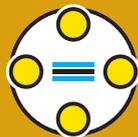


# Mapping Local Democracy in Francistown, Gantsi and Lobatse

Francistown

Gantsi

Lobatse



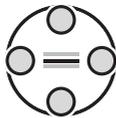
Botswana Association of  
Local Authorities (BALA)



# Mapping Local Democracy in Francistown, Gantsi and Lobatse

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Botswana Association of  
Local Authorities (BALA)

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## Preface

In the year 2000 the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IDEA, based in Sweden and in partnership with the African Union of Local Authorities, AULA organized a workshop for African mayors in Pretoria. Main subject was to identify the problems they are facing as leaders the local level. On the basis of this, IDEA developed a methodology for mapping local democracy, which was presented at a workshop in Cape Town in 2001. Five Cities throughout Africa were selected for a pilot phase to implement this methodology. Gaborone was one of them and the Botswana Association of Local Authorities, BALA was given the mandate to organize this effort.

BALA then approached its long time cooperation partner, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), asking for assistance. Since the Friedrich Ebert Foundation has a long and serious commitment to strengthen democracy on the local level, this request was answered positively. BALA and FES subsequently brought Dr. Zibani Maundeni, the Coordinator of the Democracy Research Project from the University of Botswana on board as the academic mastermind and facilitator for the activities to be undertaken. A workshop using the methodology and discussing all matters pertaining to the question of leadership for local democracy was organized on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2003 in Gaborone. The results of this workshop were published in a first booklet in 2004.

During 2004 a further series of workshops using the same methodology was organised by BALA and FES in Francistown, Selebi Phikwe, Gantsi and Lobatse. The booklet presented here is the second one in this series of “Mapping Local Democracy in ...” comprising the results of the workshops in Francistown, Gantsi,

Lobatse. It synthesizes the perceptions voiced by the participants and supplements them with factual information from official reports. It is meant to serve as a reference point for local democracy within Botswana and in the international world. It also gives a window of opportunity for local democracy to be appreciated by researchers, politicians, administrators and the public. The booklet is intended to help local democracy to emerge from marginalisation - politically, administratively and academically.

We wish to express our highest appreciation and thanks to Dr. Zibani Maundeni for his efforts to lead all the workshop participants through this complex matter and for subsequently putting the results into writing. Likewise our thanks go to Mme Ludo Matshameko, project officer of BALA who was burdened with the bulk of the organisational work.

FES and BALA are committed to carry on with this project in order to cover all towns and districts of Botswana in the course of the next years. More workshops are being planned and their results shall also be presented in similar form.



*Kentse Rammidi*  
*President*  
*BALA*



*Dr. Marc Meinardus*  
*Resident Representative*  
*FES*

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# Local Democracy in Francistown

**Francistown**  
**Gantsi**

**Inhatse**

# Introduction

This paper on local democracy in the City of Francistown is based on a two day workshop that was attended by one hundred local leaders from different institutions and representing diverse backgrounds. The participants were anonymously and systematically separated into five discussion groups, assigned specific related issues to assess and presented before the whole workshop gathering that also made an input. The presentations and the debates that they generated, including controversies, constitute the material for this paper. There was no voting on each particular issue to determine what the majority view was. So, what is presented in the report, is not majority views as such, but group presentations, debates and controversies that emerged from the two day workshop. These perceptions are supplemented by official reports where possible.

The paper defines local democracy in terms of interaction between local stakeholders and the city population, in terms of voting power and influence over issues that affect the local population, and in terms of the participation of the ordinary person in the structures of governance. It starts by contextualising the city by mapping its location and layout. It discusses population trends, the employment situation and ethnic/racial relationships. The paper also analyses representative and participatory democracy, showing how Francistown City is represented in the political structures and the level of participation by the local people.

## Layout and Location

Francistown was declared a city once it was over hundred years in existence (1897-1997). It is located in North Eastern Botswana and started as a gold mining area in the 1800s. The central government has been buying land from the Tati Company. For instance, 'in addition to the existing township area which covers 8 132 hectares of land, the government has purchased 11 525 hectares of land in Gerald estate for future expansion of the city' (City of Francistown, January 2004: 2). In addition, there is abundant and reliable water from the Shashe dam that has an output of between 61 100m<sup>3</sup> and 71 200m<sup>3</sup> and there is a planned Ntimbale dam in the North East district. One positive direct legacy of an old mining town is the Old WENELA Airport, once the largest in the country before the construction of the Sir Seretse Khama Airport in Gaborone. The airport was initially used as a recruitment centre for migrants to South Africa and Southern Rhodesia and as a means of air transport for the town. Another legacy of the Gold mines was that a Rhodesian railway line passed through the town, providing passenger and freight services to Gaborone in Southern Botswana and Mafikeng in South Africa, and to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in the North. So, the City of Francistown is well positioned as a commercial and cultural centre.

The gold mines were located in what is currently Monarch and Block 10 locations. The mines attracted human settlement leading to the emergence of some very old settlements such as Bluetown, White City, Riverside, Monarch and Somerset where most of the poorest residents are found in the city. Apparently, most of the old locations in the city maintained their English names, such as Monarch, Somerset, Minestone, Satellite, Aerodrome, Bluetown, and Area Donga. The

local democracy workshop confirmed that these English names were acceptable and that there was no intention of changing them.

The population of these locations varied, with high density in some and low density in others. “It is noted that among the localities within Francistown, Somerset West, which was largely a squatter area, had the highest concentration of population with 7.6% of the total population or 4950 persons in 1991. In terms of population density this represented 114 persons per hectare on an area covering approximately 43.36 hectares’ (Francistown City Council, et al, 2002: 6). Fortunately, most of these people have now been relocated to blocks 5 and 6 in Gerald Estate. Previously, these locations were also infested with crime, which was on the increase. The mines also attracted commercial activities along the Blue Jacket Street and the railway line. They also led to the demarcation of a significant area of the North East District into farms, creating shortage of land in the district.

One of the most direct mining legacies for the city is the presence of deep and dangerous holes which are scattered all over the place. ‘There are about forty old abandoned mining excavations within the Francistown planning area whose historical mining data is scanty or unknown’ (Francistown City et al, 2002: 5). The legacy of the decentralized gold mining is that there are deep mining holes scattered in Monarch settlement and Block 10 Location, within the compounds of Nyangabwe hospital, within the old Golf Course grounds and in Somerset along river banks. While these mining holes are endangering lives, impeding the smooth expansion of the city and creating an artificial shortage of land, they are also re-habitable (City of Francistown, January 2004).

Prominent features defining the City of Francistown are two big rivers - Ntsho and Tati, passing through the city and converging at a point in Tatitown Location. “The rivers are dry at least six months of the year while major flows occur for about one and half months in a year. Minor flows that inhibit pedestrian movement across the sand river bed usually lasts for about three months’ (Francistown City Council, et al, 2002: 2). It is clear that the flowing rivers impede human interaction for a good part of the year. The participants at the local democracy workshop held the view that the flowing rivers impeded socialisation by restricting pedestrian movement for a long time, calling for more pedestrian bridges to be constructed. In addition, the Ntsho and Tati rivers divide the city into two, positively providing natural markers for the two Francistown electoral constituencies and negatively restricting socialisation by preventing free movement of people.

Another prominent feature defining the City of Francistown is the Nyangabwe hill which bisects some residential areas, creating communication barriers between them and minimizing social interaction. However, the fact that Francistown is the main town in the north means that it is the gateway to numerous places internally and regionally. ‘Francistown serves as the transportation and communication hub for northern Botswana. It has excellent road links to Orapa/Letlhakene (and Boteti area), Maun (the Okavango), Kasane (Chobe District), Zimbabwe, Zambia and the Caprivi Strip of Namibia. The mining towns of Sowa and Selebi Phikwe and South Africa are well connected by roads from Francistown’ (Francistown city Council et al, 2002: 13). That is, the city is intersected by main roads leading to these towns and countries, attracting trade, an influx of people firstly refugees from Namibia and Zimbabwe, and secondly, illegal immigrants, compromising security. In short, Francistown’s location as the most northern city in the country, positions it well for trading,

but exposes it to illegal immigrants who swamp its streets. But, 'Francistown is one of the towns in the country, which have abundant security in terms of the Botswana Police, Prisons, Botswana Defence Force (BDF), Local Police and other private security companies. The city has three BDF camps, three Botswana Police Stations and two prisons. Thus, the city is well protected and its security is assured.

Francistown city is populated by diverse groups. Like many other cities, it is a melting pot of cultures. However, 'the predominant group is the Batswana of Kalanga origin' (Francistown City Council et al, 2002: 5). The noted predominance of the Kalanga was confirmed by the local democracy workshop whose participants noted that the Zezuru were the second largest group in the city. In terms of languages, Sekalaka, Sezezuru and Setswana are the principal ones. But only Setswana and English are the officially recognized languages, creating artificial communication barriers and impeding local democracy. The local democracy workshop participants were of the view that Setswana and English were languages of the elite and that imposing them as the official languages was sidelining the main community languages in the city.

In contrast, in terms of racial divisions, the two prominent groups were the Africans and the Asians who owned most of the businesses in the city. Thus, in terms of wealth ownership and distribution, the few Asians owned most of the city's wealth. In terms of religion, Christianity was predominant, and was followed by Islam. The workshop reported of cordial inter-group relationships and the absence of religious bigotry. But it was also observed that Asians and the Zezuru communities hardly ever attend kgotla meetings where development and other things are discussed. In terms of population, the city has been growing: experiencing rapid growth from 1980 to the

present. 'The population figures for 1991 shows a net increase of 34 179 in between 1981-1991 as against 12 452 in the period 1971-1981. This can be accounted for by the obvious growth of the commercial and industrial sectors in the city; the stabilisation of Selebi Phikwe and Orapa (other mining towns) population and the rapid growth of squatter areas in the city by then' (Francistown City Council, et al, 2002: 6).

In terms of human settlement, rich residences sit side-by side with poor ones, the Asians are primarily found in the rich-area's residences and the Zezuru tend to concentrate in Somerset East. 'Locations like Area [A] Central Residential Area and Area [G] have comparatively low population densities and concentrations according to the 1991 census. In Area [A] there were 2200 persons or 3.4% of the town's total population, representing a population density of 55 persons per hectare on an area of 40 hectares. Generally, there is a higher concentration of population in lower income, and site and service areas than in middle and higher income areas'. The workshop participants estimate that the disparities between the poor and the rich or income distribution, is around 1:10.

The city gender structure, with 33 578 or 51.6% females against 31 665 or 48.4% males, is comparable with the national trend. Positively for local democracy, 'Francistown in fact has the highest proportion of females in employment in the formal sector of all the urban centres in Botswana (41.3%)' (Francistown City Council, et al, 2002: 10). This positive gender status is because the city is a much more important commercial and textile centre, both of which attract female labour. The employment distribution is primarily construction and security services for men and textile, self-employment in the informal sector, house maids, hair-dressers for women. Historically, gold

mining was the economic base of the town. Presently, wholesaling, retailing, manufacturing and government are the principal economic activities in the city. Together with central and local government, they constitute the principal employment sectors. Small businesses in the informal sector are found everywhere on the streets. But the workshop participants are convinced that the city cannot be self-sustaining in terms of generating revenues and un-employment is perceived to be very high at 23%: 57% for women and 43% for men. Thus, un-employment is a serious local democracy issue in the city.

