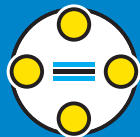# Mapping Local Democracy in Gaborone City
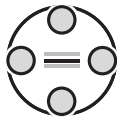
Gaborone

Botswana Association of Local Authorities (BALA)

Mapping Local Democracy in Gaborone City

Zibani Maundeni, PhD
University of Botswana

**Botswana Association of
Local Authorities (BALA)**

FRIEDRICH
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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 main problems they are facing as leaders on at 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. Dr. Maundeni first reviewed all documents and methodological instruments prepared by IDEA and adopted them to of the needs and realities of Botswana. Then a workshop using the methodology and discussing all matters pertaining to the question of leadership for local democracy was organized on the 7th and 8th of October in Gaborone. The workshop brought together local authorities in Gaborone such as the city council (councillors and staff), district commissioner, dikgosi, and ward development committees. They met with the police, IEC, BIDPA, BOCONGO, media, taxi association and others.

The booklet presented here synthesizes the perceptions voiced out 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 also intended to help local democracy to emerge from marginalization - 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 has was burdened with the bulk of the organisational work.

Since the workshop in Gaborone and its outcome were highly appreciated by all participants and BALA members, FES approved a project proposal by BALA to extend this exercise to other cities and districts all over Botswana. More workshops are underway in Francistown, Selebi Phikwe, Lobatse and Ghanzi. Their results shall also be presented in similar form. So this will be the first one of a series of booklets on "Mapping Local Democracy in…"

Peter L. Siele
President
BALA

Dr. Marc Meinardus
Resident Representative
FES

Contents

Foreword

Botswana's two-tier system of Government has worked relatively well over the past three-decades. The local government tier is very important as it provides a direct link between central government and the communities and is an important delivery arm of government.

This booklet on leadership for local democracy for in Gaborone is a practical demonstration of Gaborone City Council's willingness to serve the city community for their common good and to further enhance local government, which is the cornerstone of our democratic system of government. Extensive consultations were made through a workshop in December 2003 where the views of the community, political leaders, various interest groups and other stakeholders were taken on board before the finalisation of this document. The issues raised in the booklet should not be seen as criticizing Gaborone City Council, but should provide valuable lessons, which will drive us to communicate, share information and deliver to the city community.

I would like to sincerely thank all those who contributed to the publication of this document, especially Friedrich Ebert Foundation, which provided financial support and BALA Secretariat who worked tirelessly by organizing the seminar on local democracy, coordinating input from the workshop and seeing to it that the final product is published.

H.K. Mothei
Mayor of Gaborone
and BALA Vice President

Local Democracy in Gaborone City

This paper maps the status of local democracy in Gaborone City. It defines local democracy in terms of people's voting power in a specified area (in this case – Gaborone) and their participation in, and influence over, the handling of recognisable area-specific issues. Thus, it places emphasis on the local people's voting power, participation and influence over the delivery of services offered by the local authority. Obviously, such a definition regards as constraints on local democracy, area-based issues that are handled either by un-elected institutions such as parastatals or by central government departments that answer to central government and not to the municipal authority. They are constraints because they are not subject to the voting patterns and influence of the local people. Such a definition also excludes national issues that deny the importance of locality and its influence.

Services provided by the municipal authority and subject to local democracy includes: to plan, review, monitor and maintain a physical and economic development for the City of Gaborone; to administer implementation of the Trade and Liquor Act and its regulations within the Gaborone City Council area; to enforce Council Bye Laws and Central Government legislation delegated to Council and to educate members of the public about the same; to administer the application of the pound Act by providing reception and care of trespassing of livestock and to address matters incidental thereto; to provide and keep in clean condition market places and vending stalls that are to be used by the community; to administer the rating procedure within Gaborone City Council and to collect rates; to provide facilities and services to primary school going children in Gaborone; to provide effective and efficient primary health care services to Gaborone community; to safeguard the health of the public through identification of existing and

possible environmental health problems and instituting preventive and remedial measures as appropriate; to plan, implement and coordinate health education programmes for the Gaborone community, for prevention and control of environmental health related diseases and promotion of health life styles; to ensure proper and efficient storage, collection, transportation, treatment and disposal of solid waste in Gaborone; to maintain a safe and reliable long term disposal site and receive all solid waste from Gaborone City and surrounding areas; to plan, operate and maintain roads and associated infrastructure in the City; to plan, operate and maintain public transport infrastructure such as national, regional and urban public transport ranking facilities, bus stops, and to promote the use of public transport as an attractive and convenient mode of mass transportation; and so on (Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, 1998). These crucial services are handled by the Gaborone City Council, headed by elected local representatives.

Enormous resources are handled by the City Council and the city dwellers should take note of it. The Gaborone City Council has had a budget of P55,879,990 in the 95/96 financial year (Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, 1995); P61,614,970 in the 96/97 financial year (Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, 1996); P64,991,210 in 97/98 financial year (Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, 1997); P74,679,890 in the 98/99 financial year (Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, 1998) and P99,765,820 (Ministry of Local Government, 2000: 6). The following exercise maps local democracy in the context described above.

