

The NGO Web

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Editorial

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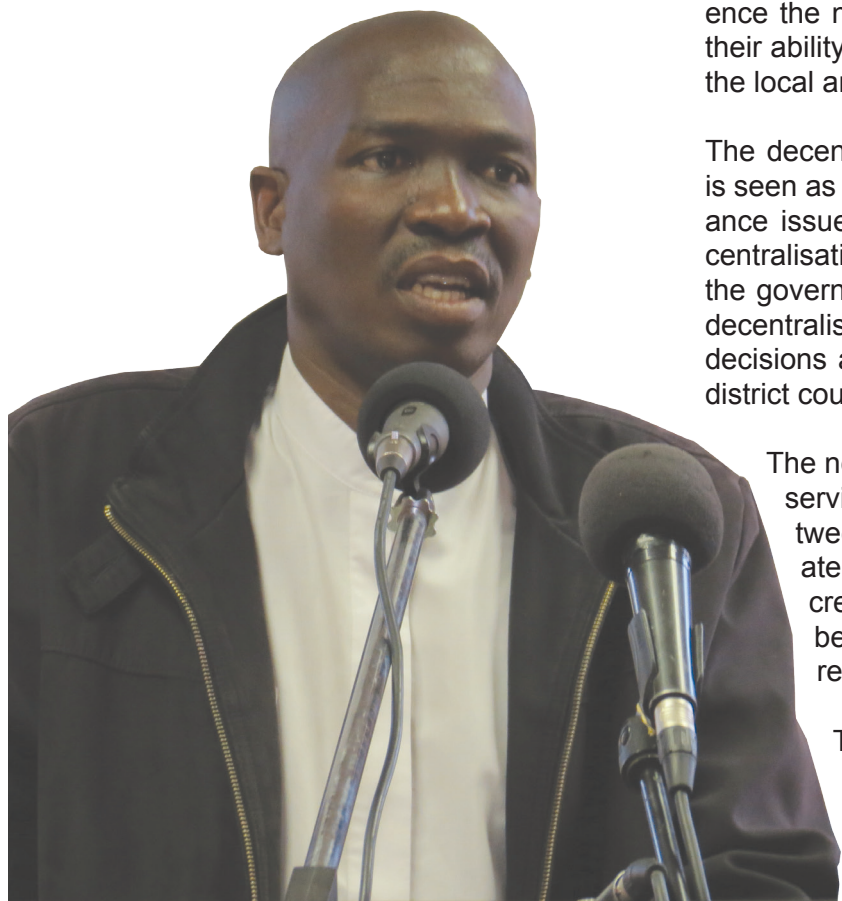
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FOREWORD

The current challenge facing Lesotho as of today, is to consolidate democracy right from grassroots to the national level. This requires active civil society organisations and social movements to continue the struggle and demand the accountable governance structures. It is our conviction that where there is vibrant civil society organisations and accountable governing structures decisions that affect them are well informed in a way that transformation is certain. As an umbrella organisation, we are bound to continuously reflect on new challenges and be able to come up with alternative thinking.



In so doing, we are responding to a call of promoting transparency and accountability, which are critical in enhancing democratic governance. This cannot be achieved unless we deepen the decentralisation programmes in our country. Further, we can be effective in upholding these core democratic values by understanding the challenges that rural communities are facing and in understanding the dynamics of power that usually affect such communities.

The political space in Lesotho it is still characterised by lack of citizens participation thus promoting structural exclusion from governance and development processes. This calls for strong engagement by ordinary citizens.

The lack of effective public participation usually results in making government decisions to remain irrelevant in most cases. In addition to this, public institutions became authorities that are not accountable, thus jeopardising poor people's needs when developing national budgets. Under these circumstances, the communities feel powerless to influence the nature of governance in the country and their ability to decide is limited only to voting during the local and national elections.

The decentralisation programme in Lesotho which is seen as a critical response in addressing governance issues is not adequate unless the fiscal decentralisation goes together with it. It is noted that the government has also been dragging its feet in decentralising the real power that includes making decisions at local level to community councils and district councils.

The net results of these are evidenced by poor service deliveries and creation of conflict between community councillors and electorate. This has had a negative impact on the credibility of local governance structures because it is only the voting powers that remain with them.

The call for deepening decentralisation is aimed at building the bridge between voters, local community councillors and national government in delivering necessary services that may include the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and weak governance. We aim to achieve this through institutionalising the culture of dialogue to all governance and development actors.

This also can be achieved by initiating empowerment programmes that will result in enhancement of community skills and knowledge.

Mr Seabata Motsamai
Executive Director

EDITORIAL



The information remains a critical part of development agenda, and where communities are well informed, they are able to take active part in deciding how the budget priorities can be shaped. The current consultation mechanisms of coming up with budget priorities are not yet institutionalised in a way that when there is an omission, government ministries can be accountable. Though the 2014/15 budget speech may be considered better, there are still areas for improvement as evidenced by the Civil Society Budget Speech Analysis Forum at Lehakoe Recreation Centre.

The government annual budget should indicate how progressively the government is intending to respond to socio-economic, political and environmental situation of the country. There is a clear challenge that there are other issues that could form part of the national priorities that have been left out in the current budget. There are critical policy issues that ought to have been given priority for the 2014/2015 Budget Speech. These include issues related to education, women and children, health and HIV/AIDS, agriculture and food security.

The country's commitment to meet Millennium Development Goal 2, which stipulates that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full cycle of primary schooling seems bleak, given the money committed and the poor performance of the sector.

Though the government has committed to creating jobs for Basotho, it has no specific programmes targeting specifically the youth of this country, as they are the hardest hit by unemployment. This year's budget can be applauded for further committing to continued agriculture subsidy programmes, but the government should pay more attention to household food security if its willing to win the fight against food insecurity.