In addition, the relationship between Francistown City and the adjoining villages is a symbiotic one. While the city has a small population of 83 023 people, this increases to 444 275 when supplemented with those from the surrounding districts, thus, making it a viable commercial centre (City of Francistown, January 2004: 2). While the city provides the adjoining villages with employment, health, education and other services, they in turn provide it with accommodation for its workers, water from the Shashe dam and other materials. The adjoining villages of Borolong, Tati Siding, Tonota, Mathangwane, and so on, accommodate a sizable population of the city's workforce.

## Representative Democracy

The elected and administrative officials of the Francistown City Council were commended by the outgoing mayor, Peter Ngoma, for outstanding achievement in the implementation of funded projects. 'A total of 132 classrooms, 141 teachers' houses, 104 toilets, 4 administration blocks, 10 libraries, were constructed during the period from 1999 to 2004. This includes 3 new schools (Tagala, Donga and new school at Gerald), relocation of Tatitown primary school and additions of facilities in other schools' (City of Francistown, 2004: 4). In terms of implementing development projects, there is no doubt that Francistown City Council is a high achiever, making it more attractive for private investment. But it should be noted that this high record of project implementation excludes those that were postponed from Urban Development Plan 1 to 2 due to lack of funding. In the process of implementing projects, the city council spent P 185 946 704.70, most of which was grant from the central government.

The second Urban Development Plan (UDP 2) started in 2003 and ends in 2009. 'Monitoring and evaluation of the UDP, just like its preparation, is a core responsibility of the Urban Development Committee. This committee is made up of all Heads of Departments of development related ministries, heads of development related departments in the council, all physical and economic planners, parastatal heads, and representatives of NGOs, CBOs and the private sector. The UDP is co-chaired by the District Commissioner (DC) and the Town Clerk, who are also the plan managers ... The UDC reports on the progress of the development plan implementation to the Full Council as the development authority, and also reports the same to the mother ministry' (Francistown City Council, et al, 2003: 175). This means that new councillors, constituting the development authority

after the 2004 general election, would be expected to implement it even if they had no input into its making. This also means that the planning system does not allow new councillors to make any major policy decisions, until towards the expiry of their term in office and the beginning of preparations for UDP 3. This reduces their contribution from makers to implementers of existing policy. Any of their promises to the 2004 electorate that could become policy, will only find their way into UDP 3 of 2009-2015. Such a planning arrangement defeats the whole purpose of representative democracy.

Francistown constituency changed hands a number of times: it used to be dominated by the opposition Botswana Peoples Party (BPP) in the 1960s and 70s. But its leader Philip Matante lost it to Patrick Balopi of the BDP in 1979. It was divided into two electoral constituencies after the 1993 delimitation commission. After that, two elected officials represented the city in the National Parliament in Gaborone after the 1994 general election. One MP came from the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and the other from the Botswana National Front (BNF) until 1998 when he defected to the Botswana Congress Party that lost it to the BDP in the 1999 general election. After the 1999 general election, the MP for Francistown West Constituency represented a population of 27503 and that of Francistown East represented 26271. The 2001 delimitation commission established a third constituency, Francistown South. In addition, following the delimitation commission, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and other stakeholders have increased the wards to 19. That is, the city council will have 19 elected local representatives after the 2004 general election.

The political parties that dominated the politics of the city and had representatives in the 1999-2004 city council were the BDP,

Botswana Congress Party (BCP), Botswana Peoples Party (BPP) and the Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM). Botswana's multi-party democracy was most visible in the City of Francistown where more than three political parties were represented in the city council after the 1999 general election. Also present in the city politics, but holding no council seat are the BNF, and Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin Movement (MELS). Francistown politics is based neither on religion nor on ethnicity. Each party has a branch committee that accepts applications from those wishing to stand for council elections (The national party central committees play that role for those wishing to stand parliamentary candidature). In the case of council elections, the BDP, BNF and BCP, subject prospective candidates into a primary election to determine the winner who becomes the party candidate in the particular ward. Candidates hold rallies and engage in house to house campaigns. Generally, there is a high level of toleration between the parties. There are no go areas for any party.

The local democracy workshop participants were convinced that the 1999 general elections in Francistown were free and fair. The IEC office explained to the workshop participants that 22 702 people had registered for the 1999 election and 74% of them voted. This high turnout indicated that the city dwellers took voting seriously. But in terms of running general election, the Francistown City party representatives felt that the IEC was too thin on the ground, making it too reliant on the district commissioner (DC) and other government civil servants to carry its mandate. Some participants resented the use of the DC as the returning officer in the general elections. In addition, they were of the view that the writ of election should be issued by the IEC and not by the President who is an interested party as he was also the leader of the BDP. The participants called on the IEC to expand its staffing (currently it has only one officer and a typist), to hire more

staff whose names should be supplied by the local stakeholders. They observed that civil servants were not competently trained to conduct general elections as they were merely briefed just before elections (but they do have the experience as they have been conducting elections in the previous occasions).

There were more complaints, including the fact that some businesses prevented their employees from voting during general elections. In addition, three general concerns were raised. First, the free market financing of political parties created serious disparities. That is, most businesses supported the ruling party and this left opposition parties without campaign resources. Second, election monitors erratically covered Francistown. That is, while international and national election monitors did cover Botswana's general elections, they only did so consistently around Gaborone and surrounding areas, and erratically in Francistown. Third, the IEC office in Francistown was incapable of enforcing the use of proper plot numbers for registration and voting purposes. That is, the IEC office in the city was incapable of ensuring that the right addresses were used during registration and voting time, creating room for cheating. In summary, the concerns were that the Botswana political economy marginalises opposition parties in terms of election finance, election monitors marginalise Francistown and the IEC Francistown office faced serious staff shortage, creating room for electoral fraud.

Francistown City has a number of elected institutions such as the city council, ward development committees, gender district committee, crime prevention committees and so on. Every ward is represented by an elected councillor who also seats in the city council-the local legislative body. In addition to the councillor, each ward has a 'ward development committee' that is elected every two years. Elections for

ward development committees are held at the kgotla and are supervised by social workers from the city council, chief and councillor. Thus, while city council elections are part of the national general elections, ward development committees are elected at the Kgotla where everyone is invited (but Indians, Bazezuru and the youth never attend and never get elected).

The workshop participants suspected, and the District Commissioner (DC) confirmed, that it was her office that submitted the list of names to the minister of local government from which ‘nominated councillors’ were selected, allegedly from BDP candidates who had lost during the general elections. For her part, the DC explained that although her office drew up the list, she was only transferred to Francistown after the 1999 elections and did not draw up that list. But she promised to include people living with disabilities, minorities and those representing specific interests. The DC also observed that there were piles of national identity (omang) cards at the national registration office and that the owners were not picking them up even though these were required for casting the ballot. She explained that ID cards were ready for collection within three weeks of application. The participants informed the DC that some people changed names and acquired new ID cards after loan-sharks had confiscated the original ones, ending up with difficulties at voting time.

The local democracy participants further felt that the boundaries of the polling stations were not explained clearly to the electorates, resulting in either too many people registering in some and not other polling stations, leading to overcrowding on voting day for some and to no activity at other polling stations. Sometimes voters also turned up at the wrong polling station where they had not registered and had to be turned away and re-directed, creating confusion and anger. There

was even a reported case of over twenty people who had registered using the same house address and this was not detected until voting in a bye election some years later. But the IEC was adamant that maps defining boundaries were released on time and adequately explained to the stakeholders. The IEC regretted that the electorates chose to ignore their explanations. While the participants thought that the IEC registration procedures had loop holes, it insisted that after the registration process was complete, house numbers and names were advertised to allow inspection by the general public. The IEC observed that very few were coming to inspect the voters roll, preferring to raise complaints once the general election was in progress. The IEC complained that this made its job difficult as it cannot disqualify voters on election-day.

The local democracy workshop also discussed the issue of gender balance in leadership positions. The general feeling was that Francistown lagged behind in the implementation of regional and international conventions that sought to bring gender balance and which Botswana signed up to. The participants made the observation that even though the city had had a women MP and a few women councillors, political parties were doing very little to support women to win primary elections. Francistown City has never had a woman mayor in its entire history even though it has had women deputy mayors. This was in-spite of the fact that there was an effective district gender committee. The local democracy workshop felt that the party branches in the city should be encouraged to do more for women, including reserving some council wards for them to compete in.

The majority of the local democracy workshop hardly knew about the district gender committee, which largely consisted of women NGOs leaders, council staff and the District Commissioner and the police.

This committee was not known to the majority of the workshop participants who felt that domestic violence was on the increase, wondering if anything was being done to address it. Other sectors such as the informal and private sectors had no representatives/associations and were not represented in any of the local democracy structures, including the district gender committee. Employees of the private and informal sectors complained that neither the labour department nor the city council was helpful to them in times of need. The results of lack of unionisation in the informal and private sectors were that the workers were victimized and intimidated and their grievances were not attended in time.

In terms of elected representatives, the Francistown City Council is controlled by the BDP and 6% of the councillors were females. A few councillors come from the BCP, BPP and BAM in that order. All opposition councillors were males. Thus, Francistown has not achieved much in terms of gender representation in elected offices in the municipality. In terms of perceived strength, the participants lexically ranked the BDP, BCP, BNF, BPP and BAM and MELs, respectively. They also observed that the parties were multi-ethnic and were neither religious nor ethnic based. Although the council consisted of majority BDP elected and nominated councillors, it allowed those from other parties to enter into council committees and worked cooperatively with them. But an overwhelming concern was that none of the parties encouraged locals within each ward to stand for elections. Instead, the parties brought and supported candidates from outside the wards. Indeed, most of the council candidates came from outside the wards they represented.

Francistown councillors elect their mayor in a two way process. After winners have emerged from the general elections and the minister of

local government had nominated additional ones, all councillors are finally expected to elect the mayor. Even if this is what is officially expected, there is a hidden process that actually determines who is going to stand and who will not. The winning party council caucus (with the blessing of the national central committee of the party) decides who is going to stand for mayor-ship and deputy-mayor-ship. Once the caucus has decided, the Full Council confirms the decision through a vote. Usually, members of the public fill the council chamber to witness the election of the mayor but they are often disappointed as the process is stage managed with no room for surprises. The majority of the workshop participants thought the above process was undemocratic and that the mayor has no powers and that his absence was not even felt. They preferred an executive mayor who would be directly elected by the electorate and responsible to them. The participants called on the central government to approve recommendations that were made by the Venson Commission in favour of an executive mayor.

Within the city council, there is the urban development planning committee consisting of heads of departments from local and central government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community leaders such as chiefs, parastatal bodies and ward development committees. Thus, all the local leaders (except from the Indian and Bazeduru communities) seat together to plan for the city.

## Participatory Democracy and Responsiveness to Needs

This section surveys participatory democracy, assessing the existence of structures that facilitate it and the level of participation. In the first instance, there are open structures within each ward such as the kgotla and freedom squares, and within the whole city such as the stadium, where city dwellers can assemble and participate in commemoration activities and discussions. The kgotla hosts activities such as polio campaigns, meetings addressed by members of parliament, meetings to discuss the national identity card (omang), and so on. Commemorations which are open to the public include World AIDS Day, TB Day, Women's Day, Labour Day and Youth Against AIDS. The stadium hosts sports games. All these activities are open to the members of the public who are invited through public address systems, posters, mail and mass media (TV, radio and news papers). But some participants felt that meetings were not advertised on time and that the local media was not as active as expected and either failed to report objectively or displayed poor journalistic standards. Complaints against the media centred on negative reporting most of the time (too often on scandals), reporting without having conducted any interviews, and ignoring Urban Development Committee activities and kgotla meetings.