Mapping the state of local democracy in Gaborone City was the product of a stakeholders' two-day workshop consisting of Gaborone

councillors, Gaborone chiefs, the district commissioner, the Gaborone office of the Independent Electoral Commission, city council staff, police officers, NGO leaders from BOCONGO, MISA-Botswana, vendors, and ward development committee members. They deliberated on various issues concerning local democracy and the results are presented below. The information generated from the local democracy workshop was supplemented by official reports.

Location and Layout

Gaborone was the least populous urban settlement in the country at the time it was designated the capital. '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). With only 3855 inhabitants in Gaborone village, the place was effectively free from occupation by distinct African ethnic groups that could claim ancestral ownership and free from occupation by exploited and segregated working classes that could be easily politicised.

Deciding on the relocation of the new capital town from Mafikeng (South Africa), the town of Lobatse was overlooked in favour of Gaborone village because the latter was situated on flat ground, had more room for expansion and had no entrenched African settlements that could have made planning difficult. Although Lobatse housed the country's high court and national abattoir and was administratively as competent as the Gaborone District, it was extremely hilly, had African settlements that would have to be moved to create space for new developments and was extremely politicised as the Africans there had strong links with South African liberation politics. Gaborone village, the new capital, was a small settlement for those colonial officials (expatriates and locals) who had administered over the Gaborone District (Batlokwa in Tlokweng Village and Balete of Ramotswa and the outlining areas (Ministry of Local Government and Lands Department, et al, 1992: 7).

The outlining villages of Tlokweng, Mogoditshane and Ramotswa were also overlooked in the choosing of the capital partly because they

consisted of distinct ethnic groups and could have either led to the development of ethnically-based residential locations to preserve the entrenched communities (thus introducing ethnic and religious based politics into the town's governance or could have necessitated relocation of these entrenched communities to pave way for infrastructural developments, causing ethnic disruptions associated with forced removals). But the surrounding villages added to the physical barriers constraining the growth of the capital. 'The physical features of the new capital location greatly influenced proposals made in the 1963 master plan. These features that were more of constraints included the airstrip and the Notwane River. Development was thus limited in an easterly direction. The railway on the other hand presented a definite barrier to the city's westerly growth. The tribal boundaries of the Batlokwa and the Bakwena presented stronger barriers in both the easterly and westerly directions' (Ministry of Local Government, et al, 1992: 8).

Gaborone Town

During the colonial days, Gaborone, Tlokweng and Ramotswa villages used to fall under the Gabrorone District and were administered jointly. Physically, only a stream separated Gaborone and Tlokweng village where the Batlokwa ethnic group resided. A forest, a railway line and a stream separated Gaborone village from the Bakwena villages of Mogoditshane, Gabane, Ledumadumane, Mmopane and Metsemotlhabe whose land is administered by land boards. 'While communal land does not exist within the statutory limits of the city, it however poses a serious constraint to the future expansion northwards, westwards and eastwards, since the city is bounded in these directions by communal land' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 85). In contrast, having been a white non-mining area surrounded by traditional villages, Gaborone village was filled with state land and private farms that had very few Africans living in them. Farms and streams physically separated Gaborone from Ramotswa village of the Balete. But the two were jointly administered during the colonial days.

Gaborone village had enjoyed a concentration of infrastructural developments as it housed the headquarters of the district and housed other institutions such as, a University of Botswana Lesotho and Swaziland branch, the district commissioner's office and residence, a stadium, an airport, a prison, and the headquarters of the police unit. The distribution of water, drainage and telecommunication systems were in place in Gaborone village and were conspicuously absent in Bontleng and White City, the other settlements that existed in the colonial days.

In contrast, the local democracy workshop revealed that White City and Bontleng were strictly residential areas for junior government officials and their families. What this suggests is that government employment type – whether senior or junior, and not race or ethnicity, determined the area of settlement. When Gaborone became the capital and a city council established for it, an unknown donor donated White City houses to the Gaborone Town Council for its staff. Thus, regardless of race or ethnicity, council staff was concentrated at White City. Moreover, the distribution of home-connected water, central drainage system and telecommunication network were conspicuous by their absence in White City and Bontleng. These services were denied even to those White City and Bontleng residents who could afford them. The existence of a water tap within some hundred metres of a household marked the distribution of clean water in these areas. The politics of denying urban-based services such as electricity, home-connected clean water, centralised sewerage system to the poor areas marked differential local democracy within Gaborone in the colonial and early years of independence (up-grading is now on and it's a painful exercise – plot owners are now legally required to connect water to their houses and stand pipes have been disconnected, up-grading Old Naledi is leading to the relocation of some people who have lived there for many years and so on).