Without further ado, there are also other interesting stories in the publication, NGO Web that one can feed eyes on. It's reality that we cannot shy away from youth unemployment, which is a prevailing challenge for many African countries.

There is also another piece on the public's participation in developing pro-poor budgeting since their participation is crucial for development. We have issues of quality in Lesotho's education system which date back to the introduction of Free Primary Education.

Your feedback is most welcome, and hope to get suggestion on topics of interest to be covered in the next issue.

Happy reading....

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CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE ON THE 2014/2015 BUDGET SPEECH

The Government's budget is an instrument of power that portrays how government wants to disaggregate its revenues and how it responds to policy priorities. It is noted that usually, the priorities of the government come as a result of the tough competition, either directed towards responding to the challenges facing the country or maintaining the status quo. In this context, it is important to analyse the budget from the perspective of the poor people. This is because the theory of change of civil society organisations that aims at transforming the development agenda.

Further, it demonstrates the Government's intentions regarding



Civil Society representatives during the Post Budget Analysis event at Lehakoe Recreation Centre on February 20, 2014.

the expenditure geared towards development. Since there are so many competing interests when developing the budget, it is important to see where the voice of the poor is in the finalisation of the budget. In the developing world, the voice of the poor tends to be lost in the way, hence our analysis.

As of today, life expectancy for Lesotho is at 48. It is defined as expected number

of years of life remaining at a given age. It is based on an average number of subsequent years of life for someone of a certain age, according to a particular mortality experience. This has a direct reference to the socio-economic and political situation of the country. Where the citizens are highly challenged by the socio-economic and political hardships, the life expectancy tends to be low.

Currently, Lesotho has HIV prevalence rate of 23.6 percent and An official unemployment rate of 25 percent. High retrenchment in the South Africa mines and the unpredictable textile industry due to that phasing out of the AGOA, is increasing the level of poverty in the country.

Further, the 2014/15 budget comes at the time when the country's Southern African Customs



LCN Economic Justice
Coordinator, Mr Sekonyela
Mapetja

LCN vice president,
Ntsoaki Khosi



Union revenue, which Lesotho's economy is heavily reliant on, has potential of declining.

The 2014-15 budget allocations presented by the Minister of Finance Leketekete Ketso show positive signs in addressing Lesotho's challenges. The country's plan to legislate annual Midterm Budget Reviews (MBRs), which will enable the Government to subject annual budget allocations to frequent scrutiny, is strongly supported by the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (LCN). MBRs will improve the transparency and accountability of the budget process, as well as the responsiveness of the annual resource allocation.

The proposed establishment of an Independent National Monitoring and Evaluation Authority is yet another positive stride by the Government to ensure more robust evaluation of the implementation of budget allocations.

Policy priorities for 2014-15

The 2014/15 budget speech identifies four priorities: Facilitating job creation, inclusive growth and economic diversification, enabling Investment climate and regulatory

framework, underdevelopment of a minimum infrastructure platform and improving public sector efficiency and effectiveness

Basis of Civil Society analysis

Our point of analysis is that there are critical policy issues that ought to have been given priority for 2014/2015 Budget Speech. This includes the issues related to education, women and children, health and HIV/AIDS, agriculture and food security.

Education



Mr Vuyani Tyhali - Lesotho Teachers Trade Union Secretary General

The government has committed M2.3 billion or 15 percent of total

spending on education, but this is low in the context of poor sector performance, and less than the regional average of 20 to 25 percent of the national budget.

The Council is of the opinion that Lesotho is unlikely to meet the education Millennium Development Goal 2 which stipulates that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. This is because the allocation for education is biased towards human resource, which in most cases is focusing on administration rather than access, which is inclusive of infrastructure, teaching and quality human resource. The civil society view is that the education budget is not addressing education decentralisation, thus concentrating at the ministerial level administration.

Since education is meant to equip graduates to be employable or even to become creators of employment, there is mismatch at the moment between what the budget is supporting in the schools and what the market is expecting, thus not contributing to students' employability. The evidence is that, there are so many youth who are not employed, though have gained formal education.

Again, Civil Society has noted that there is no clarity about resourcing education during the transition from the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate to Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education. On the basis of this, there is a strong feeling that progressively, the government is dragging its feet towards achieving the MDG 2.

LCN notes that progressive budgeting should be geared towards facilitating the adoption of the Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality recommendations, if the

MDG 2 is to be achieved. The council also believes that the government budget should be allocated in a way that improves access to education.

It is in this context that this can be achieved through improved decentralisation processes where considerations will be given in how Community Councils, community and community based organisations play a meaningful role in education.

Health and HIV/AIDS

HIV is one of the biggest health challenges facing Lesotho, and cannot be mitigated by the state action alone, but the concerted efforts from all sectors of the society with the state taking the leading role.

It is noted that active and empowered citizens are an essential part of stemming the spread of HIV and Aids and reducing the devastation it wreaks; their agency cannot be neglected. The resourcing through the annual budget allocations either by government or non-state actors is critical.

LCN notes that the 2014/15 budget speech stated that the country plans to reduce child and maternal mortality by at least 25 percent, reduce incidence of HIV by at least 15 percent and increase the coverage of Anti-retroviral Therapy to at least 80 percent of the population that needs it by 2017. Further, the 2014/15 budget speech also indicated that the government of Lesotho plans to enhance the capacity of satellite clinics to reduce burden of Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital and to intensify quality of health services.

Though the Abuja Declaration commits the states to allocate at least 15 percent of the annual budget to the improvement of the



health sector, we note that the current allocation is less by 3 (three) percent. With the health decentralisation model, it is noted that there is a lot to be done at the community level. Further, the HIV/Aids support groups, and the village health workers, should progressively be supported to play a meaningful role in the fight against HIV and Aids. Under the leadership of the community councils, more can be achieved in this regard.