Unfortunately, Francistown City does not have enough local media facilities that adequately covered local democracy activities. For instance, there is no local radio station that can be relied upon to broadcast local activities for the benefit of those who failed to attend kgotla meetings, workshops and so on. The result is that those who missed an activity never get the chance to see/hear it on radio or television or on news papers. The few media outlets that are there (a small office that serves as a branch of radio Botswana that is expected

to cover the whole of northern Botswana, the Voice News paper and the daily news) do not broadcast/write in the predominant Ikalanga language, excluding a huge population from their news coverage.

While there is transparency in some local government activities, there is secrecy in others. On the positive side, there is an element of transparency in that all local government laws and policies are published in the Government Gazette (copies are sold to the public at exorbitant prices), tenders are posted on notice-boards and vacancies are advertised for two weeks. So, there is some element of transparency. Furthermore, accounting manuals and financial rules are documented and classified as public documents. In addition, NGOs and the majority of the churches are actively involved in education, spiritual renewal, empowerment of women and youth, provision of shelter and assisting government in policy formulation. There is a good variety of organizations such as the Red Cross, YWCA, TCM, BCW, Rotary Club, Tsela Tsa Itshetso, PTAs and so on that interact with local authorities and impact on local democracy. But Emang Basadi Women Association and Ditshwanelo-Botswana Centre for Human Rights have not yet been completely accepted by the general public in Francistown. The former is accused of derailing women from cultural norms and practices. But on the whole, there is a sense of common purpose between the local stakeholders as they engage in collective thinking over ways of advancing joint action on community problems or on opening opportunities.

In addition, the Daily News that publishes national news is distributed daily and is free of charge. Ward development committee meetings are open to all ward members. Public surveys have also been conducted on issues such as adequacy/inadequacy of refuse receptacles (waste bins)

and on the state of cleanliness of the different wards. The Francistown office of the IEC distributes leaflets freely.

However, there are factors that limit participatory democracy and its effectiveness, such as secrecy, the production of limited public documents, the shortage of land and lack of networking between civic organizations and general apathy.

In the first instance, there is secrecy in that the local government budget is drafted with little involvement of the public and copies of the budget are never made available to the public. Secrecy, as in the case of Somerset West plots that were sold without public notice, can breed either corruption or perceptions that it exists. In addition, public notices are not placed in all public places that are frequented by many people such as post offices and clinics. Furthermore, central government documents are sold for a price which ordinary people cannot afford. Services such as electricity, water and telephones that are provided by public corporations are too high for ordinary people. Participants even felt that local telephone calls were more expensive than international calls and complained that this limited local democracy. Land prices were prohibitive, preventing locals from investing in business activities.

Thus, secrecy in the drafting and circulation of the local government budget, fewer notice-boards, and high prices of services and central government documents, combine to limit the flow of information and participatory democracy. In addition, there is apathy among the people. Kgotla meetings, political rallies and other forums are commonly poorly attended. For instance, kgotla meetings called to elect ward development committees in 2004 could not take place because

attendance was extremely poor. Such apathy limits participatory democracy.

On the issue of dissemination of local information to the public, the participants observed that not enough was being done. For instance, copies of minutes of the city council and urban development plans are not accessible to the public. Such documents are only distributed to a few organizations and are never seen by the general public. In addition, the local authorities never hold press/media briefings. The city council has recently established a website that is hardly known to the public. But council authorities were confident that their recently launched news letter would significantly enhance the flow of information.

All the participants shared the view that internet facilities were concentrated in Gaborone and that very little internet infrastructure existed in Francistown. Leaders of local authorities complained that they have been ignored in terms of internet services. Moreover, email services are non-existent. Worse still, the tribal Administration still relies on type writers as it has no computers. A further exclusionary factor is the fact that national referendums are usually written in English or translated into Setswana, both of which are incomprehensible to a large number of people.

Although the Francistown City Council has no mechanism for proper recording of complaints received by the local authority, lots have been received. Complaints from the ordinary people and from the police centred upon bushes that attracted thieves, poor street lighting, unpleasant odors around some places in the city, health facilities that failed to operate 24 hours, the underdevelopment of some schools and the kgotlas and dangerous holes made by sand harvesters. The participants, including police officers, reported that blocks 7, 8, 9 and

10 (residential areas) were surrounded by thick bushes that attracted thieves and endangered lives. For its turn, the local authority explained that de-bushing is done on yearly basis and usually covers two metres from the back of the yard. It also explained that de-bushing has to be within acceptable environmental practices and that it should not threaten trees. The local authority further explained that it does not de-bush fenced and unoccupied plots as it was the responsibility of the plot owners. However, it should also be noted that large chunks of the land in the whole city was owned by the Tati Company, remaining private property that is out of reach from the council. ‘Chunks of prime land – that belongs to the Tati Company – in the city have remained undeveloped for quite a long time and this restricts other developments’ (Francistown City Council et al, 2002: 31). Thus, there is still a chunk of land that is neither controlled by the central nor local government and has not been developed for many years and provides a hide out for thieves and other criminal elements, thus constraining interaction between communities within the city.

The city council further observed that it was also constrained by inadequate funding for de-bushing activities. The local authority also explained that as it attends to old complaints, new ones come in. This created a perception that the local authority was not responsive to the people’s needs. But with people’s lives threatened by thousands of illegal emigrants, who hide in these bushes, the majority of the local democracy participants were dissatisfied with the explanation from the local authority, demanding that more and regular de-bushing should be conducted to deny thieves hideouts.

Participants also complained about the lack of land for developmental activities. They cited the fact that there were no shops in Gerald Estate, one of the new residential areas. At the same time the local authorities

criminalised the setting up of tuck-shops in the residences. Workshop participants complained that this meant that Gerald Estate residents are expected to take a taxi and travel over 3 kilometres in order to buy small household items. Participants felt that rules regulating the setting up of tuck shops should be changed to accommodate Gerald Estate residents.

The participants shared a general complaint that the culture of the society has seriously degenerated. Firstly, fighting over corpses was now a common feature. This has resulted in delays in funeral arrangements and more expenses. Secondly, funerals have now been turned into feasts. Bereaved families use funerals to display their wealth, resulting in excessive expenditure on food and coffins. Thirdly, the youth no longer respect their elders; they ignore the Tswana culture and copy western values. All these have seriously eroded societal values.

Another central complaint centred on alleged discrimination over people living with disabilities. On the positive side, the council assured the participants that it organises celebrations every November for people living with disabilities and that public parking spaces now accommodate them. The City Council also observed that all new buildings are required by central government policy, to make provisions for people living with disabilities. In contrast, workshop participants living with disabilities complained that the general public never attends the November celebrations. They also complained that they were discriminated by the municipal authority through employment practices, by political parties during primary elections, and by hotels and lodges. Participants living with disabilities also complained that old buildings such as the Council Chamber was on the first floor and was therefore un-accessible to them (no lifts were

provided). But elected local officials reported that they had long passed a motion requiring the installation of a lift to access the council chamber and wondered why it was taking so long to implement it (The city clerk reported that lifts had not been budgeted for as there was lack of money).

On the other hand there were very few people living with disabilities who got elected into office (Francistown City Council had only one councillor living with disabilities. She was from the BDP). Neither did they feature prominently on the list of nominated councillors. This implied that generally, the political parties and the minister of local government discriminated against people living with disabilities. In addition, hotels and lodges were not friendly to wheel chair users. Worse still some hotels and lodges provided showers only and no baths (a clear disregard or discrimination against people living with disabilities).

But the DC explained that there exists a 1992 policy on people living with disabilities, spelling out what each institution should do to accommodate them. She also observed that she personally recommended a presidential honor for a person living with disabilities in Gaborone. She assured all those living with disabilities that the local authorities would do more to accommodate their needs.

## Conclusion

This paper has tried to locate the City of Francistown, established its history and its level of representative and participatory democracy. It showed that Francistown started as a gold mining town by the Tati Company, attracted people from different cultures and regions and had residential places with English names whose residents were content with them. Taken together with the outlying districts in central and northern Botswana, Francistown has a market of more than 440 000 people. Politically, the City of Francistown has changed hands several times, at both council and parliamentary levels. Initially dominated by the BPP, it is currently in BDP hands both at council and parliamentary levels. But the BCP is making inroads and provides a strong challenge to the BDP. But women and people living with disabilities were poorly represented. In terms of participatory democracy, the structures meant to facilitate it are there, such as the stadium, community halls and so on, but people are generally apathetic and some council business was inaccessible. What follows are recommendations from the workshop.

## Recommendations

1. Central government documents should be distributed freely.
2. Accessibility to local government documents should be improved. More copies of local government documents should be produced and circulated freely and extensively.
3. Public notices should be extended to other public places such as health posts, kgotla, post offices and so on.
4. There should be a local mass media (radio and television) which should cover what occurred in the local scene for the benefit of all those who were absent.
5. It was recommended that more voter education should be conducted to avoid more irregularities in the future.
6. There should be more networking of civic organizations.
7. Services such as water and electricity should be opened up to more competition as it was done with telecommunications.
8. Civil society organizations should meet with the local authorities bi-annually to assess the status of the city.
9. Principal local languages should be recognized officially and used on public forums.
10. Open spaces should be designated as freedom squares.

11. A cultural council should be established to promote the original values of the Batswana and to screen television programs.
12. Francistown City Council should embark on income generating activities to gain autonomy from central government.
13. The school syllabus should teach community values to young people.
14. The mayor and the district commissioner should hold regular media briefings.
15. Networked computers should be installed in all local authority institutions.
16. Laws on referendums should be amended to cater for local referendums.
17. Budget controls should be localized.
18. The city council should issue more licenses for tuck shops.
19. The City of Francistown should do more to reverse discrimination against people living with disabilities.
20. Sign language should be introduced in Btv programmes that are addressed by the president of the republic.

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# Local Democracy in Gantsi

**Gantsi** Francistown

Lobatse

# Introduction

This article maps local democracy in Gantsi. It is based on a two-day workshop that was attended by about one hundred local stakeholders. The workshop participants were divided into five discussion groups and focussed on a questionnaire supplied by International IDEA in association with Botswana Association of Local Authorities (BALA) and African Union of Local Authorities (AULA). The discussion groups deliberated on specific issues and recorded their responses that were presented and further discussed at a plenary session. The participants were drawn from the whole district and included police officers, chiefs, councillors, council staff, teachers and people with disabilities. Others included Non-Governmental Organisations such as First People of the Kalagari. There were lively discussions that further elaborated on many crucial issues.

The article is based on data, primarily perceptions, collected at the workshop from the deliberating participants. Official documents, together with the presence of the council secretary and the staff, supplemented the perceptions with facts. This kind of methodology generated a more appropriate picture of the local politics in the district. It allowed different concerns to be raised and answered in the presence of everybody else, thus, promoting local democracy. However, inviting, transporting and accommodating one hundred participants from all over a large district like Gantsi was a big challenge that was handled by the BALA officer, and secretary general, together with the generous sponsorship of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

The article is divided into sections. Section one analyse the origin and layout of the district. Section two focuses on the economy and population patterns of the district. Section three considers

representative democracy and its challenges. Section four analyse participatory democracy. The last sections constitute the conclusion and recommendations.

## Origin and Layout of the District

According to a strong perception at the local democracy workshop, the word 'gantsi' comes from/is parallel to '*gaitisie*', a Sesarwa word meaning gorgeous women. Poor pronunciation of the Sesarwa word gave way to gantsi or gantsi. But the area called Gantsi/Ghanzi was initially an open and wide land occupied by Basarwa and wild animals. 'The San (also known as Basarwa or Bushmen) are thought to have inhabited the Kalagari for several thousand years. Until recently they practised nomadic hunting and gathering' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 6). The abundance of a variety of wild animals made the area a perfect hunting country and made it suitable for the Basarwa's hunting and gathering life style.

