain how various constructions of social categories create inclusionary and exclusionary boundaries and hierarchies (Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta *et al.*, 2015) in various societies and organisations. Furthermore, the organisational object to change inequality requires the identification of some of the fundamental factors that leads to less oppressive

environment. According to Crenshaw (1991) and Cho *et al.* (2013), the perpetual persistence of inequality is entrenched on the minority status that continue to cloud men's perception about women, thus manifest inequality within a society.

For almost three decades, the notion of intersectionality has been very persuasive in order to capture the interconnectedness (Crenshaw, 1991; Woodhams and Lupton, 2014) of various social categories which manifest gender inequality within local government planning. According to Woodhams and Lupton (2014: 302) "at its heart is the idea that people may be disadvantaged not only by one subordinate identity but by what Nash (2008: 2) calls 'mutually reinforcing vectors' of ethnicity, gender and so on". Intersectionality tries to explain and unravel the underlying societal challenges that condition the subordination of women. Due the perpetuating marginalisation of women, particularly African-American women, Crenshaw (1991) analysed inequality through the intersecting social categories. Intersectionality emerged from a burning desire to understand the visible experiences from African-American whose voices (Corlett and Mavin, 2014), for many year, had been silenced and their interactions with men had manifested gender inequality. Furthermore, "African-American women's voices had been subsumed in women's studies (due to their minority ethnicity) and race studies (due to their minority gender status)" (Corlett and Mavin, 2013: 260). These minority social position that women hold within societies continue to demonstrate the perpetual levels of inequality in both rural areas, urban areas, organisation and local governments. Therefore, the power relation and male domination within societies can blamed on the continuing underrepresentation of women in local government planning. The social position of women not only marginalise, but position of them at the bottom of societal hierarchies. Thus, it is imperative to review the connection between planning and social inequality.

### **3. Planning and Social Inequality**

Globally, gender mainstreaming has always been at the centre of development discourse in dealing with the fundamental social ills (Debusscher, 2010; Masenya and Mokoale, 2015). In South Africa, local government is a sphere of government that has constitutional obligation to ensure the provision of basic services, deepening democracy, inclusive planning and eradication of poverty (The

Constitution, 1996). However, representation of women and men in planning remain unequal, particularly in local government (Kilgour, 2012). According to Statistics South Africa (2016), South African women constitute only 38%, 33% and 39% as municipal mayors, municipal management and municipal councillors respectively. Within local government, municipal mayors, municipal management and municipal councillors are the decision makers which indicate underrepresentation of women in decision making process. Accordingly, Kilgour (2012) postulated that women continue to be disadvantaged and marginalised in both decision making and planning processes within local government. However, it can be argued that, in South Africa, equality between men and women exist in legal and policy level, but rural areas are plagued with an undying challenge of marginalisation of women in decision making within the society (Kotze, 2009; Jewkes *et al.*, 2010; Masenya and Mokoale, 2015). This equality is due to the legislative framework promulgated to redress all discriminatory ideologies which characterised apartheid regime. The Constitution, 1996 as the supreme law of South Africa, Black Economic Empowerment, Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment, Affirmative Action Policy, Municipal Structured Act, 1998, Municipal Systems Act, 2000, Municipal Finance Management Act, 1998 and Employment Equity Act (1998) are some of the legislative frameworks that encourage inclusivity and equality.

Years since the promulgation of the frameworks, genders inequality or gender underrepresentation remains an embodied character South African government (Stats SA, 2016), particularly in local government planning. The marginalisation of women in planning can be accounted to the discriminatory societal construction that most rural societies exhibit and now it characterise the planning systems within local government. Regardless of the notion of decentralisation of governance post 1994, the planning system within local government remain centralised without an effective public involvement in municipal affairs. Inclusive planning offers local government with the potentiality to address societal problems. The former President of South Africa Nelson Mandela during his Inauguration speech said, until women are emancipated from all forms of discrimination and marginalisation, the fight against poverty and other contemporary problems will never be won.

During the formulation of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), the local government is mandated to ensure public participation for societal needs identification. However, the forms of participation in in South Africa do not allow ‘the public’ to influence the planning processes directly within local government affairs. This is because public participation takes place through Community Based Organisations (CBOs), ward committees and Community Development Workers (CDWs) (Municipal Structured Act, 1998; Municipal Systems Act, 2000; Asha, 2014). The composition of CBOs, CDWs and ward committees is based on their political affiliation (Asha, 2014) which remain male dominated (Stats SA, 2016), and thus makes women to be underrepresented in planning. Notwithstanding this mandate of ward committees and CDW, Healy-Clancy (2014: 3) argued the “black married women’s domestic authorities that authorised their leadership of new social institutions, at the same time that these ideals constrained” their effective engagement into male dominated political arena. Due to the domination of men in politics, particularly in rural areas, the composition of ward committees and CDWs manifest underrepresentation of women in planning. Despite the promulgation of legislations that try to redress exclusion and gender inequality, inequality in planning within local government remain embodied in the new democratic dispensation. Healy-Clancy (2014) stated that the modern marriage created the categories that shows forms of difference between women and men. This demonstrate that the societies condition a mutually reinforcing vectors in constructing gender inequality. Therefore, majority of women in remain underrepresented in local government planning.