In a context where poverty and unemployment are burdens, the health facilities are always under stress, often forcing the poor people to use last resources towards accessing, health facilities. This limits Lesotho's efforts to achieve Maternal, Child and Infant Mortality MDG 4. By adopting progressive resourcing or 15 percent budget as per Abuja Declaration will result in minimising the burden on the healthcare system.

Agriculture and food security

Agriculture productivity is fundamental in African states, Lesotho in particular where the majority of the people depend on it. In this context, it is important to examine how the government intends to support and facilitate improved household

self-sufficiency in food production. This is usually assessed based on how government allocates resources. It is noted that beyond the role agriculture plays in economic growth, it also acts as a social safety net for rural communities. The 2014/15 budget proposes to reduce food insecurity by 25 percent by 2017. To achieve this, the government plans to develop and support commercial agriculture to increase agricultural productivity, improve and implement advanced technology, diversify into higher value crops and improve supply chains and marketing.

Though this is a good move, the Government should also focus on household productivity, as this will facilitate and enable rural communities to improving their purchasing power. Improved agricultural practices are not the only needed for food supply, but will also serves as a preventive mechanism for diseases thus critical for health promotion. Further, the budget speech provided a framework for diversification in the sector, though it has not met the benchmark of the Maputo Declaration which states that countries should progressively allocate 10 percent of the annual budget to agriculture.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

DIVERSIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

Although the World Bank and Government of Lesotho's Bureau of Statistics agree that unemployment rate is currently at 25.3 percent, taking into the consideration the closure of textile factories, new graduates from tertiary institutions and those who fall out of the education system, this seems to be underestimated.

The National University of Lesotho has managed to produce 3 053 graduates, while Limkokwing University for Creative Technology produced 914. In addition to this, the Ministry of Forestry is also providing a month's employment, with a once off wage payment per year.

The Government's National Strategic Development Plan commits to generating 10 000 jobs per annum. At the moment, this commitment is not traceable to which sectors and with which skills the young graduates have acquired.

On this basis, there is a general feeling of youth organisations that there is a mismatch between what they were trained for and the current labour market requirements; this needs a new policy focus.

It is noted that the government introduced Partial Credit Scheme administered by the Standard Lesotho Bank and the Ministry of Finance with the view to curb the high unemployment rate among youths.

With the challenges facing young people, access to credit has proved to be problematic. This is noted by the participants of the NGO Week held last year during



Finance Principal Secretary Mr Mosito Khethisa

the Lesotho National Development Corporation presentation on this matter.

During the Budget Speech Session held by the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations, it was clear that the marketability of the youth was still a sticky issue in the country.



Mr Sofonea Shale, Development for Peace Education Coordinator

For countries like Lesotho faced with development challenges and weak governance of institutions, rise in youth unemployment means the youth become vulnerable to unsocial behaviours thus exacerbating the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the country.

Because there are also weak governance structures, the youth pin their hopes in politics, where favouritism may provide a gateway to a better life. Providing evidence to this, 'Musetsi Musetsi, a 2012 graduate says there are structures in theory to help the youth access funds from the Partial Credit Scheme, but the fate of all young people lies in their political affiliations.

LCN's perspective is that, a gap exists between training institutions and the labour market, thus

calling for a job summit that will involve all the stakeholders including the training institutions, the business fraternity and the government.

Lesotho should take the advantage of being a South African Development Community (SADC) member state to lobby and advocate the SADC countries to speak in one voice in mobilising investors within the region — which is not the case now. Furthermore, it should also diversify investment destinations such the European Union and Africa — particularly South Africa.

The new focus should be the manufacturing sector, which unfortunately is dreaded by most Basotho. This could be achieved by mobilising Basotho to invest in manufacturing activities that would at least generate employment locally. The government should also facilitate the search for international markets for lo-



Young Christian Students march in Maseru

cally manufactured goods and services. It is our believe that it is not only through Foreign Direct Investment that Lesotho can survive, but it can also survive through utilising and supporting

the business sector. Without proper dialogue and strategies aimed at reducing the high unemployment rate, issues related to crime and prostitution will be the order of the day.

PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPING PRO-POOR BUDGETING

The approach to human development in the contemporary world requires that government should be accountable to the electorate. Though in most cases, this is not explicitly defined, it means the new approach is aimed at building a social contract between the state and citizens. At its core, poor people should be given first priority when the state is transacting its business because they have natural rights and responsibilities.

The Constitution of Lesotho provides that every citizen has a right to participate. This is the process where people can influence decision-making, which



SADC Council of Non-governmental Organisations Poverty and Development Programmes Manager Mr Glenn Farred

affects their lives to bring about positive change. It is through participation that citizens can express their opinions and be tak-

en seriously. It can be interpreted that the right to participation dictates that the human dignity of ordinary citizens is important. In addition to that, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that every citizen has a right of opinion and expression. It is on this basis we note that, the participation of citizens is guaranteed by both Lesotho Supreme Law and the International Law.

Civil Society's active role in policy development is not an intrusion in governance processes, but a right. Further, it is noted that the right for civil society participation can also be interpreted as a way of ensuring that development respond to issues related to ordinary citizens and it also enhances the rule of law. In addition to the legal framework, it is understood that democratic governance requires that citizens take active participation on public affairs. It is on this basis that the Council demands that government budgeting processes should be participatory as to facilitate accountability.

This can be achieved through availing the public budget documents especially the budget book to the public and publishing a medium term budget policy statement. In addition to this, the government should agree to increase participatory budgeting through community parliaments, and publish a citizen's budget printed in Sesotho focusing on accessible and clear communication to raise budget awareness.