It should be noted that Bakgalagadi also lived in the Gantsi area, occupying most of the large villages in the district and raising domestic animals and planting crops, as compared to the nomadic life of the Basarwa. 'Groups such as the Bakgalagadi entered the district several centuries ago. They are the main occupants of the established villages (Kalkfontein, Karakubis, Kule, Ncojane) in the western part of the district ... The Bakgalagadi are principally cattle and goat keepers, but they also raise crops when the rains permit, and they hunt and gather' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 7). The Gantsi area was also bound to attract hunters and other people from elsewhere and to expose the inhabitants to unregulated competition and exploitation. 'The Herero came to Botswana at the beginning of the present century, from Germany South West Africa, as refugees, and settled at Makunda and nearby. They are noted cattle keepers and some have built large herds. Over the years they have moved to Charles Hill, and \Makunda is today largely deserted' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 7). The entry of Bakgalagadi and Baherero with farming ways of lives into the

district significantly transformed the nomadic hunting and gathering lives of the Basarwa.

The Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) is a landmark of the district. It 'comprises 44.36% (52 313 sq. kms) of the total area. Together with the Kutse Game Reserve, it forms the largest Game Reserve complex in Botswana and the third largest in the world' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003:1). The process of relocating Basarwa inhabitants from the game reserve have been on, together with a long drawn court case challenging its legality. If the relocation succeeds, it would mean that a significant portion of the land have been subtracted from the nomadic hunting and gathering lives of the Basarwa. But even if the relocation court case fails, it would not add any significant value to the lives of Basarwa as the CKGR is already controlled and managed by the central government and hunting is regulated and restricted.

Officially, Gantsi is described in a geographical sense. 'Gantsi District is situated in the western part of Botswana. It measures 117 910 sq. kms. The district is bordered by Ngamiland District to the north, Central District in the east and Kgalagadi and Kweneng Districts to the south. To the west, it is bordered by Namibia' (Gantsi District Council, 2003:1). However, hunters and cattle owners from all the surrounding districts were attracted by the abundance of wild animals and the availability of water. 'The most striking topographical feature in the district is the Gantsi Ridge ... The ridge contains the most productive land in the district, due to its high water potential and moderate quality soils. The fact that the ridge is approximately 300 kms and some of it falls outside the district means that there is high competition for productive land between ranches, villages and the nomadic life of the local inhabitants, which was dependent on wild

animals. Indeed, ‘the opportunities for exploiting wildlife and veldt products have been adversely affected by the increase of the livestock population, establishment of settlements within the migration routes, fencing, and drought’ (Gantsi District Council, et al, 2003:10). These have negatively affected the livelihoods and halted the living patterns of the nomadic people.

The bulk of the land along the ridge is freehold land, constituting 8.88% (10 480 sq. kms). A large number of commercial farming enterprises (ranches) are found along the ridge’ (Gantsi District Council, 2003:1). ‘The first Gantsi farmers came, mainly from the Cape Province, about the turn of the present century. They settled along the Gantsi Ridge, which has long been known for its strong, reliable and shallow groundwater’ (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 7). The ridge changed hands in a grand scale: ‘the Gantsi Free Hold Farms in the northern part of the district consists of 172 farms with the average size of approximately 6 340 hectares’ (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 78-9). The conversion of the ridge into ranches has meant loss of land and of access to natural resources for the San/Basarwa’s nomadic hunting and gathering traditional economy. This has plunged the majority of the Basarwa into poverty. ‘The district has several RAD (consisting of highly mobile people who are also extremely poor) settlements: Xade, Grootlaagte, Qabo, New Xanagas, West Hanahai, East Hanahai, Bere, Kacgae, and Chobokwane’ (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 7). The establishment of a large number of ranches along the Gantsi ridge also meant that ranching became a major economic activity in the district and most of the hunting areas within the ridge have been privatised, limiting the scale of hunting and gathering by the local inhabitants and interfering with the emergence of settled villages by the Bakgalagadi and the Baherero.

The ridge and ranches have attracted most of the indigenous and other population, concentrating people along the ridge and leaving other areas sparsely populated. Thus, 'the majority of the population of the district is located along the ridge, with major population centres being the Gantsi Township and the villages of Charles Hill, Karakubis, Kalkfontein, and Dekar' (Gantsi District Council, et al, 2003: 1). This means that the availability of water in the ridge played the major role of influencing the distribution of the population (concentric patterns) and ranches in the district. This also means that the scarcity of water was a limiting factor in the distribution of villages, population and ranches in the district.

The Gantsi Township originated as a camp for visiting district commissioners and police officers. The presence of the camp attracted squatters and this has resulted in the unplanned growth of the township, poor sanitation, and necessitating upgrading and relocation. Chiefs and village development Committees gradually emerged and started allocating land. The district council, the district commissioner, the land board and the Self Help Housing Agency (SHHA) joined them in the planning of the place. Gantsi village was later declared a Township and a planning area and currently Gantsi has a district development plan, covering 2003 and 2009. This means that infrastructural and other developments (including a military camp, airport, schools and clinics and stadiums) would occur in a planned and coordinated manner, enhancing the image of the township and improving the sanitation and lives of the people.

## Economic Indicators and Population Trends

At the 2001 population census, the district had 33 970 people. A strong perception at the local democracy workshop indicated that the Basarwa formed the majority, estimated at 45% of the district's population. But the other strong perception was that the Bakgalagadi, are the majority as they numerically dominate all the large villages in the district while the Basarwa are scattered in the small villages and settlements. The CKGR had a decreasing population due to relocation exercise that was ongoing.

The languages that are spoken in the district and in the Gantsi Township include, Sengologa, Sesarwa, Seherero, Afrikaans, Setswana, English and a few others. This indicates the point that the people from different origins occupy the district and that it has been a melting pot of cultures as though it was an urban area. Typical of other areas in Botswana, 'several ethnic groups, with different origins, languages and cultures, populate the district' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 6). One obvious observation is that there are sour ethnic relations and allegations of discrimination in the allocation of resources and the ill-treating of the Basarwa, were exchanged at the local democracy workshop.

The local democracy workshop participants held the view that the initial open country that provided opportunities for crop production and cattle rearing, and hunting and gathering has been completely transformed. The point emphasised is that there used to be enough rainfall (however this could not be verified), enough open space and unlimited freedom of movement. The limited supply of ground water in the dry season was the only thing limiting free movement

and nomadic life. But even then, survival skill had been perfected to counter shortage of ground water in the rest of the district.

Currently, economic activities that include crop production and the rearing of livestock have expanded to include manufacturing, retail outlets and government administration. Formal employment is now dominant. Accompanying the economic transformation of the district is visible and widening economic disparities. The percentage of the rich is getting smaller and that of the poor is expanding at a high rate.

Most of the district's wealth is in cattle rearing and large businesses. These are owned by 20% of the men. Thus, the pattern of ownership is extremely skewed. 'The district cattle herd has grown over the last 40 years. In 1955 the herd accounted for 55 397; in 1965 it was 79 432; while in 1973 it was 145 000. The numbers continued to increase such that there were 136 336 and 165 000 cattle in 1985 and 1995 respectively' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 9). But the strong perception of the local democracy workshop was that most of it was owned by 20% of the population. This is confirmed by official publications where it is reported that ' Only a minority of the households own cattle, but small stock is ownership is more widespread' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 9).

The livestock sector has been boosted by additional ranches: 6 ranches measuring 7 400 hectares each, in the Makunda First Development Area; 11 ranches measuring 8 400 hectares each in the Hanahai Second Development Area; 22 ranches in the Matho-a-Phuduhudu area. Thus, cattle and wildlife ranching is most likely to boost the district's economy. There is no evidence that this is likely to spread the cattle wealth more evenly. In contrast, it means the transfer of more

land from communal practices to private hands, further constraining the hunter-gatherer live styles of the local people. In 2001, the farms had 5 377 people. Most of whom were cattle herders.

Tourism is emerging as an important economic activity in the district. 'Currently the only significant tourism activities taking place in the area are in the CKGR, Gantsi Township and in the freehold farms, some of which run hunting/photographic safaris. The CKGR continues to be the main income generator through tourism activities. The revenue is generated through camping fees, park entry fees, bookings and vehicle charges from holidaymakers. During DDP 5, 13140 tourists entered CKGR and Khutse Game Reserve and contributed P 3 614 017 to the economy of Botswana' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 118). Thus, tourism is a major economic activity in the area. There were 689 Basarwa in the CKGR in 2001, and all faced relocation outside it as they were thought to be a limiting factor to the development of tourism.

Tourism within the Gantsi Township was primarily limited to one hotel and, two guesthouses, two lodges and one camp in the free hold farms... Commercial hunting is also practised in the ranches and hotels do offer wild life meat more regularly and all the year round. So, the freedom to hunt freely has been transferred from the local people to the ranchers. Despite the tourism and booming cattle industry, the Gantsi District is dependent upon central government for sustainability. The bulk of budget comes from central government grants.

In addition, tourism too is dominated by the government and the private sector, and only benefits the wider population marginally through low paying employment. However, it should be pointed out that Kuru Development Trust runs a guesthouse and camping facilities, and

the local community runs Dqae Qare game farm with a guest house. Thus, the community's involvement in the tourism sector is extremely limited and is hardly enough to address the rampant poverty and to promote local democracy.

Unemployment too is rampant in the Gantsi Township and in the district. 'The district's total labour force was 7 864 persons of which 16.5% were actively seeking work. It is estimated that not more than 42% of the population (12 years and older) are employed, of which 75% are males and 25% are women' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 8). Thus, unemployment is greatest among women and youth, than among men. This gender based unemployment was confirmed by the perception of the local democracy workshop participants who noted that most of the employed women were in drought relief labour intensive activities, tuck shops, hair saloons and shabbeens/unlicensed beer drinking places where the proceeds and wages are extremely low. Thus, unemployment is worse among women and youth and the few that are employed earn very little, exposing them to acute poverty.

The majority of those formally employed (2407) or 42.5% are in agriculture, hunting and forestry and are unhappy with their pay; 2212 are in public administration (coming from all over the country); 850 are in wholesaling and retailing (including retail of motor vehicles and personal household goods); 1316 are in the constructing industry; 580 are in education; 279 are in manufacturing (including repair of machinery and equipment); 231 are in hotels and restaurants; 227 are housemaids; 189 are in real estate, renting and business activities; and a few are in other small scale economic activities. The dominant view of the local democracy workshop participants was that most of those employed experienced extremely low wages.

Generally, the wages are poor and economic opportunities are low. The workshop participants estimated that 45% of the people in the district lived below the poverty datum line and this has negative consequences for local democracy. For instance, alcohol abuse is rampant, and small theft and murders are common, occurrences that negatively impact on local democracy. In the case of murder, there were 6 cases in 2000, 12 cases in 2001 and 3 cases in 2002. These numbers were high for a rural area and for one district. In the case of stock theft, there were 50 cases in 2000, 37 cases in 2001 and 53 cases in 2002. In the case of common theft, there were 211 cases in 2000, 156 cases in 2001 and 214 cases in 2002. In the case of burglary, there were 56 cases in 2000, 46 cases in 2001 and 53 cases in 2002 (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 206). There is no doubt that poverty and drug abuse are playing the primary role in all these incidents that breed mistrust between neighbours and threaten the vibrancy of local democracy. Worse still, politicians take advantage of the poverty to buy votes with liquor, thus contribute to the worsening of social ills facing the district.