Having been designated the new capital, the Gaborone area had to be developed distinctly: politically; administratively; economically; and culturally. Initially, there were mainly four locations in the town: Gaborone village, White City, Bontleng and the 'Mall'. The first three were already occupied, with little room for expansion. The Mall was the new location and was designated as the political, administrative, cultural and economic centre of the town, superimposing it over Gaborone village, Bontleng and White City. Differential residential

areas were designed to surround the mall. 'North of the Mall were the largest plots, giving an average density of about 2 to 4 dwellings per hectare, and used for high cost residential purposes. In the middle, between the Mall and the Kaunda Road was an area of medium-density housing at 5 to 12 dwellings per hectare. And in the south was an area for low cost residential development' (Ministry of Local Government and Lands, et al, 1991: 8).

In addition, the 1963 Gaborone development plan that launched the new capital was designed in such a way that housing development was polarised with high and medium cost on one side and low cost on the other (Ministry of Local Government, et al, 1991: 9). The local democracy workshop confirmed the rich-poor feature of the early new capital and blamed it for the subsequent polarisation of politics in the capital. Yet until 1984, only one Member of Parliament represented the city in the national assembly, denying it the expression of the socio-economic diversity that characterised it. However, in 1984, the central government sought to reverse the segregation of residencies in terms of income disparities by insisting on integrated development. Since then, 'there is a policy of non-polarisation in the design and development of residential housing neighbourhoods. This policy has prevented spatial polarisation within the city limits. To a great extent, this has resulted in a balanced, well-integrated and socially healthy community' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 151). However, it must be pointed out that the city council has had no contribution to the formulation or implementation of the above policy of integrated residential development as its activities are restricted to the 'administration of Self-Help Housing Agency (SHHA) programmes and the provision of urban district housing for the council officials' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 148). What emerged from the local democracy workshop

and from official reports is that the municipal authority is restricted to the administration of the poor resident portions of the integrated communities where there were no flush toilets among other services.

The Socio-Economic Base of Gaborone and its Implications for Local Democracy

Initially, Gaborone was neither a mining, nor, an agricultural place. It was primarily the seat of government that subsequently attracted business activities. Thus, government activities, and not mining or farming, was the primary focus of the city. The local democracy workshop emphasised that as the seat of government, all the headquarters of central government offices were located in Gaborone (except the high court). As a result, the construction of central government offices attracted the construction industry, which became dominant economically. Gaborone attracted an extremely large population of constructors and labourers who had no decent accommodation and partly caused squatting. Gradually, the population of civil servants increased in proportion to construction labourers. However, the recentness of the city meant that construction was the most important employer and male labourers constituted a significant portion of the city's population. The result was the swelling up of the poor who occupied the squatter location of Old Naledi that existed outside central government planning. Women vendors provided them with food services. State institutions rapidly emerged, accompanied by the city council, and private businesses. Employment opportunities expanded and diversified to include, government, private and informal sectors.

Apart from construction, males dominated in formal employment (managerial positions, political positions, industrial technical staff, public service, the forces – army, police, prison forces and security companies) and that part of the informal sector dealing with welding, carpentry, and mechanical-engineering. Women have expanded

their economic activities from street vending, tailoring, carpentry, teaching, nursing, banking, hair saloon, cleaning, and factory workers. Currently, a few also occupy managerial and political positions.

Official reports show that the structure of the Gaborone population diverged from the trend in the national population until 2001. For instance, according to the 1991 population census, the distribution of the Gaborone population showed that the active working age bracket of 15-64 years constituted 71,1 percent of the population, implying that 7 out of every 10 persons in the city, was within the active working age bracket. Although there were more females than males in Botswana, the reverse was the case in Gaborone before 2001. Males made up 51 percent of the city's population before the 2001 census (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 138). Un-aware that the 2001 population census recorded a shift to 49 percent males and 51 percent females, the 2003 local democracy workshop questioned the legitimacy of gender equality issues assuming such dominance in Gaborone politics. In terms of local/national democracy relationships, it was ironic that women organisations built their headquarters in Gaborone where women were a minority, and spearheaded national gender equality politics form there. Interestingly, the 2003 local democracy workshop blamed not the women organisations but the president (of the republic) for encouraging gender-based politics by signing to SADC protocols requiring gender equality without taking cognisance of actual gender distribution of the city's population. But the fact that unemployment patterns in the city were more severe among females than males should not be overlooked, generating the kind of gender politics that the local democracy workshop blamed on the president.

Institutional Arrangement and Implications for Local Democracy

Although the city revenue comes from different sources, such as abattoir fees, cemetery fees, health clinic fees, community centre fees, rents, sale of property, service levies and so on, the bulk of it comes from central government grants. For instance, out of a total budget of P55, 879,990 in the 1995/96 financial year, grants amounted to P29, 354,000 or 53 percent (Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, 1995:1). Central government grants increased to P40, 897,000 or 63 percent out of a total budget of P64, 991,210 in the 1997/98 budget year (Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, 1997: 4). It further increased to P71 621,340 or 72 percent in the 2000/01 financial year (Ministry of Local Government, 2000: 6). There are two aspects concerning a grant: it is externally raised income and therefore outside the confines of local city democracy (Mosha, 1998; Lekorwe, 1998); but it is internally based expenditure and therefore an aspect of local democracy. The local democracy workshop that was dominated by elected councillors preferred autonomous existence of the City Council in which income would be wholly generated locally. But the management of the municipal warned that central government was more concerned about sharing resources nationally in order to avoid uneven development between regions. Ironically, President Festus Mogae shares the same sentiments with the elected councillors. He has 'warned that local authorities must start sharing costs of development and other services with consumers and beneficiaries' (Botswana Daily News, 4 November 2003). It is clear that the Gaborone City would have had to raise P64, 991,210 for the 1997/98 financial year to attain financial autonomy. What is not clear though is whether the central government would cede some of its taxes to the municipal authority