In conclusion, the government should help improve all Basotho's understanding of whether Government expenditure is in line with their priorities.

In the decentralisation policy, we



Deputy Prime Minister Mr Mothetjoa Metsing

note that the Government commits to review existing legislation and develop a comprehensive legal framework to provide guidance and enforcement in the implementation of decentralisation. It will further ensure that all actors have knowledge and un-

day-to-day work, including powers and obligations of each level of Government.

It is the basis of this policy support, civil society understands that the deepening decentralisation programmes are possible,



derstanding of the relevant legal instruments important for their

but this needs political will from the side of the government.

It is further noted that for effective participatory budgeting process, the government needs to better explain how it will improve service delivery through a more effective public service, expand programming and funding for social development programmes that aims at reducing poverty. If local communities are able to demand accountability from the decentralised structures, it will be possible to demand such accountability from the national level, though there is a need for civil society to mobilise and support ordinary citizens in this regard. The community parliament as a form of advocacy can be a good platform for achieving people's participation in developing pro-poor budgeting.



THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN BUILDING DEMOCRATIC LESOTHO

Public institutions in their nature are more concerned with providing the much-needed services to the public. The concept of public institutions may vary from country to country, but the common services provided by such institutions are public education, healthcare, police and military among other services.

As the wheels of change are turning, many African states have realised the importance of changing power through democratic elections, but what remains a major challenge for Africa is to consolidate democracy. It is noted that many African states continue to struggle with rampant corruption, which is a major deterrent to Africa's development.

This has prompted some African



IEC Director of Elections Mr Mphasa Mokhochane, left, and Chairman Mr Mahapela Lehohla during Political Leaders Dialogue at Transformation Resource Centre on 12 February 2014.

countries to engage in robust activities to fight corruption in all of its forms including the illicit flow

of resources both within the continent and outside Africa and to further strengthen the public in-

stitutions and their adherence to laws.

In most African states, the governance landscape is characterised by the lack of citizens' participation, which is regarded as a corner stone for good governance. Their structural exclusion from governance processes and exclusion from the policy dialogue space hinders the expected outcome that Africans can excel in fighting poverty and promotion of good governance. In fact, the purpose of public participation is to promote transparency, encourage openness in government and build ownership of decisions, programmes and projects. The net results of these challenges is the entrenched and increasing vulnerability of these public institutions and perceptions on how they are constituted.

The internal wars in some of countries such Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Sudan, Egypt and Tunisia just are few examples that show that Africa should consolidate democratic governance.

In Lesotho in particular, the democratic governance agenda is still under consolidation and there is a need for the Coalition Government to strengthen governance institutions such as judiciary, legislature and acceptance of Independent Electoral Commission. The perception and utterances by other political parties that IEC is partisan can erode the investment made in the past, thus tarnishing the credibility of this institution.

Though the political parties claim the old tradition on the recruitment of the IEC commissioners was not observed, but political leaders who attended the Political Leaders Dialogue empha-

sized that labeling commissioners political inclinations could tarnish the credibility of the institution. It was mentioned during the Dialogue that if any retraction is needed, such a move should be tactical and be made timeously in order build confidence of the electorate to the independence of IEC.



In addition to this challenge, it was anticipated that some political actors would find it hard to accept elections results, particularly 2014 by-elections, following



In most African states, the governance landscape is characterised by the lack of citizens' participation, which is regarded as a corner stone for good governance

the utterances made in the media about the elections body. It was noted that once the political

leadership attention is diverted, the service delivery agenda at local level would suffer.

The civil society participation in governance and development has not yet been institutionalised hence the need for Lesotho Council of NGOs to create a platform for a dialogue for politi-

cal leadership in order to diffuse the tension that may arise due to misunderstandings.

The council believes that in a situation where dialogue is not used a means to attain political stability, public accountability would be in danger. In is in this context that Civil society organisations under LCN had developed some mechanisms which contribute to the building of the culture of dialogue. These mechanisms included mediation to political impasse from 2007 general elections to an extent where SADC was invited to mediate.

It is accepted by many actors that LCN is continuing to play a significant role in enhancing the culture of dialogue and upholding of democratic values and culture in Lesotho.

By running different types of projects, LCN together with its members are at the core in complementing the government's and communities' efforts in development.

It does not need much convincing to note that the role of civil society in governance and development in Lesotho is a very significant one and critical in building Lesotho democracy.

The real issues around interventions at national level hinge around commitment which can be expressed in many ways and the commitment of the civil society in this regard is unwavering. It is for this reason that involvement and facilitation of LCN seem to be of the most viable strategies, which have been tried and tested, and now trusted by political parties in the country.

It is noted that democracy is critical for any development and it is on this basis that public institutions should be respected by political leaders as it is the foundation for hope by their followers that such institutions can play a meaningful role in development.

However, sometimes leaders may know the reality but choose to ignore it, this can fuel unnecessary tension.

AGRICULTURAL INPUT SUBSIDY

DOES IT REALLY RESPOND TO COUNTRY'S FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION?

In Lesotho, 77 percent of the population lives in the rural areas; almost all of them rely on subsistence agriculture as a source of livelihood. Lesotho's agriculture is mainly made up of crops and livestock sub-sectors with both sectors contributing proportionally towards the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP). In the 1980s the contribution of agriculture to the GDP averaged 20 percent but started to decline in the 1990s. Between 1991 and 2005, the contribution of agriculture to the GDP averaged 17 percent (BOS, 2006).

In the period 2000-2009 the contribution of agriculture to the GDP averaged nine percent, with livestock contributing 52 percent, crops 32 percent, to the agricultural GDP. It is evident that livestock contribution to the agricultural sector is increasingly relative to other sub-sectors and this is mainly because crops are more susceptible to natural hazards like drought.