There are too few economic opportunities for the local people in the rest of the district and limited and controlled hunting and gathering have been introduced and severely monitored. ‘Despite drought relief labour intensive employment, food handouts, handicrafts sales, casual labour, and small stock production, for a large portion of the population there are no economic opportunities than hunting and gathering’ (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003:10). Restricted and licensed hunting and gathering is conducted in the Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) by the department of wild life management and the land board. It is estimated that 4 100 people hunt and gather in the Okwa Wildlife Management Area that is controlled by the department of wildlife. An additional 2 100 people hunt and gather in the Matlho-a-Phuduhudu Wildlife Management Area and 1300 hunt and gather

in the Groot Laagte Wild Life Management Area, both controlled by the Gantsi Land Board. But licensed hunting is seasonal and limited, inviting poaching or unlicensed hunting, which is severely punished by the authorities. Thus, significant hunting powers in the district have been transferred from the local communities to a central government department and to the land board, both of which exercise close monitoring and penalise those who violate the licensing conditions, which include hunting with traditional weapons and for subsistence, rather than hunting for commercial purposes that could help reverse the acute poverty in the district.

Lack or limited economic opportunities and widespread poverty in the surrounding villages have compelled more people to migrate to Gantsi Township and to other urban centres, worsening unemployment there. The Gantsi Township has 10 877 people or 33% of the population of the district and this is a high urbanisation rate. Migration is a significant factor in the growth of the township. 'Except for Gantsi Township and Charles Hill, most villages in the district lost population between the two census, especially Kalkfontein, Karakubis, and Kole' (Gantsi District Council et al, 2003: 8). Loss of population worsened the poverty in these other villages, while worsening unemployment in the urban centres.

In summary, the introduction of more ranches and tourism helped the expansion of the economy and definitely increased wealth in the district. But the jobs created by these economic ventures are paying very poorly and this does not help reduce the poverty in the district. In addition, unemployment is high and licensed hunting adds to the poverty in the district.

## Representative Democracy

The local democracy workshop participants were unanimous that the legal framework guiding the conduct of elections in the Gantsi District was conducive. The local and national elections were overseen by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which conducted its business in an open, impartial and fair manner. However, there was a strong feeling at the local democracy workshop that the legal framework marginalised people living with disabilities that the IEC did not help with transportation. In addition, the IEC was understaffed and failed to conduct proper voter education, depended on personnel from other government departments and local authorities, thus compromising its independence. The workshop participants also felt that the central government exercises control over the operations of the IEC through the control of its funding. They further felt that the community had absolutely no control over the IEC in Gantsi and that this negated local democracy.

Furthermore, people in the district hardly knew why they were voting and there was no adequate voter education to change their mindset. This is despite the fact that 80% of those registered actually voted in the 1999 election. The high turnout and inadequate knowledge about the reasons for voting present serious challenges to the IEC to intensify its voter education and empower the electorate.

While the IEC conducted itself in an impartial manner, the politicians and the voters did not. Workshop participants felt that some electorates and politicians came to polling stations on party colours even though this was against the Electoral Act. It was also felt that some unscrupulous politicians used beer parties on the eve of election to exercise control over the electorate. They confined the beer-drinking

voters, confiscated their registration cards and compelled them to spend the night at the politician's residence. It is doubtful whether such intoxicated people had not sold their conscience to the highest bidder and therefore forfeited their right to demand better service. The workshop called for non-governmental organisations to observe elections and to record non-compliance with the law.

The important political parties in the district were the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) that is the strongest, the Botswana National front (BNF) that is the second strongest, and the Botswana Congress party (BCP). But only the first two parties had representation in the district council after the 1999 election: BDP with 15 councillors and BNF with 3 councillors. The 2004 election saw an expanded district council in which the BDP won 13 seats, BNF won 7 seats and BCP did not win any seat. There was unanimous agreement at the local democracy workshop that the parties are neither based on religious nor ethnic background. However, this meant that cultural or ethnic questions were not predominant and the fading culture of the Basarwa was not a serious political issue. The local politicians were expected to address the party manifestos that were national rather than local in orientation. Such kind of politics helped to unify the people, but to marginalise local issues. Thus, the politics of the district did not focus on directly relevant local issues.

The election of the council chairperson is limited to councillors and excludes the direct involvement of the ordinary people. Each party with representatives in council conducts caucus meeting to decide on the candidature. The winner of the caucus election is then presented to council for endorsement. This process is repeated every year. But the participants of the local democracy workshop felt that caucusing violated standing orders, it was undemocratic and made

the chairperson unaccountable to the electorate. They preferred a situation in which there was no caucusing and in which the whole full council cast a ballot for the chairperson. However, the local authorities explained that there was no law against caucusing and therefore that it was not illegal. But even then, it violated principles of good local governance as expressed in the local democracy workshop.

It was also observed that elected officials do not have powers over the council staff and that this violated principles of good local governance. The council chairperson has no hiring or firing powers over the staff. The authorities explained that notwithstanding the fact that the chairperson does not have powers over staff, he/she discuss priorities with the council chief executive and ensures that council resolutions are implemented.

The local democracy workshop further reviewed the manner in which decisions are made in the district council. A strong perception of the workshop participants is that the BDP councillors implement their party policies and programs and the BNF councillors criticise them for unfulfilled government promises, including those that had been approved but not funded, or that had been stopped without a convincing explanation such as the Financial Assistance Policy. Thus, the BNF was expected to play the role of opposition party in council. However, political campaigns marginally centred on the relocation of the Basarwa from the CKGR, slow and unsatisfactory allocation of land in Gantsi, unemployment and poor wages.

The workshop participants positively noted that the political parties allowed and encouraged local candidates to stand for elections. That is, candidates were not imported from outside. In the case of the BDP, any member of the party can stand for primary elections

even if they come outside the ward, provided they have the interest. Winning primary elections is a confirmation for party candidature. In contrast, those wishing to stand in the BNF have to come from within the ward and have to complete application forms, campaign and go through primary elections. The party members choose a candidate on the basis of education, good morals, *botho*, patience, voluntary spirit and good speaking skills. Apparently, the majority of those who get elected are men (including young men) and only a few women. In the 1999 election, BNF fielded 4 and the BDP fielded 6 women. But the workshop participants felt that the government should set minimum qualifications below which a person should not be allowed to stand.

Another concern raised at the local democracy workshop was the marginalisation of people living with disabilities. The concern was that all the local institutions ignored them: the IEC did not provide transport and special booths for them during elections; the council did not ensure that all buildings were easily assessable; political parties do not help them to occupy elected positions, with the end result that disabled never occupy elected offices unless ‘specially’ appointed by the minister of Local Government, which does not happen more often. Such exclusion of people living with disabilities from elected office compromises the quality of the representation.

In the spirit of local democracy, each local institution with representation at the local democracy workshop, responded. The BDP noted that it only became aware of the issue of people living with disabilities at the local democracy workshop and promised to deliberate on the matter for purposes of helping them to occupy elected offices. In contrast, the BNF indicated that it already has policies intended for placing people living with disabilities in elected position. Unfortunately, such policies of the BNF are ignored by the party and never implemented, thereby

marginalising them. For its part, the BCP indicated that it welcomes people living with disabilities but would expect them to use their own resources for campaign purposes. This is despite the fact that most of them are poor, and the effect too is marginalisation.

Elections are held at the kgotla every two years for village development committees (VDCs) and members of the community are invited to vote and be voted for. The chief chairs all meetings called for purposes of electing the VDC. The council community development officer conducts the election. In the case of elections for land board members, elections are held at the kgotla every three years. Land board election is conducted by its staff, in the presence of the chief. However, these elections are often politicised as political parties choose candidates and lend them support, marginalising those capable residents who do not belong to any political party. This compromises the quality of land board representation as sometimes incapable people get elected simply because they are supported by the biggest political parties. Further compromising local democracy in the land board election is the fact that the Minister of Local Government has powers to overrule the election and appoints his/her own people.

In summary, local representation is credible due to the fact that local candidates get elected, the legal framework promoted free and fair elections and the IEC conducted itself professionally. However, local representation was constrained by the fact that political parties focused on national rather local issues, only a few women and not people living with disabilities got elected, election for chairmanship of the district council was limited to councillors at the exclusion of the ordinary people, and land board election were politicised.

## Participatory Democracy and Responsiveness

There exist factors that promote participatory democracy and others that limit it. Full Council, land board meetings and kgotla meetings are open to the public and the local institutions claim that they send letters through school children to parents, inviting them to public meetings. However it was reported that the majority of the people neither attend Full Council meetings, nor kgotla nor land board meetings. Even though loud speakers and notice boards are also used to invite people to open public meetings, they still do not attend in large numbers. It was revealed at the local democracy workshop that people associate loud speakers with political rallies that they do not want to attend. Despite different methods of conveying information, people complained that they do not hear of these meetings most of the time. The majority of the workshop participants complained, that they are not adequately informed of the days when council budgets are considered and copies are never made available to the public, that the input they make towards the district development plan is very minimal and that most council documents are not accessible.

Some of the people, who got information from councillors about the Full Council meetings and land board general meetings, cannot distinguish political rallies from developmental meetings and end up not attending. Others spend most of their time at the open shabeens and bars and cannot attend even kgotla meetings. This is particularly true of people in the outlying settlements, who are also expected to travel to attend meetings either in Gantsi Township or villages, and who spend more time drinking. While some would prefer to spend money on travels to attend developmental meetings, they often cannot tell the difference, and end up not attending any. Thus lack of

adequate information confuses those who hear about meetings from the councillor. It was recommended that local institutions should make an effort to educate local communities about the differences between political and developmental meetings.

There are also events and celebrations that are meant to bring more people together, such as TB Day, AIDS Awareness Day, Youth Rally, June 16 (African Child Day), Clean Up Campaign, Independence Day, and agricultural shows. All these events and celebrations are participatory in nature as they attract a lot of people and people do attend them.

It was also reported that local democracy is constrained by lack of transparency in most of the business of the local institutions, particularly the land board. For instance, information from local institutions such as the district council and the land board is not easily accessible even though the councillor and VDCs are expected to pass it to their communities. It was explained that councillors, VDCs and chiefs are given copies of the district development plan, but they do not share these with their constituents. What is not clear is whether those who possess these documents are themselves adequately enlightened/knowledgeable to be able to share information with other people.

On the other hand, the white community that is rich and knowledgeable does not attend Full Council/Land Board general meeting/kgotla meetings unless they are tendering. Only a few members of the white community do attend meetings. Non-participation by the white community is negatively complemented by non-participation by the majority of locals who do not attend public meetings. This makes it difficult to develop shared values, and common goals. However, it was also explained that most of the white Batswana lived in the farms/

ranches and never hear of meetings. On the other hand, the Basarwa claimed that they could not attend meetings either because they felt discriminated at such gatherings or were tired of broken promises by politicians who fail to deliver services. But what was surprising is that when the president was visiting the white Batswana in the ranches and the Basarwa would all attend to complain about everything else. This shows that they did not find meetings addressed by local leaders attractive enough to warrant their attention.

Another complaint was that the chief executives of local institutions do not regularly visit outlying villages and settlements to brief them on developments in the district. The absence of such briefings negatively impact on participatory democracy. In short, while the public is expected to travel to Gantsi Township to attend either Full Council or Land board general meetings, the chief executives of these institutions do not themselves take their institutions to the people by visiting and holding regular kgotla meetings in the villages and settlements. The workshop participants encouraged heads of departments to collectively visit the villages and settlements in order to explain developments that are taking place in the district. The point was emphasised that heads of departments should come together to avoid having to organise numerous meetings that exhaust the local population and push them into apathy. In contrast, the local community was also encouraged to change its ways and to attend meetings called by different departments and local authorities.