or it would require the latter to come up with new taxes, thus over-burdening the city dwellers with more taxation.

Official records show extensive central government involvement in the running of the Gaborone City. Apart from central government grants, government ministries, departments and public corporations are heavily involved in the administration of the Gaborone City, crowding out the municipal authority. The bulk of the work concerning, the establishment and management of residential areas directly fall under central government departments in the Ministry of Lands and Housing and not under the city council. The central government Department of Housing is responsible for the formulation of housing policy as well as the implementation of specific housing programmes and strategies. It is also responsible for the administration of the government pool housing scheme and the monitoring of the Self-Help Housing Agency (SHHA) programme. The central government Department of Lands is responsible for the allocation of serviced residential land. The central government Department of Surveys and Mapping is responsible for the design and implementation of cadastral surveys of all detailed layout plans on state lands among other things. The Department of Town and Regional Planning is responsible, in addition to other schemes, for the preparation of settlement development plans and design of detailed layout plans for various residential neighbourhoods and the Botswana Housing Corporation is a parastatal charged with the primary responsibility of providing urban housing for both public and private occupation, outright sale as well as rentals (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 148). With these central government departments directly involved in the mapping, distribution and management of land in Gaborone, the functions and the financial base of the municipal authority are severely restricted and this crowds out local democracy.

The provision of water to Gaborone City is the responsibility of the Water Utilities Corportation, electricity is the responsibility of the Botswana Power Corporation, and telecommunication is the responsibility of the Botswana Telecommunications Corporations. The fact that these are supplied by public corporations means that issues related to their provision are outside the framework of local democracy. Such situations further marginalise the relevance of the municipal authority and downgrade local democracy. 'In Gaborone City, street lighting services (i.e., poles and lamps) are provided, installed and maintained by Gaborone City Council while the provision of power is done by the Botswana Power Corporation' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 251). This means that street lighting is a local democracy issue while the provision of electricity is not. This creates a situation in which the municipal authority is blamed for omissions by either central government departments or public corporations, thus, threatening local democracy.

Gaborone and the Adjoining Villages: Implications for Local Democracy

The enormous population increase in Gaborone, from the estimated 3855 in 1963, to 18 799 in 1971, 59 657 in 1981, 133 468 in 1991 and 186 007 in 2001 have resulted in the physical expansion of the city to 169 square kilometres, eating up most of the undeveloped land. Farms such as Broadhurst and Bonnington have disappeared and have been replaced by residential and commercial areas, schools, clinics and so on, bearing similar names. 'By the time the planning for a new location - Broadhurst (named after the previous farm) - was complete in 1974, there was a pressing need due to population expansion, for the planning of Broadhurst II to begin. The growth of Gaborone has always been characterised by population growth beyond projections. For instance, in 1981, Gaborone had the highest proportion of urban residents (35.9%) in the country, and this is attributable to the city being the most attractive centre for migrants' (Campbell, 1998: 265). Unsurprisingly, 'the most populated residential neighbourhoods in the city displaying population densities of more than 120 persons per hectare are extensions 8 (Bontleng), Extension 13 (Old Naledi), Extention 23, Extensions 32 and 33 north of Lemmanyane Drive in Broadhurst, and extension 37 in Tsholofelo' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 133). However, the most densely populated areas do not have more representation in the Gaborone Council as shall be shown later, and this negatively affect local democracy.

The growth of the city has led to its physical expansion into the outlining ethnic villages. Presently, 'there is a discernable development corridor between Tlokweng, Mogoditshane and Metsemotlhaba. The

built-up environment of Tlokweng and Mogoditshane has merged with the built-up environment of Gaborone especially along the Zeerust-Gaborone Road and Gaborone-Molepolole Road. There is hardly any spatial separation between the settlements except for the statutory boundaries. This has resulted in the juxtaposition of urban, semi-urban and rural environments' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 27). There is no doubt that adding such large doses of entrenched and settled communities into the population and cultural make-up of the city, compromises its mixed and ethnically balanced population. Such a situation poses the danger of the emergence of ethnic politics, polluting the ethnic-free politics of the city.