It is often asserted that agriculture is the backbone of the rural economy. However, in recent

years this assertion has been questioned, largely as a result of the poor performance and output of the sector.

pace with the growing population. At the turn of the 20th century, Lesotho was a net exporter of grains to the mining and industrial towns



More importantly, the performance and output of the agriculture sector has been declining over the years and has not kept

of South Africa. Currently many farming households can hardly feed themselves from their own produce for more than six months.

To counter this situation, the Government of Lesotho engaged into Universal Agricultural Input Subsidy to curb the situation by advocating for intensive crop production in the country categorised into three distinct approaches.

grammes. In fact, many African countries, including Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia pursued large scale “universal” subsidy programmes from the 1960’s up through the 1980’s (Dorward, 2009).

namely:

Availability: Food supplies must be sufficient adequately to feed the population,

Access: All people must have physical, social and economic access to sufficient food,

Stability: Access and availability must be ensured at all times,

Effective utilisation: The food consumed must be safe and nutritious.



In the Budget Speech, the Hon Minister of Finance Leketete Ketso argues the subsidy programme aimed at improving food security and hence reducing hunger is yielding positive results. In this statement he reports that 154 000 metric tonnes have been produced from 2012/13 summer cropping season compared to 42 000 metric tonnes in the previous season. Forecast predicts yield could be marginally higher in the next season.

- Approach 1 — Government share cropping with field owners

- Approach 2 — Block Farming where commercial farmers share crop with field owners or hire fields from the field owners in the selected areas in 10 districts with potential for massive cereal production

- Approach 3 — Individual farmers who do not fall in Approaches 1 & 2. Farmers who do not intend to give their fields to government sharecropping or to Block farmers fall in this category.

For this arrangement, since 2012/13, the government subsidised Agricultural inputs (seeds & fertilizers) at 50 percent of the market price as well as mechanical operations at 50 percent of the approved charges by the ministry.

In 2014/15, the government committed to continue the subsidy programme at 50 percent. Lesotho is not the only African country to engage in subsidy pro-

grammes. These programmes were characterised by a government-controlled input (and output) marketing system, in which farmers were supplied with agricultural inputs at controlled and subsidised prices, and often on heavily subsidised credit. There is a mixture of experiences and lessons from these countries.

Does the subsidy programme really address Food Security?

Looking at the premise of food security and universal definition of food security:

“All people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

This widely accepted definition of food security implies that a number of conditions are to be fulfilled at the same time in order to achieve a state of food security,

It should be noted that measuring the 154 000 metric tonne figure against a longer term average, as well as considering climatic conditions, would help to better understand the true impact of the summer cropping subsidy programme.

Further, considering the conceptual understanding of food security, it is too general to translate high cereal yields into food security. While only one condition of the food security situation has been met, no evidence shows all people physically accessed the food sufficiently. Food security also relies on access to sufficient nutrients.

Focusing the subsidy programme only on cereals does not ensure that people have access to a range of nutrients necessary for true food security, for instance nutrients from vegetables. In the capital Maseru, prices of maize

meal, rose in December 2013 after a long stable spell in 2013. (FAO GIEWS Briefs, 2014). This reflects rising grain prices in neighbouring South Africa, the country's main supplier of maize imports.

In the light of the broad picture of food security, the current situation only underscores availability. No evidence shows food was accessed by all (or at least many) people.

The rising maize meal prices in the end of December 2013, indicates local supply of maize meal was not stable thus prompting imports from South Africa.

The Minister further mentions government's intention to diversify into other sub-sectors like high value crops. However, it will be interesting to know the amount of budget allocated to this sub sector.

Does the current subsidy programme provide value for money while addressing food security

One of the objectives of the Agricultural Input Subsidy is to encourage economically and technically efficient use of inputs, including the uptake of new technology. The economic returns, defined as the net benefits relative to total costs, vary considerably depending on the weather, maize and fertilizer prices, assumptions about yield responses, etc.

The expected returns on yield have to justify the amount of investment placed into the sector.

However, since the adoption of the Agricultural Input Subsidy by the government of Lesotho, millions of Maloti have been injected into the agricultural sector especially cereal crop production and the returns have been varying.

However, there is no accurate data to substantiate the link between yields and economic returns. The economic contribution of the agriculture sector has also deteriorated significantly over the years. This is according to the Central Bank of Lesotho economic review, 2012. Agriculture's contribution to the GDP has declined from 25.0 percent in the 1980s to around 10.0 percent in the 1990s and further to single digit rates in recent years. The Government should commission a study to investigate the structure of the current subsidy programme, and whether it is providing value for money.

Readiness to transition from the subsidy — Exit strategy

In the Budget Speech, the Hon Minister of Finance highlights the government's continued and intensified support to farmers. He also conceded, however, that in the long run the programme will be reduced and farmers should aim

to be self sufficient since in principle subsidies are not meant to be permanent.



Finance Minister Hon. Leketekete Ketso presented 2014/15 budget speech



The budget committed into the subsidy continues to increase year-on-year, from M117 million in 2012/13 to M166 million in the 2014/15 budget. It is important for the government to set clearly defined goals and objectives of the subsidy programme measured

within a set time period. The programme has to consider more especially the vulnerable class to ensure current and future food security.

The Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations recommends that for the programme to adequately respond to food insecurity and food deficit, the government should broaden input subsidy to cover other sectors that contribute to improved food security such as vegetable production.

It is recommended that an in-depth study be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness and profitability of the programme.

This should include an examination of the appropriate role for

the government in administering subsidies, the potential benefits of decentralising delivery to District Agricultural Offices, and the potential to involve the private sector in procurement.