### **3.1. Gender Inclusivity in Planning within Local Government**

The Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996 (Henceforth referred to as Constitution)) as a supreme law stipulate the rights that all people have regardless of their gender (Akinboade, Mokwena and Kinpack, 2013). Furthermore, the Constitution, 1996 afford local government with the constitutional obligation promote participatory planning, inclusive planning and participatory development. Therefore, “South Africa has committed itself to a developmental local government (Constitution, Section 153) whose objects are to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities, ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner and encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government”

(Akinboade *et al.*, 2013: 458). The objects of the local government to deepen democratic and accountable government must take place by putting all citizenry at the centre of all development initiatives. However, due to the dogma of female underrepresentation in local government, the inculcation of inclusive planning continues to allude most planners (Masenya and Mokoele, 2015).

For decades, the notion to holistically address poverty has been at the centre stage of planning in South Africa. The advantages to promote inclusivity in planning was to redress the many faces that poverty portray. Therefore, the inculcation of women and men in planning within local government not only unravel community's aspiration, but it changes the complex social construct (patriarchies and hierarchies) embodied in African tradition and culture, and apartheid administration which harboured the notion of male superiority and female inferiority (Jewkes *et al.*, 2003; Stier and Mandel, 2009; Jewkes *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, gender integration and mainstreaming in planning provides the potentiality to dissolve or abate the complex interaction that continue to marginalise women in planning. The manifestation of this social construct fails to lessen poverty and empower women. The incapability of local government of redress and abate gender inequality demonstrate the complexities embodied into the phenomenon. The inability of the conventional system in local government to promote inclusive planning is attributed to the complexities that are embodied in gender inequality.

The chronic concern of women underrepresentation in local government forced planners to continue to operate with gender imbalances in addressing the social ills (Healy-Clancy, 2014; Masenya and Mokoele, 2015; Stats SA, 2016). However, local government's commitment of address the social ills within poor communities without placing women at the centre of planning will render to fight against poverty a fruitless endeavour. This notion emanates from a pragmatic evidence that poverty is gendered and women continue to belly its brunt. Therefore, any planning initiatives to address these social ills must inculcate the women's views. Of paramount importance, the dawn of the new democratic dispensation rhetorically dismantled all the discriminatory praxis. However, pragmatically, majority of rural women remain marginalised during planning and participation in local government affairs.

The inability of local government to inculcate women into planning is coined back to the stereotypes that characterise African traditional and cultural patriarchies that marginalised women for ages (Healy-Clancy, 2014; Galizzi and Siboni, 2016). African tradition and culture have created a hierarchical structure that places women at the bottom of the hierarchy (Healy-Clancy, 2014). Consequently, women bear the brunt of undertaking many unpaid household responsibilities that are not empowering, but stagnating their avenue to contribute positively to the society. Therefore, the labour division have gone a long way in restricting the emancipation of women in planning and participation in development initiatives within their communities. The interaction of women and men within the household is rather complex. This complexity can be visualised through the level amount financial decision women take within the household as compared to men (Jewkes *et al.*, 2003; 2010; Kilgour, 2014). The allocation of resources within households is a prime responsibility of women. However, at a societal and municipal level, majority of women are not visible in decision making and thus, qualify their absence within local government. Therefore, the democratic principles to empower all citizenry continue to fail to cascade down to the micro level of a households in pursuit to resolve the ever increasing gender gap in local government planning.

### **3.2. Local Government and Inclusive Planning: State of Binary Paralysis**

The Constitution, 1996 as the supreme law recognised the injustice of the past. Further, through the new democratically elected representatives, adopted the Constitution, 1996 to heal the divisions of the past and establish a societal democratic values and social justice. Nevertheless, the fruits of democracy and MDGs (now reformulated as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)) in terms eradication of gender inequality and poverty are yet to be realised by entire citizenry. Thus, the democratic dispensation continues to demonstrate the perpetual incapability to dislodge the complexities of gender inequality or social inequality within the micro level of a household setting (Kotze, 2009). Therefore, 23 years celebrating democracy or lack thereof, majority of rural women remain outside the mainstream of decision making, particularly in local government planning. This is supported by the fact in 2011, the proportion of women in local

government was very low, with 25.85% and 34.5% in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape province respectively. Galizzi and Siboni (2016) argues that the continuous existence of underrepresentation of women in decision making body limit their ability to influence developmental decision in local government. The dawn of emancipation, freedom for all, participatory development and inclusivity for all in 1994 are merely utopia when scrutinised through the contemporary development lens. Therefore, the constitutional obligation to foster public participation coupled with representation of women in local government continue to be allusive. Thus, the ontological basis of public participation or lack thereof within local government demonstrate the complexity of mainstreaming gender into planning.