While Gaborone has swallowed up a significant portion of the land and the cultural and economic make-up of the outlining villages, the politics and administration have purportedly remained separate. Tlokweng and Mogoditshane continue to be administered by separate local structures. Yet there is interdependence between these villages and the Gaborone City. The City provides these villages with business opportunities, employment, educational and health facilities, roads and fire services. In return, the adjoining villages provide Gaborone City with accommodation for its workers, sand for its construction purposes and firewood.

Squatting has become a serious problem for the adjoining villages. In July 1991, President Sir Ketumile Masire appointed 'A Presidential Commission of Inquiry Into Land Problems in Mogodisthane and Other Pre-Urban Villages' in response to government's concern 'about lawlessness in land transactions in the Mogoditshane area (Republic of Botswana, 1991: Executive summary). The terms of reference spelled out that 'the Kweneng land board has completely failed to

handle land problems in the Mogoditshane area and it reported this to the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing…In the Mogoditshane and other neighbouring villages people do as they like with the land. They subdivide *masimo* (crop fields), change their use to residential plots, sell and allocate plots without the involvement of any lawful authority' (Republic of Botswana, 1991: Executive Summary). Thus, developments in Gaborone have had spill over effects onto neighbouring villages, plunging them into land-related problems which were previously unknown. Following the recommendations of the presidential commission (a centralised instrument), the Kweneng land board was instructed to demand payment (P5000) or demolish squatter homes. Churches and civic organisations were opposed to the latter recommendation, but the central government ignored them and demolished squatter homes of all those who could no pay the fine. Apart from squatting, the population of the adjoining villages have been growing tremendously. For instance the population of Mogoditshane grew by 10.54 percent between 1991 and 2001, generating pressure for more residential space and the change of land use from crop production to rentier property development.

Population Increase and Local Democracy in Gaborone City

It must be recognised that even though women were a minority in Gaborone until 2001, the gender distribution was shifting rapidly and was likely to catch up with that of males. The 'nett in-migration' to Gaborone by gender between 1981 and 1991 was 27 488 for males and 24 388 for females (Campbell, 1998: 264). The huge migrant population has negative consequences for local democracy. Normally, in-migrants see themselves as visitors and are less likely to be committed to local democracy in the Gaborone City and are more likely to be committed to the local democracy in their original home places. Thus, the fact that Gaborone's population is characterised by a huge in-migrant component, means a huge population of non-participants in its affairs, thus, limiting local democracy.

Dramatic population increases primarily due to in-migration, combined with rapid expansion of residential and commercial purposes to place enormous pressure on open space within the city. Gaborone's population stood at 133 468 people in 1991, occupying 169 square kilometres of land, and shooting the population density to 789,9 persons per square kilometre (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 133). The city's population has increased to 186 007 in 2001. The fast-increasing population's effect on the open spaces, and therefore on local democracy and on the environment, has been negative and serious. 'A noticeable trend in the city has been the utilisation of designated open spaces for other urban land use activities. TCPB received a total of 17 applications for change of use from designated open space to other land use activities between January,

1992 and November, 1994. Of these applications, 8 were approved and 9 were rejected…If the situation is not checked, all designated open spaces would disappear in no time' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 121). It is therefore not surprising that the local democracy workshop concluded that there was very little open space in Gaborone currently. In addition, the city was shocked to hear that the Minister of Lands, Housing and Environment had allocated part of an environmentally fragile area – a forestry reserve along the Notwane River - for the construction of a filling station (Grant, 2003: 11). Thus, local democracy is under threat from the fast disappearing open spaces and from the centralisation of land allocation powers in the ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment.

Open spaces that had been established and could be used for multipurpose community activities are under threat from an extremely fast growing city population. 'Within Gaborone City boundaries, open spaces account for 537 plots and cover a vast area of 6 378,05 hectares representing 33,40 percent of the total land area…Large portions of undeveloped land, having no designated land use, fall under this group' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 121). Although such enormous open space is primarily undeveloped and undesignated land, its availability has democratic potentials because it provides space for political rallies, informal children playgrounds and soccer fields. Thus, undeveloped land has played a crucial role of serving the democratic functions that would otherwise have to be performed by the absent community halls in the majority of residential areas. Open spaces in Gaborone City, purposely planned and built for sports and recreational facilities, account for 7 large plots covering 538,20 hectares or 2,82 percent of Gaborone total land area (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 128).

In addition, the 7 community halls in the city are centralised (all controlled by the one city council) and too few, constraining local democracy. Only activities approved by officials who are implementing council policy can take place in these community centres. These include weddings and general parties, church service, disco, live bands and music, film and fashion shows as well as seminars and workshops. Others are drama, rehearsals and meetings. Seven halls catering for a population of 186 007 performing various local democratic activities seem to be inadequate.

With respect to distribution, the Community centres are concentrated in the northern, eastern and southern axes of Gaborone City. These are the older portions of the city. Delayed provision of community halls, and centralisation of the administration of the few halls that are there, combine to negatively impact on local democracy. 'Gaborone West in which much development has taken place in recent times recently got a community hall' (Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment, et al, 2001: 203). Thus, new locations go without community halls for long periods of time and those that do are not allowed to run them, having to seek permission from the Gaborone City Council. In addition, there are only two youth centres – the Botswana Youth Centre (in Gaborone West) and the Young Women Christian Association (in Extension 10) for the entire youth population in the city. This is too inadequate.