Finally, the government should develop and communicate clear goals and objectives of the subsidy programme within a set time frame in order to prepare farmers to transit into self sufficiency.



THE ISSUE OF QUALITY IN LESOTHO'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

In 2000, Lesotho's Ministry of Education started implementation of the Free Primary programme. The objectives of the Free Primary Education (FPE) programme are to;

- Make basic education accessible to all pupils and relevant to their needs;
- Make education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities;
- Provide basic and necessary resources to enable every Mosotho child to enter and complete the primary cycle of education;
- Ensure that education is affordable to the majority of Basotho;



- Provide and maintain quality education as a basis for promoting human resources development, economic development and societal advancement, thus fulfilling government's broad policy of eradicating poverty and illiteracy;

- Equip every Mosotho with the basic skills and knowledge to live a meaningful life and cope with their environment.

In addition to making primary education free, the government put together a package of benefits

meant to decrease the total costs of primary education to parents, and incentivise families to send their children to school.

While, some of the elements of the package were already in place prior to 2000, with the implementation of Free Primary Education, there was renewed commitment within the Ministry of Education to extend these benefits to all qualifying children under the programme.

he total package of benefits include; school lunches for children who qualify; a government run textbook rental scheme that gives all students within government supported schools access to textbooks; supply of school materials including exercise books, pens and pencils; and support for school infrastructure.

When the Free Primary Education was introduced in 2000, there was opposition to the programme on the basis of a lack of infrastructure to support programme implementation; insufficient engagement with the school proprietors; suggestions that by not including parents and communities in discussions prior to programme implementation they

were absolved of their responsibilities in the education of their children; and finally that the programme was more of a political rather than a policy response.

However, even with all its shortfalls, the free primary education programme has mostly delivered on the key objectives, especially in opening up access to primary education to the majority of pu-



The table below, put together with information from different Education Statistical Reports, including the reports for 2010; 2007 and 2009, reflects some of the impacts of the implementation of the Free Primary Education programme on pupil enrolments. The table indicates that between 1999 and 2000, the first year of implementation of FPE, enrolments increased by more than 45 000.

pils; ensuring that a majority of Basotho children complete the primary cycle of education; and making primary education more equitable.

Evidence suggests that there are still problems with the programme, including not enough teachers, as a result class sizes are too large; most schools do not have enough classrooms; gov-

Enrollments rates by sex in primary schools before and after implementation of FPE in 2000

Primary School Enrollments	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total	364,951	410,745	415,007	418,668	429,720	427,009	422,288	424,855	400,934	396,041	389,424	388,681
Males		202,760	206,665	209,024	214,746	214,762	212,693	214,123	202,710	200,332	196,319	197,912
Females		207,985	208,342	209,664	214,974	212,247	209,595	210,732	198,224	195,709	193,105	190,769
Number of teachers	8225	8578	8762	8908	9294	9993	10,154	10,418	10,353	10,956	11,536	11,508
Net Intake Rate												
Male		63.2	61.7	60.2	61.3	55.4	53.6	55.9	54.7	54.8	55.4	60.8
Female		65.1	62.8	62.5	63.0	56.2	54.1	57.9	55.0	56.5	54.7	59.1

Source: Bureau of Statistics, Education Statistical Reports 2010, 2009 and 2007

ernment procurement systems are still not coping with the demand for stationery and books; and the implementation of the school feeding programme has its own shortfalls.

However, with recent policy responses, including the development of a new curriculum and a policy of continuous progression, the Ministry of Education has mostly responded to the issues of equity and access, while at the same time ensuring that more pupils complete the primary cycle of education.

Evidence from analysis of the three cycles of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ), suggests that Lesotho has managed to implement the free primary education programme, while maintaining a level of equity between different schools and students in these schools.

However, in terms of quality of outcomes, mostly measured by performance in reading and Math, children from Lesotho schools perform worse than their peers in most of the countries in the region.

As indicated by the table below. On reading and math scores, Lesotho class six pupils performed better than only Malawi and Zambia in the last cycle of SACMEC evaluation.

An analysis of the three phases of the SACMEQ done by SACMEQ together with the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO, suggests that for Lesotho, the availa-

bility of school resources and the location of the school; whether in an urban or rural area; the socio-economic status of the pupil; the availability of learning materials; pupil age; grade repetition; the spoken language of instruction; and whether or not the teacher receives in-service training are important factors



Recent policy responses, including the development of new curriculum and a policy of continuous progression, the Ministry of Education has mostly responded to the issues of equity and access, while at the same time ensuring that more pupils complete the primary cycle of education

that inform pupil performance. These problems suggest a need to more intentionally develop policy proposals and specific interventions that address the issue of differences in outcomes between rural and urban schools. In response to the identified

problems, the following recommendations are made:

- In terms of Math instruction, the schools language policy should be flexible enough to allow for instruction in the pupil's home language.

- To address most of the quality issues in primary education, the Government of Lesotho will need to increase allocation from the current 13 to 15 percent of total expenditure to at least 18 to 20 percent, as recommended in the EFA proposals.

- Given the current fiscal constraints, the new money will have to come from efficiency savings within the Ministry. However, the best foreseeable source would be private investment in basic education as a whole.

- Teacher training should take into consideration the current teacher-pupil ratios and include methods that remove the burden on the teacher to be the only source of information, especially in the upper classes.

- An annual national assessment of class three pupils will provide information on schools which are failing to provide pupils with the basic tools before they proceed to the upper classes.

- In terms of Math and Science teaching the Ministry of Education should fund and encourage peer learning and twinning of schools.

- The Lesotho College of Education and the National University of Lesotho should expand their in-service training.