The promulgation of policies and acts by the South African government such as The Constitution, 1996 as a supreme law, Employment Equity Act, 1998, Municipal Structured Act, 1998 and Municipal Systems Act, 200 which ensure that women and men are afforded equal opportunities (Manyaka, 2014) in pursuit to combat gender inequality continue to demonstrate its incapacity to dismantle this undying social phenomenon. The incapacity of legislative framework to combat gender inequality shows certain levels of entrenched complexities (Asha, 2014; Manyaka, 2014). The engagement of women in planning has always be compromised by the complex societal systems that the society thrives through. These societal systems for many years relegated women to the inferior micro scale of a household which render them incapable to make sounds and value making decisions within the society (Jewkes *et al.*, 2003; Galizzi and Siboni, 2016). However, it can be argued that this complex societal arrangement that favours men is not clearly visible within the household. This is due to the fact that despite the fact that for many years, men have been household providers, women continue to influence the distribution and allocation of resources (Galizzi and Siboni, 2016). Therefore, women within household are demonstrate that they good planners when juxtaposed with men. However, just a level above the household, women are absence in planning at a community level. Then, the question is, where is the mismatch in this development discourses? Do women's ability to plan diminish as they venture into community planning system? Or men want to demonstrate their superiority in planning and development initiatives at a societal level, whereas that domination to a greater extend is not visible within the households? Therefore, household men and women interactions within the

households should not be viewed in a linear manner, but it exhibits nonlinearity, adaptive and self-organise which are amongst other embodied characters of complexity theory (Portugali, 2011; 2012; Crawford, 2016).

The politicisation of participation through ward committees can be seen as another way of gate keeping enormous number of women outside the planning arena within local government. This is rooted on the basis that regardless of increasing number of women in politics, it remains a male dominated field (Mubangisi, 2007). However, rural areas continue to show less women involvement in politics. Therefore, the local government's application of public participation through ward committees and CDWs can be blamed for the continued underrepresentation of women in planning. The notion of politics that helped during liberation of South African citizenry from the tough and hurtful hands of apartheid administration is the one that marginalise women in planning within local government in the new democratic dispensation. According to Cicognani, Mazzoni, Albanesi and Zani (2015), public participation within local government affairs not only contribute towards fostering participatory development, but it enhances social change, social cohesion, the sense of ownership and collective well-being. However, in South African context, the potentiality that public participation presents in fostering social cohesion, participatory development and improving to the empowerment of the public remain without pragmatic evidence to support this notion.

As stated earlier, local government is a sphere of government closer to the people is constitutionally obligated to promote democracy and participatory development (Constitution, 1996). Therefore, the promotion of equal participation in planning and development initiatives are local government's prerogative. The successful local government that foster deepening democracy can be adjudicated based on the promotion of equality in planning and empowering women and provision of basic services. Heydenrych (2008: 702) argued that "A different way of thinking about democracies is to focus on the role of the people under different models – after all, democracy is by definition a form of rule by the people". The undertone of this conception is coined on the decentralisation of decision making predominantly to those affected by the development initiative thereof. Hence, the involvement of women in planning become profound to realise democracy and address various social ills confronting the societies. However, 23 years into

democracy, the process of mainstreaming women into planning remain the largest part unknown (Masenya and Mokoale, 2015). Despite the fact that decisions have been decentralised to the lowest level of government, ward committees, CBOs and CDWs continue to play advisory role in planning within local government (section 72 (1) of Municipal Structures Act, 1998; Raga and Taylor, 2005). Therefore, their influence in planning remain very limited and thus, decisions remain locked at the local government level. Thus, despite decentralisation of governance from the upper echelon of government to the lowest one, decision making remain centralised within local government. Regardless of the promulgated legislative frameworks that foster decentralisation, the fragments of apartheid planning approaches of centralisation continue to characterise local government planning system in the new democratic dispensation. Consequently, local government's inability to comprehensively integrate women in planning demonstrate that the new democratic dispensation fails to emancipate and empower the designated groups within the society. Local governments are faced with enormous predicaments (Asha, 2014) of providing services while ensuring that women and men participate in municipal affairs. The inability of local government to increase inclusivity between women and men should not be viewed as simple, but it exhibits complex characters.