The Gantsi library confirmed that it keeps only one copy of the district development plan and that this was not enough for the public. In addition, the councillors also confirmed that they keep the district development plans for reference and cannot lend them to the public. The VDC members circulate the district development plans among

themselves and find it difficult to lend it to the public for fear of losing it. The end result is that a lot of development information does not reach the public, constraining participatory democracy.

Locals have participated in referendums but the wording and language was not user-friendly. The local democracy workshop participants expressed the view that the wording of referendums (on electoral reforms and on the retirement of judges) was too technical and they could not easily understand. The participants were surprised that after a large number of them opposed the reduction of the voting age from 21 to 18 years in a previous referendum, the government drew the conclusion that the people had voted in favour of reforms.

There are a number of NGOs operating in Gantsi and contribute to the vibrancy of local democracy. These include the Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC), Emang Basadi, First People of the Kalagari. These advocate for human rights, indigenous rights, and youth and women development. There are also community based organisations such as Men Against AIDS Committee, Crime Prevention Committee, Permaculture that helps backyard gardens and building houses for the poor, and Bokamoso that train pre-school teachers. There are no significant religious groups that command large followings in the Gantsi District. This means that the morality of the community is facing degeneration. The few religious organisations conduct funerals and public prayers and thus contribute to local governance.

However, the participation of NGOs and CBOs is not certain. The chief executives of local institutions such as the district commissioner/council secretary/land board secretary allege that they invite them to public meetings, but the NGOs and CBOs absent themselves most of the time. They were also absent from the local democracy workshop

that was held in Gantsi Township. The BNYC could not attend the local democracy workshop that also coincided with a youth policy review workshop at Tautona lodge. The IEC could also not attend as they were holding electoral education workshops elsewhere in the district. However, the youth insisted that they are never invited to public meetings and workshops. In contrast, the chief executives of local authorities also insisted that they usually sent invitations to the BNYC and that maybe the officer does not pass information to the other members.

The other NGOs and CBOs also complained that they are only invited for celebrations and entertainment and not for development planning purposes. In short, they complained that local authorities do not regard them as development partners and this was constraining their involvement and negatively affected participatory development. Thus, relations between local authorities and NGOs/CBOs are uncertain and need to be looked into for purposes of improvement.

## Conclusion

This article has reviewed the status of local democracy in Gantsi, particularly the origin and layout of the district, the economy and population, representative democracy, and participatory democracy. The perception of the local democracy workshop was that Gantsi District, was originally populated by Basarwa/San, who have seen the arrival of numerous ethnic groups (Bakgalagadi, Baharero) and races (white farmers) with different life styles that have eclipsed theirs. The presence of different and competing life styles, particularly hunting and gathering on the one hand, and cattle farming and ranching on the other hand, have permanently changed the lives of the Basarwa.

The economy of the district has expanded significantly, presenting more opportunities for enhanced local democracy. But the primary result of the growing economy has been the transference of more land and hunting rights from the Basarwa to the farmers, thus, limiting/constraining local democracy for the Basarwa. On the other hand, the growing economy of the district led to the creation of more jobs even though these do not pay very well and therefore contribute little to local democracy. Regulated and restricted hunting rights of the Basarwa and widespread poverty that is prevalent in the district also constrain local democracy. The fact that only the ridge was permanently habitable because of its good soils and availability of underground water, meant the concentration of villages, ranches and population along it, further displacing the life styles of the Basarwa and plunging more of them into poverty, drug abuse and crime. The district presents great opportunities for tourism in the Gantsi Township and the CKGR, but it is not clear whether this will reduce the high unemployment and contribute to the enhancement of local democracy.

On the other hand, the legal framework provided an environment for free and fair elections. But lack of voter education and the widespread poverty played in the hands of politicians who staged beer parties on the eve of elections, intoxicating voters and disabling them democratically. The local democracy workshop felt that caucusing by the parties in the process of electing the council chairperson was undemocratic and unaccountable to the electorate. Such a manner of electing the council chairperson does not add any significant value to local democracy in the Gantsi District.

However, it is commendable that the political parties encourage local people to stand for elected positions. In contrast, parties ignore people living with disabilities when considering people who could stand for elections, thus, limiting local democracy. In addition, there is widespread apathy among the people (both the locals and white farmers in the ranches) who do not attend kgotla/Full Council/land board meetings, constraining both representative and participatory democracy. This is worsened by the fact that information dissemination about meetings in the Gantsi District was not smooth, and public documents such as the district development plan that chiefs and VDCs possess, were not readily available to the ordinary people, constraining participatory democracy. In the light of the above, the following recommendations were made by the local democracy workshop.

## Recommendations

1. The community should be adequately informed of public meetings through school children, chiefs and councillors.
2. websites should be introduced
3. There should be more consultation in order to include public opinion when starting or terminating policies and programs.
4. Local public surveys should be conducted and people's views should be taken seriously.
5. Heads of departments and chief executives from the different local authority institutions (Council, district commissioner, land board, IEC, police, schools and so on) should make joint visits to villages and settlements in order to reduce the large number of meetings that encourage apathy.
6. Minutes from Full Council Meetings should be translated into Setswana and other languages and copies should be made available
7. After attending full council, councillors should be made to report at kgotla meetings, including the discussion of the council budget.
8. Documents and policies dealing with people living with disabilities should be widely circulated and made known to the public.
9. People living with disabilities and all disadvantaged people should be invited to policy-making forums.

10. Land board business should be made transparent.
11. Land should be fairly and speedily allocated
12. Rich people should not be allowed to own more than two farms.
13. Council budget should cease from being a secretive matter.
14. Old age pension should start at 60 years
15. 18 years of age should be taken as the official majority age in all policy and legal documents.
16. Policy documents should be sold cheaply
17. Public notices should be extended to clinics, schools and all other public places
18. The IEC should operate all the time and not during election years only
19. A monitoring mechanism should be developed to guide the activities of NGOs and CBOs.
20. White Batswana should be encouraged to attend meetings
21. Bars and shabbeens should close during public meetings
22. Apathy should be addressed
23. Referenda should be in local languages

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# Local Democracy in Lobatse

Gantci Francistown

Lobatse

# Introduction

This article maps local democracy in Lobatse. It is based on a local democracy workshop that was held in 2004, bringing together around one hundred local stakeholders from different institutions. The workshop was guided by a questionnaire provided by Botswana Association of Local Authorities (BALA), African Union of Local Authorities (AULA) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). The participants were divided into five group discussions. They deliberated on a number of items and recorded their responses which were collected and analysed by the researcher who was also making his own recording at the plenary. The article that follows is an analysis of the data that was collected at the two day workshop and supplemented with official documents.

The report is divided into four sections. The first section outlines the layout and location of the town, noting the factors that promote local democracy such as the small size of the area and the metropolitan political culture, and the factors that hinder it such as hills that restrict pedestrian movement and limit the number of outwards roads. The second section analyses economic indicators and population trends, noting the stagnating growth of the town and its dependency on government grants for sustainability.

The third section discusses representative democracy, highlighting the voting turn out, and the dominant issues during the last election. It also considers the election of the mayor and the manner in which the residents are sidelined. It further considers the powers of the mayor, noting his ceremonial rather than administrative powers over the staff of the municipality.

The fourth section considers the institutions and factors that promote or hinder participatory democracy in the town. It highlights the positive and negative aspects of participatory democracy as practised in Lobatse. The last section is conclusion and recommendations.

## Location and Layout

This section outlines the town's layout and the physical impediments to local democracy. Lobatse is located in South East of Botswana, and is 'part of an area of about 4 355 km<sup>2</sup> square ... The area comprises Kgatleng, Kweneng, Southern and South East districts including the urban centres of Jwaneng and the capital city Gaborone which is situated 70 km north of Lobatse' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 1). In addition, Lobatse is situated in a valley, and is surrounded by hills and is bisected by the Peleng River. 'Bordering the town to the west and south are a series of low hills'. According to the perceptions of the local democracy workshop, the town cannot expand because of the hills and there is shortage of serviced plots. 'About 54% of the township is un-developable land consisting mainly of hills and steep slopes' (Lobatse town Council, et al, 1997: 23). These hills also make it difficult for people from different parts of the town to socialise as there are no adequate footpaths to enable unimpeded movement. In addition, the hills pose as a security problem because they limit the number of main roads out of the town, and this could make it difficult for speedy evacuation in times of natural disasters or in times of attack by enemy forces. In addition, the surrounding hills make construction extremely costly.

Threatening the future of the town is the fact that the ground is now developing cracks that are affecting buildings. Added to the land cracking is the poor workmanship of contractors which combine to damage existing houses. The local democracy workshop participants suspected that the municipality contributed to the cracking of houses by failing to thoroughly screen contractors. They also suspected corruption as they thought that contractors that are known to have abandoned projects before finishing them went on to win more tenders

with the municipality. The municipality dispelled fears of corruption by outlining the process of tendering, noting that (i) a technical committee assesses all tenders; (ii) the town clerk cross checks the procedure followed by the technical committee; (iii) all municipality managers (head of departments) review the decisions of the technical committee; and (iv) finally tendering committee consisting of elected councillors ask questions. The town clerk observed that taken together, the tendering process ensures that there was no corruption and that bad contractors were excluded. Thus, only the best contractors were hired and that retention money was only paid to contractors six months after the completion of projects to cover faults.

In addition, the municipality noted that Lobatse was prone to violent winds and land cracking, both of which contributed to the damaging of houses and buildings. It further explained that the land cracking combines with the hilly ground to increase the cost of construction, and this particularly hurts the poor. The workshop participants agreed and observed that standard government policies such as SHHA loans whose ceiling is placed at P 20 000 is perceived to be too inadequate for Lobatse because of the land cracks. In other words, policies that treat all towns and regions equally end up treating Lobatse unequally because they fail to consider its special problems such as land cracking. In one extreme case, a proposed Motswedi school could not be built because the space allocated to it had developed land cracking.

However, the surrounding hills give the town a scenic view with the potential for attracting tourists if improved upon, (including the building of hotels on the hills). It is this possibility of developing the town into a tourist destination that gives the residents more economic hope for the sustainability of the town. But the workshop participants held the view that not enough was being done to turn Lobatse into a

tourist attraction. However, the municipality explained that it had no funds to survey the hills. Added to the town's scenic view was the fact that Nelson Mandela once lived in Lobatse and the dwelling where he lived is dilapidated. Altogether, the participants complained that there was poor marketing of the town as a tourist destination. In contrast, the municipality explained that it visited China on other business but also inquired about ways of turning a town into a tourist attraction without much success. But the participants advised that the municipality should visit Durban and Mmokolodi to study how hills could be developed for tourist purposes. But the municipality also explained that its staff once visited Kariba town in Zimbabwe and were impressed about how it was made into a tourist destination.

Another colonial heritage of the town is the fact that Lobatse is also surrounded by private farms. Official documents confirm that 'Lobatse is wholly surrounded by freehold farms of the South East District'. These farms are not under the control of the municipality and yet their population were combined with those of the town for purposes of electing representatives. But a situation in which the municipality does not own or control the land surrounding the town, and does not make policies for farm owners, restricts local democracy. Such a situation promotes hostilities rather than mutual understanding between the private farms and the municipality.

The colonial heritage of old buildings is proving to be a serious problem for the town. The Lobatse police who attended the local democracy workshop complained of the existence of old colonial buildings that have become hide outs for thieves and criminals. The local democracy workshop participants agreed, adding that there were too many unoccupied and dilapidated colonial buildings that tarnished the image of the town and provided shelter for dangerous criminals. These

observations are confirmed by official documents where it is stated that Lobatse has a serious problem of absent landlords. 'This poses a problem of chunks of land in the town lying undeveloped and old buildings which are giving the town a bad image' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 25). Thus, the town residents share the common belief that old colonial buildings are a problem.