Country	Mean score for reading	Mean score for math
Botswana	534.6	520.5
Kenya	543.1	557.0
Lesotho	467.9	476.9
Malawi	434	447
Mauritius	573.5	623.3
Mozambique	476	483.8
Namibia	497	471
Seychelles	575	551
South Africa	495	495
Swaziland	549	541
Tanzania	578	553
Uganda	479	482
Zambia	434	435
Zimbabwe	507.7	519.8

CSO INITIATIVE TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO HEALTH THROUGH ADVOCACY

Lesotho's challenges in the health sector are daunting; battling the world's third highest HIV and AIDS prevalence rate (23 per cent for adult aged 15-49) and demand that consistently outstrips the ability to provide vital health care services. Health facilities are not well resourced.

The country is supposed to have functional health care facilities, services, and programs. The health facility accreditation survey for quality assurance in 2009 indicated that none of the 16 hospitals and 47 health centres passed accreditation standards for quality assurance, meaning that the chances of receiving appropriate health services are minimal.

The country has one of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the region, according to DHS 2009, maternal mortality rate is reported at 1115 per 100 000 live births while child mortality rate is at 91 per 1000 live births.

There are a number of reasons contributing to this situation and what is important will be to work together to address these challenges.

In order to contribute to the health challenges in the country, on the 30th January 2014, Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) through its Health and Social Development Commission in collaboration with Medicines Son Frontiers (MSF) launched the CSOs Health Advocacy Forum.

The Forum seeks to strengthen the commission's advocacy ef-



Health and Social Development Commission coordinator, Mrs Mamathule Makhotla, right, and Mr Tampose Mothopeng Matrix Director.

orts on health specific issues and enhance coordination and collaboration among CSOs working on health and HIV/AIDS in order to support service delivery of high quality and an effective national

response.

A large number of CSOs in Lesotho have been established and are operational in providing health services which include; provision of clinical services to the communities, HIV and AIDS prevention interventions, health promotion and information exchange and public and community interests advocacy.

CSOs Health advocacy forum provides platform for civil society actors to share, learn, coordinate and act on matters of collective concern, it also promotes equity and quality in the delivery of HIV and AIDS services in Lesotho and to track the CSOs' contribution towards the national response.

The Forum acknowledges the fact that medicines and technology alone are not enough in ad-



The country has one of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the region, according to DHS 2009, maternal mortality rate is reported at 1115 per 100 000 live births while child mortality rate is at 91 per 1000 live births.

addressing the country's health challenges. There is need to confront a number of areas like; physical distance, availability of drugs and essential medicines, human resources for health, implemented health systems, quality care, stigma and discrimina-

tion, health as a right, culture of solidarity between the patients and providers, and better support to health workers.

It is recognised that the Ministry of Health is making efforts to address the challenges but there is need to walk this journey together.



The forum will provide a unified engagement that will address the mentioned areas; specifically complementing the work of the government to ensure that access to quality health care is not compromised, like being actively involved in the cases of stock out of medicines. The forum is open to CSOs working and interested on health issues and from time to time will engage with the government, donors, and international non-governmental organisations to ensure effective service delivery in the health sector.

NATIONAL BY-ELECTIONS: LESOTHO PORTRAYS MATURITY

The stretch of democracy globally, marks a significant milestone of our times. Elections sit at the heart of this, making possible the act of self-determination for each individual states throughout the world. The importance of elections in democracy is that it gives the citizens of that country an opportunity to choose someone they approve of and it also gives them a right to freedom.

Electoral events in each country are unique and reflect an individual country's political and historical characteristics. While there is no formula to match all the individual states, the process should adhere to international commitments and obligations. The holding of credible and peaceful elections is vital for the process of deepening democracy and restoring constitutional order in countries that its citizens are disgruntled.

It is recognised that building the



Voters queue outside a polling station at Qaqatu during the national by-elections held on February 15, 2014

capacity of an electoral management body in isolation will not necessarily produce credible elections, but the overall focus on the political environment in which the elections take place. It

is therefore essential to involve all stakeholders in the electioneering process, to ensure that all parties concerned adhere to principles outlined to ensure free, fair and credible elections.

It is against this backdrop, the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (LCN) sent team of 68 observers for the two National Assembly seats and 27 Local Government Electoral Divisions by-elections on the 15th February 2014.

The National Assembly by-elections were held in two constituencies of Thaba-Phechela and Thaba Moea in the Mafeteng and Thaba Tseka districts. The holding of elections was necessitated by the replacement of 27 Local Government councillors and two National Assembly Parliamentarians.

LCN Observer Mission, inspired by international principles governing democratic elections and in pursuance of its vision of striving for a democratic Lesotho, deployed observers across the country. Team comprised of mobile and stationed observers drawn from its membership already working in the area of democracy and human rights. The Observers Mission covered all the ten districts of the country and about 80 percent of the polling stations, using the checklist, a



Democracy and Human Rights Commissioner Mr Thuso Ramabolu

standard instrument for all observers to determine whether the elections complied with the generally accepted standards for democratic elections.

Although the LCN Observer Mission covered some pre-election such as candidates' forums that have the direct bearing on the elections, the thrust of the observation was on the Election Day. On the Elections Day, the mission observed the voting process, the conduct of elections management body (IEC), vote counting and the general atmosphere around the elections areas.

The LCN mission observed that while the voting stations were generally accessible to the voters, most areas had a challenging terrain and could not be easily accessed by both elections observers and voters particularly people with disabil-

ities. It also adds that the visibility of other polling stations was brought into questioning as banners were not placed appropriately at the centres, while on the other hand voting centres, which have been stipulated in the IEC list of voting stations, did not exist, for instance Ratjomose Primary School. The general observation is that most polling stations opened and closed as stipulated in the law.