#### **4. Complexity of Intersecting Inequality within Local Government**

The South African government for many years has embarked on a journey to foster inclusive and non-discriminatory planning system to resolve the contemporary societal problems. However, the notion of inclusivity in planning remain without pragmatic evidence to support it in most local municipalities. Despite the commitment to include people in decision making, representativeness of women remain very low (Galizzi and Siboli, 2016). The inability to resolve these levels of inequality within local government as a sphere of government with constitutional mandate to foster participatory development portrays the complexity of gender interactions, and therefore requires a critical analysis through the intersectionality and complexity lenses. According to Crenshaw (1991) and Corlett and Mavin (2014), intersectionality as a theory emerged from a desire to show the experience of African-American women whose voices have been silenced regardless of the violence they faced. Though Crenshaw (1991)

conceived intersectionality from law background, its applicability in analysing gender inequality in the social science remain profound.

The perpetual categorisation of people into distinct classes manifest some level of inequality. Crenshaw (1991) and Cho *et al.* (2013) postulated that the overlapping level of inequality in organisations result from the intersection of two minority categories (black and women), and thus constitute a distinct marginalised “social position (black women) that produces unique forms of disadvantage” (Corlett and Mavin, 2014: 260) which conditioned the inferiority complex that women are plugged with. The social position that women occupy which has been manifested by the domination of men condition their limitation to influence decision during planning. Intersectionality give precedence that the multi-layered form of male domination that manifest itself through gender violence continue to ensnare women (Cho *et al.*, 2013) from full participation in local government affairs. The dearth of equal representation of women in local government planning shows that inequality cannot be redressed only through the application of legislations and policies which demonstrated their incapacity to dislodge the complex intersection between men and women. Intersectionality can be used as a lens to understand the construction of gender inequality within societies and local government planning.

The power relation, categorisation of social position, race, gender and ethnicity condition the marginalisation of women in decision making (Crenshaw 1991; Jewkes *et al.*, 2010; Cho *et al.*, 2013). Inclusive planning and eradicating inequality remain very complex. Therefore, intersectionality provides a simple toolkit of understanding inclusive planning and the perpetuation of gender inequality within local government. South African local government which harboured problems of exclusive participatory development require a new lens of analysing inequality. According to Acker (2006) and Sufrin, Baird, Clarke, and Feldman (2017), every organisation or structure portray what is called an inequality regime. Inequality regime can be understood as “as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintenance of class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organisations” (Acker, 2006: 443). Further, Acker (2006: 443) state that “define inequality in organisations as systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organise work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and

benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; and pleasures in work and work relations”. The connotation of inequality regime in the context of South Africa implies that the continued power relation that (re)produce inequality within local government helps manifest underrepresentation of women in planning. Meike Verbo’s contribution that integrate the European Union Policies to address the (re)production of inequality for members of intersectional groups competing over resources (Cho *et al.*, 2013; Sufrin *et al.*, 2017). However, over the years, South Africa have enacted a plethora of legislative frameworks (Employment equity Act, Black Economic Empowerment, Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment and The Constitution) to resolve women (dis)empowerment, gender inequality and discrimination. The perpetual existence of inequality demonstrates the inability of policies to resolve the complexity of the intersectionality.

## 5. Conclusion

Most feminist scholars have attested to the importance of women during planning and implementation of development initiatives to redress societal needs. The construction of gender inequality in the new democratic dispensation continue to deter commitment to inculcate women in planning and implementation of development projects within local government. Ward committees, CBOs and CDWs as instruments of participation in local government affairs continue to show that women are underrepresented in planning due to their political orientation which is still male dominated. Traditional and cultural stereotypes have always been blamed for the construction of gender inequality. However, intersectionality presents a new ideology about the construction of gender inequality within a society and local government. Therefore, it can be concluded that the construction of gender inequality in the society and organisation deter the involvement of women in planning and implementation of development initiatives and redressing the social ills confronting the societies. The article concludes that there is an urgent policy requirement to resolve the “inequality regime” within organisation in order to foster inclusive participation in planning and the promotion of good governance.

## 6. Recommendations

- Due to the complexities that arise when redressing gender inequality, there is a requirement to promulgate policy that explicitly address the emergence of the inequality regimes in local government and around the society. This will enable and enforce equal treatment of women and men in work environment.
- The formulation of a social movement composing of both men and women can help change the societal stigma that deter women's involvement in planning and decision making in local government and development initiatives.
- Political leader should take centre role in mainstreaming women in planning and development initiative in order to redress gender inequality and solve the social ills confronting the country.

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