The upgrading of the poor locations by replacing pit latrines with central sewerage system, the privatisation of solid waste management and the relocation of Old Naledi, is likely to improve the city's image, environment and local democracy. 'Of all the services provided, sanitation has not fared so well in the urban areas. The majority of the poor people use pit latrines, although the policy since 1992 has advocated the use of flush toilets' (Mosha, 1998: 286). In addition,

the Self Help Housing Agency (SHHA) or poor residential homes in Gaborone are not fenced, encouraging trespassing, harassment and the beating of residents by criminal elements. Crime on the poor areas is on the increase and the police are slow to respond and this has a negative implication for household security, for free movement at night and hence, for local democracy.

In addition, there is a growing perception that there is corruption, particularly concerning open tenders and the collection of water-borne waste through council-based vacuum tankers. There are two types of projects for tenders: small and large projects. All large projects are tendered through the national tender board and are advertised in the open market and the city council is not directly involved. The city council is involved in small projects and purchases, where the minimum requirements insist on three quotations for each, before purchasing can be authorised. Councillors participating in the local democracy workshop felt that officials have inside information that can easily influence outcomes of quotations. But council staff felt that councillors had these perceptions because they were removed from the tendering process and were bitter about it. In the case of refuse collection, majority of workshop participants were of the view that it was very slow and exposed to corrupt practices. But council staff is convinced that there is an effective monitoring mechanism in place. What is missing is the fact that such a mechanism is not completely known to the residents.

For the last two decades, Gaborone had very few public toilets and this limited local democracy and endangered the environment. The absence of private flush toilets in the poor neighbourhoods negatively impacted on the environment. But the absence of public toilets at open spaces where political rallies are held, and at banks, surely limited

the time people could spend out of their homes and therefore limited local democracy. Even the private sector has not built adequate pay-as you use toilets. The absence of public toilets in several public places constrained people from spending more time in such places and this negatively impacted on local democracy. Otherwise those who spent more time in such places ended up making the bushes unwelcoming by relieving themselves onto them. However, the situation has dramatically changed because the recent building of new malls has added more public toilets.

Representative Democracy

Botswana is a hierarchical-unitary state in which Parliament regards local authorities as its own creation rather than as equals and competitors. 'All local authorities in Botswana exist by virtue of ordinary Acts of Parliament and, at least in theory, any of them could be abolished at any time by parliament. Local authorities are not included in the constitution, and consequently, do not have inherent competence derived from it' (Lekorwe, 1998: 74). Thus, local democracy enjoys no independent existence as it derives its standing from another political institution, parliament. Having local authorities whose existence is not entrenched in the constitution weakens and marginalises local democracy.

Local elections in Gaborone are held at the same time with national elections and are administered by an independent electoral commission. Administratively, there is a Gaborone District Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) office that runs municipal and parliamentary elections in the Gaborone City. It consists of public servants who are accountable to a national IEC that is headed by a high court judge who is appointed by the Judicial Service Commission and approved by an all-party conference – consisting of party leaders. The IEC ensures impartiality in the handling of local and national electoral matters. However, neither the IEC Gaborone office nor the IEC headquarters issue the writ of elections. It is the President who issues the writ of parliamentary elections and the Minister of Local Government who issues the writ of local elections. Yet both the president and the minister are interested parties and this is perceived negatively in terms of the running of local democracy.

The Electoral Act governs both national and local government elections. The conduct of the IEC, and of the police, is governed by the Electoral Act. It empowers the Returning Officer to issue instructions to the police, but only in line with the Electoral Act. When it comes to accommodating polling agents in the vehicle transporting ballot boxes, the police refuse to exercise flexibility, ignore IEC instructions, and prefer to follow instructions from the national police headquarters. Moreover, the local authority, that is, the Gaborone City Council, is not involved in the administration of municipal elections and this impact negatively on local democracy. On the plus side, national and international organisations observe general elections (both national and local) and this add credibility to the electoral process.

The system of First Pass the Post (FPTP) is used in both primary elections and in local and national elections. Although the workshop participants commonly believed that such a system has served Botswana well, it does not easily allow the accommodation of women, youth and marginalized communities, such as religious and racial communities of Moslems and Indians. In terms of gender politics, males have dominated the mayor-ship of Gaborone City. The Gaborone City Council has had eleven mayors since 1966, and only two or 18 percent, have been women (Lekorwe, 1998: 77). Both female mayors were from the ruling BDP and at a time when gender politics was still less prominent. Thus, the FPTP system does not easily allow diverse representation that would reflect the diversity of the Gaborone population.

