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We need a country where a woman's word carries considerable weight. Because building a vibrant, successful society requires the talents, creativity and intelligence of both women and men.

There is a lot on this page for a woman to digest. Which is why it's a good idea to keep it for further reading and discussion. It concerns the barriers that have stopped women from realising their full potential - and what should be done to remove those barriers.

The Women's Coalition was formed to examine the status of women all over the country and to use these times of change to bring about change for women too.

The result of our research and discussions is the Women's Charter for Effective Equality. It reflects the feelings and wishes of women in South Africa today and is dealt with in 12 sections. The following is a synopsis of a detailed document.

**EQUALITY**

The first section deals with how the equality of women should be brought about, taking into account the context within which women live. This full, effective equality, is an integral part of every area discussed in this document.

**LAW AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE**

This provides for the active participation of women as law officers and the fair treatment of women in the justice system.

**ECONOMY**

Jobs, work, careers, business, taxation, benefits - everything which involves a woman's work; how she is paid, how she is treated, her prospects and recognition as a

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single woman, married woman, pregnant woman and mother, are dealt with.

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

This should be a continuous, lifelong process and must be available to all girls and women regardless of where they live and their circumstances, i.e. pregnancy, disabilities, home duties, having children. Women should influence policy-making, and management of education and training.

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**DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENT**

All land and its resources - natural and constructed - should be available and accessible to women. From clean water to farms, housing, health services, recreational facilities.

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

Counselling, preventive care, material assistance - these are only some of the services which should routinely be available to women who pay such a key role to ensure the well-being of her family and community.

**POLITICAL AND CIVIC LIFE**

Women should be involved in every level of decision-making to bring a healthy balance to the general management of the country and its people.

**FAMILY LIFE AND PARTNERSHIPS**

In this highly complex area, women invest enormous effort and get very little recognition. There needs to be equality and mutual respect in all types of partnership and family.

**CUSTOM, CULTURE AND RELIGION**

These practices should no longer interfere with women's human rights and civic status.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Women's physical, emotional and social integrity will be protected by the law and bolstered by appropriate services.

**HEALTH**

This covers women's specific health needs in diverse life circumstances, including basic services like a medical aid, sanitation and clean water.

**MEDIA**

Women's contribution to private and public life should be positively reflected. Negative portrayals should be challenged.

*To lend your weight to this movement, please write to the Women's National Coalition, P.O.Box 62319, Marshalltown, 2107.*

**WOMEN'S NATIONAL COALITION**

*Equality will enrich our society*

