

# 'I will do anything the ANC wants'

**SIZWE SAMA YENDE**

sizwe.yende@citypress.co.za

ANC leadership battles in Mpumalanga have always been an all-male affair, leaving women to settle for less influential positions. However, this is about to change.

The battle rages on about who will be elected as Mpumalanga chairperson. The position became vacant when the incumbent, David Mabuza, was elected ANC deputy president in December.

Now a woman, national council of provinces' member Cathy Dlamini (56), has thrown her hat in the ring.

The highest position a woman has held in the province's top five has been deputy chairperson. The incumbent, Violet Siwela, was elected to the ANC national executive committee during the party's elective conference at Nasrec in December. This means her job is also vacant.

The Mpumalanga ANC has another woman in the top six, deputy secretary and former Emalahleni mayor Lindiwe Ntshalintshali.

Dlamini is the latest contender for the post of Mpumalanga chairperson. She has already started her campaign.

The Mpumalanga ANC is expected to convene a provincial general council next month.

"A number of ANC members have approached me to stand. There are those who say I should be chairperson and there are those who say I must be premier [after the 2019 elections].

"I said I'll avail myself in whatever capacity they want me to serve."

Dlamini decided to stand after Refilwe Mtshweni made history by becoming Mpumalanga's first black woman premier.

Mtshweni took over from Mabuza, but she is not contesting the chairperson position.

Sources say this is because she has no provincial or regional political clout and serves only as a branch member.

There is talk within the provincial executive that Mpumalanga has no option but to choose a woman chairperson to be premier after the 2019 general elections.

A few men started bidding to become the provincial chairperson, even before Mabuza was elected to the national top six.

Some of the men left the race; they were not sure of their chances and decided to form alliances among themselves in a bid to get a place in the provincial executive committee.

There were nine contenders after Mabuza's appointment as ANC deputy president. Now only five remain.

They are Mandla Ndlovu (current ANC secretary), Peter Nyoni (Mpumalanga co-operative governance and traditional affairs head), David Dube (provincial legislature member), Charles Makola (former ANC deputy chairperson) and MP Fish Mahlalela.

Dlamini decided to enter the male-dominated space after nongovernmental organisation Practical Radical Economic Transformation failed to get Mpumalanga public works MEC Sasekani Manzini to agree to try for the position.

The Mpumalanga ANC Women's League has not supported any candidate openly and has not hinted whether it backs a man or woman.

"We'll have our nomination later, after discussing it among ourselves and the branches," said league secretary Lydia Moroane.

Dlamini might be heading into new terrain, but she is familiar with being a pioneer. She has been mayor of two Mpumalanga municipalities.

She was mayor of the then Greater Malalale Local Municipality overseeing the towns of Malelane and Hectorspruit and KaMhlushwa village.

In 2011, the ANC appointed her monitoring and evaluation director in the office of the premier. After that she became Mbombela mayor.

She said she was watching the campaign for provincial chairperson with interest.

Asked if she would consider joining forces with any of the contenders, she said the branches would give direction. What they wanted would determine how the provincial leadership was structured.

"I can work with anyone, but this campaign is male-dominated and I've been thinking we have to give women a chance," she said.

Dlamini said she planned to make her campaign transparent after Parliament passed the Political Party Funding Bill this week.

This meant she could be the first ANC leader to reveal where the money behind her campaign came from.

"I'll be in a position to say where I get funding. These funds are not innocent. They come with conditions. I'll be transparent," she said.

## TALK TO US

**What do you think about women holding positions of power in the ANC? Do you think these are obstacles that are placed in their way?**

SMS us on 35697 using the keyword WOMEN and tell us what you think. Please include your name and province. SMSes cost R1.50



**CATHY DLAMINI**