The City Council is governed through committees that consist of councillors, and the mayor. However, city dwellers neither directly elect the mayor nor committee members. Councillors are the ones who

elect the mayor and elect each other into committees. Committee and mayoral elections are held yearly and are only restricted to councillors. In any case, the mayor submits progress reports to his councillors and not to the electorates. Thus, the city mayor is not accountable to the electorate. Moreover, city dwellers hardly know the mayoral candidates until when councillors elect one of them to be mayor. Even then, it is not very clear whether the political parties nominate the preferred candidate or whether individual councillors decide to stand and inform the party. This was a controversial issue in the local democracy workshop because it once happened that the Gaborone City Council passed a vote of no confidence on its mayor and deputy, and replaced them with other candidates. There was a near political crisis when the new entrants were expelled from the party, indicating that the former mayor and deputy were the party's own preferred candidates. Despite this incident, the councillors attending the local democracy workshop insisted that they are the ones who decide on the candidature and expect the party to approve. But still, other members of the local democracy workshop held the view that a system in which councillors and not the electorates elected the mayor and deputy, was not fully democratic because the two were not accountable to the electorate. Even then, they felt that such a system was comparatively better when placed alongside another in which mayors were nominated and imposed by the party. The councillors also viewed the system as relatively easy to operate and preferred it.

In terms of majority councillors, Gaborone City has been dominated by the BNF since 1984. 'The 1984 elections were a two party contest, and for the first time in the history of the city the BNF triumphed. Of the thirteen wards, the BNF won 10, and the BDP won the other 3. This trend continued with the BNF increasing its majority in the 1989 elections, by winning 12 of the 13 wards and BDP winning the other'

(Lekorwe, 1998: 77). When Gaborone City's wards were increased to 25, the BNF won twenty-four (24) in 1994, leaving only one to the BDP. But the Botswana political system allows councillors and members of parliament to cross-the floor. That is, to join another party after being elected under a different party. The Gaborone City Council extremely suffered when 15 councillors crossed the floor from the BNF to the newly formed Botswana Congress Party in 1998. However, the system does not provide for a re-election, making politicians less accountable to their electorates and impacting negatively on local democracy. It is also likely that such crossing the floor partly causes voter apathy.

In addition, political parties are national rather than locally, or regionally or ethnically or religiously based. Even party manifestos are nationally based rather than locally based, and they tend to marginalize local issues. Such kind of politics prioritises national issues and undermines local ones. For instance, Gaborone City councillors need not promise their electorate anything locally-derived. All they have to say is what their national party would bring if elected into office. Thus, the concern is with the control of the national government and not with the local authority. Such politics marginalize local democracy by marginalizing local issues and by eclipsing individual character under the image of the party.

The quality of local representation is perceived to be low because most Gaborone councillors have very little formal education, preventing them from understanding budgetary issues. The Gaborone City Council has been very unsuccessful in attracting educated people to be councillors. On the other hand, councillors complain that educated elite and religious leaders hardly ever attend their meetings, and therefore, nobody engages them on any serious discussion. Moreover, educated people are not interested in becoming councillors either

because the remuneration is too little or losing elections scare them of. Whatever the reason may be, educated people in Gaborone hardly attend meetings addressed by councillors.

However, local democracy is enhanced by the fact that all parties are free to campaign wherever they want. Apart from the BNF that prevented the BCP from campaigning in Old Naledi in 1998 (BCP had been formed by parliamentarians and councillors who broke away from the BNF in that year), all parties are free to campaign in all areas of Gaborone (campaign difficulties were experienced only in the cases of walled-residences whose occupants keep fierce dogs that scare away campaigners and in the case of apathetic people who do not show up for rallies and meetings). However, there is hardly any intimidation or violence. In that regard, the peaceful political environment promotes local democracy. Yet there is extreme apathy because the majority of people simply do not attend meetings called by councillors.

Participatory Democracy

The Full Council of the Gaborone City Council and kgotla meetings that councillors address from time to time, are open to the public. In addition, Full Council meetings are gazetted even though the public might not be aware of it. Moreover, efforts are made to invite NGOs through the Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (BOCONGO), but these hardly ever attend either Full Council or kgotla meetings. Public systems are used to advertise Gaborone City Council Full Council and kgotla meetings. Unfortunately, the public, including trade unions, NGOs, churches and so on, hardly attend these forums, providing little interaction with the elected local politicians. As a result, the city council is not responsive to the needs of the city dwellers because there is very little interaction between them and the councillors, and there are very few mechanisms through which city dwellers can present their complains, except attending meetings addressed by the Minister of Local Government where they complain about council's delayed or failed delivery of services. But using such a central government forum to register complaints and grievances against the council damages rather than promotes local democracy. It compels councillors to be defensive in their response to such complaints and makes them to view the residents as 'informers' of central government rather than as participants in the local democracy process.