While acknowledging the problem, the municipality explained that these buildings could not be demolished without the consent of the owners in London and elsewhere, and assured the workshop participants that efforts were being made to track them down. It also noted that it had invited the Attorney Generals Chambers for help and that advertisements have been placed on foreign news papers for purposes of tracking down the owners of those buildings and that once the legal process is completed, then a solution would be possible. The municipality further explained that it had invited the National Museum and the Department of Lands to help find a solution to the problem of too many un-usable colonial buildings. If the town finds a solution to the problem of dilapidated buildings, the outlying villages would benefit as they too face a similar problem.

## Economic Indicators and Population Trends

Lobatse was made the headquarters of the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC), the High Court and the headquarters of the Geological Surveys Department. But its economic history was neither an agricultural nor a mining one. 'Although there are base metal deposits (lead, copper and manganese) they have little economic significance ... Industrial rocks of economic significance found in the area include brick-earth, feldspar (used to make glaze), glass sand and industrial stone (quarry)' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 6). Official documents observe that there has been economic stagnation in the town.

Lobatse initially emerged as a rail-traffic town. 'The major impetus for the settlement and early growth of the town was the construction of the Mafikeng-Bulawayo railway line at the turn of the 19th century, which created Lobatse's role as the gateway for rail traffic to and from the north' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 1). Thus, Lobatse first existed as a colonial town, bequeathing it colonial buildings, many of which have become dilapidated and hide-out for thieves. However, the presence of colonialists in the town attracted African people from all over the region, and produced a 'culture that is reminiscent of a metropolis' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 10). Languages that are spoken in the town include Setswana, English, Afrikaans, Sengologa, Ikalanga, and Asian dialects. The presence of so many languages shows the diversity of the town's population, but hinders local democracy in the sense that it makes communication difficult. On the positive side in terms of promoting local democracy, the existence of an urban culture promotes the cultural melting pot and a reasonably high literacy levels.

Another of Lobatse's colonial heritage is its centrality in agro-based industries that came through political decisions that were made earlier on. The choice of establishing the [Bechuanaland] Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) in Lobatse ensured that the town became the hub of agro-based industries. The result is that "beef processing employs a fifth of the town's labour force. Other major industries include milling, brewery, tile manufacturing, tannery and clay works" (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 1). However, the town's diversified industrial base has not experienced substantial growth in recent years and unemployment is extremely high and population growth is stagnating. 'The decentralisation of the meat industry to Francistown and Maun in 1986/87 led to the stagnation of the town's economy. The number of cattle slaughtered at Lobatse BMC declined partly due to decentralisation and partly due to drought conditions' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 24).

In fact, Lobatse has not escaped the dependence syndrome in which it receives substantial grants from the central government. In its 2000/01 budget, central government grants amounted to P 28, 649, 290, or 81% in a total budget of P 35, 289, 220 (Ministry of Local Government, 2002: 121). It was estimated for 2001/02 to be P 30, 748, 500, or 81% out of a total budget of P 37, 993, 800. Similarly, the percentage of central government grants was substantial in the 2003/04 financial year where it was estimated at P 41, 184, 800, or 83% out of a total budget of P 49, 393, 620. These figures show that the town of Lobatse is heavily dependent upon central government grants which are subject to the fluctuations of the national economy which is beyond the confines of local democracy. However, central government grants cannot ensure the sustainability of the town whose economy and population has been on the decline.

Lobatse's population has been characterised by slow growth and stagnation. 'Official census figures show that in 1964, Gaborone had a population of 3855 making it the third most populous settlement in Botswana after Francistown and Lobatse which respectively had the figures of 9521 and 7613' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, 2001: 132). Thus, in the 1960s Lobatse used to be the second largest urban centre in Botswana. This has dramatically changed as new towns and cities came into being. According to the 2001 population census, Lobatse has a population of only 29 289, compared to 186 007 for Gaborone, 84 406 for Francistown and 49 849 for Selebi Phikwe (with a growth rate of 25.34 %' (Selebi Phikwe Town Council, et al 2003:6). Gaborone and Francistown became the largest cities in that order.

According to the 1981 population census, Lobatse was surpassed by Selebi Phikwe which became the third largest town in the country. Lobatse's population was growing marginally. The 1981 and 1991 census recorded population figures of 19 034 and 26 050 respectively. The average growth rates were 4.8% and 3.2% between 1971-81 and 1981-91' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 6). Part of the reason for the slow population growth is that Lobatse is no longer able to create good jobs as compared to the nearby Gaborone City and Jwaneng mine. The BMC which employed males is on decline and retailers and cloth manufacturers that employ primarily females are on the increase.

It is therefore not surprising that Lobatse has had more females than males. According to the 1981 population census, Lobatse had 9 140 males and 9 893 females, as compared to 12 539 males against 13 511 females (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 6). According to the

2001 population census, the town has 14 205 males as compared to 15 484 females. This corresponds to the national gender distribution. However, there are more males than women in Lobatse between the ages 30-64, 'where there is a significant male population domination of 57.7% in 1981 and 64.4% in 1991' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 6).

Comparatively, Lobatse has a relatively mature population, 'with a ... relatively high proportion of the population in the economically active age (15-64) which constituted 70 of the town's population in 1981, rising slightly to 73% in 1991'. This is a positive development in terms of reduced percentages of dependents, and positively impact on poverty. However, Lobatse has 134 males and 163 females over 70 years of age, and these fall in the dependency category. On the other hand, the proportion of children born between 1981 and 1991 declined...' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997:7). In addition, Lobatse experiences less in-migration. 'During the inter-census period 1971-1981, the importance of Lobatse as a major destination for internal migrants declined ... In fact in 1980-81, migration losses were recorded. The average annual net migration rate for 1971-1981 was 0.43% while the net average migration for 1980-81 was -3.5%' (Lobatse Town Council, et al, 1997: 9). In terms of local democracy and taking into consideration the fact that birth rates were declining, Lobatse may need to create more space and establish more recreational facilities and entertainment centres for its elderly and may have to convert some of the children's facilities for that purpose. In addition, 63.1% of the town's population live under the poverty line and the majority of these are the elderly and children.

Overall, Lobatse's economy and population are going down and these are not good signs. As the economy of the town further stagnant and the population growth records losses due to low birth rates and negative in-migration, Lobatse's future is not rosy and major investments may be needed to sustain the current standards of living and the current levels of local democracy.

## Representative Democracy

This section assesses the extent to which the town's residents participate in the local elections and assesses the manner in which wards are demarcated. It also looks at the issues that dominated the past elections and how local issues were factored into the town's political campaigns. The section further assesses the extent to which the residents of Lobatse have influence and control over the institutions that provide representation.

To begin with, seventeen thousand five hundred and ninety-five (17, 595) were eligible to register and vote, and ten thousand nine hundred and ninety-seven (10, 997) or 63% registered, and eight thousand four hundred and fifty-one (8, 451) or 48% of eligible voters cast their ballot in the 2004 election. The number of rejected votes was marginal. However, while the percentage of those who voted/eligible was below fifty percent, the percentage of those who voted/registered was very high (77%). So, an overwhelming majority of those who were registered validly voted for the persons who represented them in the municipality and in parliament. This indicates that the majority of people who registered for the election in Lobatse ended up casting their ballot, evidence that democracy is well entrenched in the town.

It should also be noted that the main parties organised primary elections in which the members were invited to select candidates who would represent the parties at the national and local elections in 2004. A system of primary elections that enables ordinary party members to elect among party candidates enhances representative democracy. Representative democracy partly means that the 'most' popular candidate wins and becomes the party candidate for the concerned ward. Only individuals who were already card carrying members

of parties could stand for primary elections (but civil servants were prevented from standing by national law governing the public service). Ordinary people who were not card carrying members but who wanted to stand for primary elections were not allowed to do so. In addition, the political culture favours parties over independent candidates. So, effectively, political parties control representation as they are the ones that supply candidates for the residents to choose from.

It was also revealed at the local democracy workshop that royalty (bogosi), ethnicity and geographical origins, were contributory factors determining which candidates win primary elections. What was also worrying about primary elections in 2003 in Lobatse was the fact that the parties themselves (and not some neutral organisations) conducted the primary elections and there was always a likelihood of bias in favour of those in the party hierarchy. However, the local democracy workshop participants in Lobatse had no evidence that indeed there was bias. Commonly, those who felt cheated either protested the results, or opted for independent candidature, or voted with the opposition. Lobatse did not experience much of these activities, suggesting that the primary elections generally went well.

It should be noted that after the delimitation exercise of 2002, Lobatse was awarded 12 wards. This means that 12 councillors represent a population of over 29 000. The town's population is divided into unequal wards, ranging from Boswelatlou and BC Thema with 517 and 546 respectively, to Peleng with 887 voters. Some local democracy workshop participants suspected that the delimitation of ward boundaries was not properly done. This was particularly so in the cases of Peleng and Tsopeng wards that had to be subdivided. However, the local authorities explained that the local District Commissioner (DC) and the Lobatse-based Election Officer of the Independent Electoral

Commission, had invited local stakeholders and formed a team to draw the ward boundaries. Political party representatives and members of NGOs were invited to be members of that team that also consisted of the municipality physical planner. Together, the members of the team addressed kgotla meetings and solicited the views of town residents. In this manner, the demarcation of wards was democratically done and the authorities claimed at the local democracy workshop that local politicians did not contest the ward boundaries and it was surprising why they were doing so at the workshop.

Each ward, no matter its size, sends only one councillor to the municipality. There is no provision that larger wards should have more representation and this constrains the emergence of good principles of electoral governance. In the 1999 election, the BNF had won 9 wards, the BDP had won 2 and the minister of Local Government had appointed two more councillors. Anyhow, four political parties contested eleven of the wards in Lobatse in 2004. The 1999 election had no go areas for the BCP that had split from the BNF. The 1999 election was tensed by the defection of the two BNF councillors who crossed the floor to the BCP. A few years after that election four more BNF councillors crossed the floor to the newly formed NDF. Such defections saw the BNF splitting twice and losing the mayoral seat in Lobatse. The local democracy workshop participants perceived the crossing of the floor as anti-representative politics as politicians ‘steal’ the people’s votes. What was more disturbing was that the voters had no control over such matters until an election year.

Interestingly, in 2004, the BNF contested in eleven wards and won eight, the BDP contested in 12 wards and won 4, the BCP contested in eleven wards and won none, and the NDF contested in eleven wards and won none. This time the choice of the voters was respected as those

who won the ward elections under particular political party tickets were confirmed as the councillors and as yet they have not crossed the floor and the town mayor belongs to the most popular party. The least popular parties have no representation in the council. Thus, in terms of representation, the opposition BNF controls the town and the BDP that controls the central government is the main opposition in Lobatse. In this regard, representative democracy is functional as long as there are no defections.

It is interesting to note that four (3/12) of those elected in Lobatse in 2004 were women. In addition, two more women were nominated by the minister. While this is not a disappointing figure as it met the SADC 30% quota, there were strong feelings from the womenfolk at the local democracy workshop that political parties were not doing enough to help them win electoral contests. This was despite the fact that women constituted majority of those voting and sacrificed more. In this regard, representation was constrained because it did not correctly mirror the town's voting population. However the womenfolk were comforted by the fact that Lobatse was leading in gender sensitivity as it was one of two towns and cities in the country that have had women mayors.