The Gaborone City Council has recently launched a publication – *Kgetsi ya Tsie* – through which it explains its operations and programmes. Copies of council development plans, budgets, and progress reports are free public documents. But these documents are released concurrently with their national counterparts that eclipse them. For instance, the council development plan comes out at the same time with the more important national development plan that

eclipses the former. In addition, the council budget comes out in April, the same time that the national budget is realised. There are hardly enough copies of the municipal documents for public consumption (Production of copies is the responsibility of the Ministry of Local Government and it only produces enough copies for the use by the local authority). Thus, city dwellers hardly know what is contained in the council documents, including the budget, urban development plan and so on. In addition, there are no suggestion boxes although there are a few public booths to use for registering complaints. But the city council does not have a system of knowing the numbers and types of complaints.

Although computers have been installed and networked, the City Council neither rely on the email nor does it have a website. This constrains local democracy because there are no reliable and smooth communication links between the municipal authority and the public. In addition, the city council has not embarked on any public surveys, local referendums or used focused group discussions to generate ideas and test the support of the city dwellers for its programmes. In addition, NGOs hardly make an assessment of council activities. Although BOCONGO is a member of the Urban Development Committee, it has never attended any of its meetings. In fact, NGOs prefer to interact with central government ministries and departments than with local authorities. However, the local democracy workshop revealed that most NGO leaders stay in the neighbouring villages rather than in Gaborone, and effectively have no right to participate in its local democracy. In any case, councillors call meetings around 5 pm when everybody is leaving their various workstations and on their way home. Thus, it is perceived impractical that NGO leaders would be expected to start attending meetings addressed by councillors after working hours. The real major constraint is that all NGOs in Gaborone

City are national rather than local in orientation and that is how they want to portray themselves. So, attending city council meetings would imply that they are locally – rather than nationally – based and this could damage their image, both in the eyes of the nation and in the eyes of the international donors that sustain their activities.

Although NGOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), trade unions and churches hardly attend council meetings, and hardly involve themselves in local democracy activities, their national input impact on local democracy. NGOs hold some of their workshops in Gaborone, churches hold their Independence Day prayers and other activities either at the national stadium or at Ditshupo hall, both in Gaborone and invite city dwellers to attend. NGOs and other organisations have also raised issues of concern, including human rights, gender equality, environmental protection, transparency, democracy and so on that have an impact on local governance. They have engaged in civic education, acted as watchdogs and advised on national policies that had effects on the lives of city dwellers.

Conclusion

This work has attempted to provide both facts and perceptions on the state of local democracy in the Gaborone City. It has also provided a historical account of the city's origins, layout and relationship with the adjoining villages. It is evident that migrants constitute a significant portion of the Gaborone population. Yet migrants care very little about local democracy. They have swelled the city population, making it extremely difficult to plan for an alarming growing population.

The uneven roles of the central government and the municipal authority proved to be a central political issue during the local democracy workshop. The administration and provision of essential services to Gaborone City such as water, electricity, land allocation, development planning and so on, are handled by central government ministries, departments and parastatals, leaving the municipal authority to handle 'marginal' issues such as street lighting, sewerage collection, and so on. The dominance of central government in the administration and provision of services to Gaborone city is resented by the municipal authority, by both the political and administrative wings. Even political parties, NGOs, trade unions and churches marginalize local issues, preferring to portray a national than a local orientation. City residents are marginally informed about activities of the municipal authority, even those that are gazetted. The releasing of important municipal documents such as budgets and urban development plans coincide with the releasing of counterparts national documents, further marginalizing local issues.

The occupation of the office of mayor is not open to direct elections. Neither is the occupation of positions in the council committees open to direct elections by the public. Although councillors prefer

the current system of indirect elections, the general public prefers a directly elected executive mayor, who has appointing powers over senior municipal staff, has full control over the income of the city council, full taxing powers and runs a municipal police with powers of arrest.

Recommendations

This section outlines the recommendations that the workshop generated. The participants were divided into various working groups and asked to generate recommendations. These were presented and discussed by the whole workshop.

– There should be more decentralisation of power. The local authority should be allowed to generate its own income and manage its own budget. The local authority should determine tax levels and collect taxes. These are responsibilities that are currently handled by various central government ministries and departments.

– There should be an executive mayor directly elected by the city dwellers. This would make the city mayor responsible to the electorates and not to the councillors.

– Municipal and national elections should be conducted at different times. But first, it should be established if people would be interested to vote if the separation was effected.

– The local authority should come up with programmes aimed at empowering women and youth.

– The Gaborone District Office of the IEC should issue writ for municipal elections.

– The city council should be empowered to enforce its own bye-laws, with powers of arrest.

– The remuneration of the municipal staff should be improved to enable it to retain experienced local skilled manpower that is currently being lost and jeopardising localisation.

– In addition to Standing Orders, there should be a job description for the councillor, clearly stating what s/he is expected to do, and differentiating it from that of the Member of Parliament. This would clear doubts about the responsibilities of councillors and members of parliament.

– The local authority should mount public education campaigns to encourage the residents to raise issues that directly affect them.

– More should be done to open up the business of the council to the city residents.

– The city council should devise a clear system of receiving and responding to complaints and should make it effective.

– The city council should have a fully-fledged public relations office that would inform the public about the business of council.

– The city should be empowered to initiate and administer its own local referendums

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