It should be realised that Lobatse operates the national 'first past the post (FPTP)' system that does not consider the popular vote in awarding elected seats. The system only awards the seat to the winner in each ward, regardless of the size of the margin, as in the case of Newlook Ward where the BNF won it by 275 to BDP's 250 votes. However, the minister of Local Government at the central government level is authorised to appoint two more councillors (without necessarily being required to appoint the second most popular candidates). While local institutions such as the DC and the area Member of Parliament are

involved in the selection process, the minister is authorised to ignore their advice and to make his/her own selection. Some local democracy participants held the view that ministerial appointments constrain local democracy as most of the time the minister selected from her own party and did not consider gender or popularity of the candidates. Their interpretation was that ministerial appointment interferes with good notions of representative democracy.

It should also be noted that the fourth ward (Lobatse Farms) was contested by the BDP alone. This was primarily because the farm residents felt intimidated enough not to nominate another candidate except the farm owner (who was a BDP member), constraining representative democracy which is based on un-coerced choice. However, there were no complaints regarding the conduct of elections in the town and this suggests that there were free and fair. There were adequate ballot papers, polling stations were evenly spaced and within walking distance, polling agents had unimpeded access to polling stations, and there was no intimidation or violence. So, the last three general elections in Lobatse have been free and fair.

The central issues in the 2004 national election were poverty, employment, housing and health. In terms of local politics in Lobatse, priority should have been given to employment creation, housing, poverty and health. This may suggest that while employment and housing were central issues in Lobatse, unemployment was a central national issue. However, the workshop participants revealed that political parties write nationally rather than locally oriented manifestos. In addition, local candidates were required to quote from the manifestos, effectively eclipsing local issues that are central to the local voters. (In spite of the above constraint councillors explained that they were still able to raise local issues during the campaigns).

In this sense, the local electorates have no control over the drafting of party manifestos and have no control over what issues should be prioritised.

In addition, the election of the mayor is completely out of the control of the residents of Lobatse. Previously, the central committee of the party that had won the local government election decided the mayoralship. The residents had completely no say in who became mayor then. Currently, the residents elect the mayor indirectly. That is, residents elect councillors who then formally vote for the mayor. In any case, the mayor is also a councillor (elected or appointed by the minister). There have been instances in which councillors who have been appointed by the minister ended up in the mayoral position. However, the local democracy participants thought it was unfair to the local voters to have a mayor as somebody who had not won any election. But the point is that other councillors are the ones who would have chosen to elect that councillor as mayor.

The mayor is accountable to the councillors who elect him/her and not to the town residents. His power base lies with the councillors whom he/she has to impress in order to win re-election every year. Whether s/he is popular with the residents does not matter. S/he only needs to be popular with the councillors to secure a win or a re-election. Such a system places the mayor under an obligation to impress the councillors, and this may not be the same with better service delivery. It is partly due to this aspect that the local democracy workshop called for a directly elected mayor.

However, it should be noted that Lobatse is one of the few towns that has had a female mayor. This outstanding achievement was registered

during the time when the mayoral position was decided by the party and not by other councillors. Elected councillors of Lobatse have never voted a female to the mayoral position. In any case, female councillors have always been fewer than male ones. It is not clear whether councillors do consider gender when deciding on the mayoral position. In contrast, the predominance of women in the town's population is not reflected when it comes to the allocation of mayoral responsibilities. Thus, voting by councillors may not be the best way to promote gender equality in Lobatse. But the 2004 council was an exception as it elected a woman mayor.

In addition there was concern by the local democracy workshop participants that the mayor did not have adequate powers over local administrators. Even collectively, councillors did not have powers over the movement and disciplining of local administrators. Only the town clerk has some limited powers over the staff. The transfer of staff is handled by the ministry of local government which is authorised to transfer any local officer (including the town clerk), without consulting the elected officials. For purposes of empowering the mayor and the municipality, the local democracy workshop participants are in agreement in calling for a directly elected mayor who would have the power to hire and fire his own staff. Such a system could subject the movement of the municipal staff to local democracy and free the town's politics from the minister.

The other concern was that mayoral elections were held too frequently, with the danger of having a different mayor every year. The local democracy participants complained that annual elections of the mayor did not promote stability in the municipality. They suggested that mayoral elections should be held every five years, with a recall clause to allow the removal of a mayor whose performance is not satisfactory.

The town clerk explained that the law allows the municipality to alter the standing orders in order to determine the period that the mayor should be in office. It was advised that the central District Council had altered the standing orders and held mayoral elections every two years rather than annually.

## Participatory Democracy and Responsiveness

This section discusses participatory democracy. It focuses on the availability of open forums in which the town residents fully participated and highlights the constraints facing participatory democracy in Lobatse. Full participatory democracy is here defined as the involvement of the residents with speaking rights and a requirement that they be answered in a satisfactory manner.

Perhaps kgotla meetings and workshops mark full participatory democracy in Lobatse. Kgotla meetings are open to the public who have the right to speak and ask questions. Sometimes the area Member of Parliament, the minister of local government, the vice president and remotely the president address kgotla meetings and exchange views with the town residents. The public is invited and allowed to speak and to ask questions at these meetings. Councillors, the town clerk and other service providers are also expected to attend and answer questions at these kgotla meetings.

In addition, the local democracy workshop also attracted diverse representation and the local leaders were allowed to register their complaints, such as the poor location of the tannery and the bad smell that comes from it, the poor emptying of pit latrines by the municipality (the complaint is that the whole neighbourhood would be asked by the town council to pour water in the pit latrines and mix in advance for easy emptying and too often the council trucks fail to turn up at a time when the ward residents are engulfed by an irritant smell), the discrimination of young people in the hiring of care givers in the home based care program (only middle aged are hired), the absence of physiotherapy in the whole town, the unfriendliness of the

local hospital to people living with disabilities, the lack of employment opportunities for the blind and other disabled people in the town. It was also reported that businesses (particularly food outlets) are expected to pay for health inspection and that too often they do not and no inspection is carried. Such a situation is regarded as a public health hazard and the municipality was encouraged to conduct free health inspections in order to protect the public.

The above issues and more were openly raised and frankly discussed at the local democracy workshop and the hospital superintendent, the town clerk and other senior officials attended the local democracy workshop and had to answer to these concerns. For his part, the town clerk was shocked because neither residents nor his officers ever reported this delayed emptying of pit latrines to him. For their part, the officers blamed the residents partly for their late reporting of full pit latrines and partly for violating building laws to the extent of making the pit latrines inaccessible. But the residents and the local politicians revealed that some of these inaccessible pit latrines were dug by council staff and that the municipality itself was to blame. After counter accusations were exchanged, the town clerk made three assurances: that he had ordered enough trucks for emptying the pit latrines; that he would closely supervise the staff; and that pit latrines were being faced out as residencies were getting connected to the sewerage grid.

In addition, suggestions, both by the municipality and the residents, were made defining the way forward. For its part, the municipality encouraged residents to lodge their complaints directly with the officers concerned, or to the local politicians or to the district commissioner, through verbal reporting or through phone calls rather than wait for workshops or kgotla meetings. Ultimately, they should make sure that

their complaints reach the town clerk. For their part, the residents suggested that certain services should be privatised, including the emptying of pit latrines. They also suggested that bushes should be cleared to deny thieves hide outs and that pollution from BMC, hotels and Sefalana should be monitored and measured.

Full Council meetings (where the urban development plan, council budget and other matters are discussed and approved) are open to the public which is invited to attend but not allowed to speak or ask questions. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the media are also invited to these meetings and they too are not allowed to speak or ask questions. However, the public hardly attend full council meetings, except when the election of mayor is being held. This raises the question of how the invitations are made and gives the impression that these meetings are not exciting enough to attract the attention of the public. It was reported that the invitation to the public is sent through the councillors and through loudspeakers mounted on vehicles that drive around the wards. In addition, the meetings are gazetted and known in advance. Thus, if residents are invited and do not turn up at full council meetings, may be there was something wrong with the way the meetings are conducted. However, it should be noted that while full council meetings are open, the public is not allowed to speak. Only the mayor, councillors and the town clerk are allowed to speak at these meetings. The public is expected to be spectators and this partly explains the lack of interest in the meetings. Thus, while these meetings are open to the public, participatory democracy is constrained by the fact that residents are not allowed to speak and by extremely low attendance.

It was further observed that the public has access to Full Council minutes, to valuation rolls for rates, and to all published council

documents. Such access promotes transparency and local democracy. It was also observed that it is a requirement that tenders are published through the public media and on notice boards around the town. However, it was reported that although the municipality invites the media to its meetings, it was not conducting regular media briefings, leaving many of its activities unreported. On its part, the municipality complained that the invited media sometimes turn up late and other times never turn up at all and would phone asking for speeches and minutes. In addition, while the municipality has computers, it neither has a website or email facilities through which people could access services without going through officials.

Lobatse does have diverse NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs) and these interacted with the municipality in manners that promoted local democracy. These NGOs and CBOs include Ministers Fraternal, women organisations, youth council, burial societies, marketing association, health advisory committee and so on.

## Conclusion

This article has mapped local democracy in Lobatse Town. It has analysed the manner in which the location and layout of the town promotes or hinders local democracy. It emphasised that the surrounding hills and valleys constrained the physical expansion of the town and restricted pedestrian movement, thus impeding local democracy. The article has also analysed the economic indicators and population trends, noting the decline in both, and the town's dependence on central government grants for survival. It further noted that central government grants were outside the scope of local democracy as it was money raised outside the town.

The article also analysed issues of representation, showing the good turn out in the local elections and the disparities in the sizes of the wards. The section also noted the issues that dominated the local election and the political parties that had representation in the municipality. It observed that local issues were not well accommodated in the political party manifestos that were national in orientation. It also discussed the election of the mayor and pointed out that gender has been ignored and that the town's residents were excluded in such elections.

The article also discussed participatory democracy, noting the reluctance of the residents to attend full council meetings in which they were not allowed to speak, preferring to attend workshops where everybody is allowed to speak or kgotla meetings where they can register their complaints with the visiting local Member of Parliament or the minister of Local Government or the Vice President. The article noted that while such forums allowed the residents to register their complaints, it constrained local democracy in the sense that it did not promote daily dialogue between them and the local institutions.

## Recommendations

1. There should be fiscal and administrative autonomy of the local government from the central government
2. Mayoral elections should be held every five years and not every year.
3. The municipality should have powers over policing in the town.
4. The mayor should be directly elected and with executive powers.
5. Lobatse should develop a policy that promotes more languages
6. The municipality should establish a public relations office to respond to public complaints and to disseminate information.
7. The municipality should develop a clear localisation plan.
8. A joint committee of stakeholders should be established to supervise the implementation of recommendations.
9. SHHA loans should be increased and made more flexible for Lobatse residents as their town is different from other places.
10. The town should be made friendly to the elderly.
11. Wheel chairs should be made available in times of workshops and public meetings
12. The IEC should help the elderly and those living with disabilities, with transport during election time.

13. The IEC should be fully empowered to issue writ of election.
14. Employers should be compelled by law to realise their employees for purposes of casting their votes.
15. Local and central government elections should be held on separate days.
16. Election/voter education should be incorporated in school syllabus from primary level.
17. State funding of political parties should be introduced.
18. There should be a high level consultative forum that includes the private sector, NGOs and CBOs.
19. The urban Development Committee should be revitalised.
20. Efforts should be taken to make Lobatse a tourist destination in Botswana.
21. There should be positive discrimination to enable women and youth to enter decision making positions.
22. Recreation facilities for the youth should be expanded and freely accessible
23. Youth should be taught not to vandalise recreational property.
24. Training of people living with disabilities should include those under 18 years of age.

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