LCN was informed that elections materials were distributed to polling stations and made available to the station managers on time. However, the ink used initially had to be replaced by new markers as it dried up quickly, therefore causing delays and inconvenience to the voting process.

It is noted that IEC generally conducted these elections in an independent and impartial manner, although there were some isolated incidences where the polling stations officers portrayed lack of confidence during the counting or decision-making processes in the polling stations. It can be con-

cluded that the majority of the polling staff had little or lacked confidence about the electoral process.

The Mission observed that there was generally permissive environment for multi-party participation and indeed, there were various political parties and independent candidates contesting elections. This is highly encouraged and considered as ingredients for sustainable democratic governance.

It noted that general calmness reigned during the election, however, political parties' regalia was identified in some instances such as Mosotho Primary in Thaba Phechela constituency and this is against the provisions of the Electoral Act as it discourages campaigning on election day.

The team observed that generally the ballot papers were secure and ballot boxes were sealed throughout the process of voting and were



Although there were some isolated incidences where the polling stations officers who portrayed lack of confidence during the counting or decision-making processes in the polling stations

visible, but noted that the secrecy of the ballot could have been compromised because the marking pen used was too thick that one can easily see what has been voted.

LCN's main observation is that the electoral process did not provide a special process and/or support for the voting of the disabled people particularly the visually impaired and those with speech and hearing impairments. Voting for visually impaired is still done through the assistance of another person.

This clearly compromises the right to secrecy of the voter. This goes further to the physically challenged people who were not able to enter the polling stations, like the case of Moeketsane Primary School where one voter voted on horse back. It is also noted that counting was done in a transparent and open manner, however in some instances counting was done under poor lighting, which needs to be improved.

Tackling the issue of dispute resolution, the Mission concludes that it is vital that disputes that arise during electoral process be resolved as and when they arise through an all-inclusive and participatory decision-making. This principle was fairly applied in the case of Thaba Phechela constituency that is Bongalla and Ha Maoela polling

stations where IEC party agents and independent candidates resolved the dispute amicably.

The election date was announced in time, thereby allowing voters and the general populace to prepare and exercise their right to vote. It was observed that there were few rejected ballots as compared to the previous elections. This indicates growth and quality voter education, which came as a result of IEC and civil society partnership. It is observed that Generally, IEC preparedness for this particular by-elections was satisfactory, however there were some incidences of lack of confidence on the part of the polling staff, resulting in unnecessary delays.

The mission further noted that political parties and independent candidates were availed the opportunity to place party agents in each polling stations, although, some failed to utilise this opportunity. The LCN is impressed with the overall conduct of electorates, IEC, political party agents, media houses and security agents who have contributed towards conducive environment for this by-elections. The mission also observed that the elections were peaceful and calm.

The conclusion drawn for this showed that the stages of the electoral process contributed to transparent, credible and peaceful elections which are the cornerstone of free and fair election.

LCN STATEMENT OF THE VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE

Civil Society Organisations under the auspices of the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) Democracy and Human Rights Commission wish to make the following pronouncement to Basotho regarding the prevailing diversity of political views in the country about the incumbency of Prime Minister.

Lesotho uses the Westminster form of government where the Head of Executive/Government derives legitimacy from the confidence in the National Assembly. This concept is captured in the Constitution of Lesotho Section 87 (2) The King shall appoint as Prime Minister the member of the National Assembly who appears to the Council of State to be the leader of the political party or coalition of political parties that will command the

support of a majority of the members of the National Assembly. The underlying meaning is that the Premier can only legitimately hold office so long as that confidence sustains.

The CSOs have learnt of the recent development namely;

- The Vote of No Confidence on the Prime Minister Thomas Thabane
- Adjournment of the Business before the National Assembly;
- Prorogation of Parliament

It has been observed that Basotho have reacted to these issues with keen interest. The political interest and anxiety over these issues demonstrate that Basotho are eager to be active par-

ticipants in shaping and informing the manner in which these issues are handled. The Commission finds itself duty bound to guide such involvement of the public so that it remains highly active, interactive, informed yet peaceful and mature.

ISSUES OF CONTENTION

There are three issues that characterise this political enthusiasm;

Vote of No Confidence

The Constitution of Lesotho provides that Prime Minister could be removed from the position of Head of Government by the passage of the motion of no confidence in the National Assembly.

The Constitution further provides guideline that any member of National Assembly may propose a motion of no confidence on the Prime Minister. It also provides that such a motion should indicate the name of the alternative Prime Minister. Although the Standing Order No. 111 provides that the motion of no confidence may include reasons for the desire to remove the Prime Minister, this is not a necessity either of the Standing Order or the Constitution.

Therefore the Commission believes that the mooted motion in parliament is wholly in line with the provisions of the Constitution. In the event that the motion is passed by parliament, the Constitution provides that the sitting Prime Minister should within three days either resign from the Premiership or advise the King to dissolve Parliament. Acting on the advice of the Council of State, the King may refuse the advice of the Prime Minister on dissolution. This means that there are two possible outcomes from the passage of motion of no confidence.

- (i) Removal of the Prime Minister and replacement by the one who commands majority of the National Assembly or
- (ii) Dissolution of parliament and the subsequent elections within the time stipulated by the Constitution after dissolution which is 90 days;

Prorogation

The Constitution provides that acting on the advice of the Prime Minister, the King may at any time prorogue parliament. Prorogation refers to the closure of parliament for a period not more than 12 months (Constitution, Section 83 (1) and (4). When parliament is prorogued, all the business line up before it lapses and may be introduced in the next session. It would be opened

by His Majesty and that would mark the beginning of the next session. Ordinarily prorogation is used as a monitoring measure to have time to reflect on the work done for a certain period;

Adjournment of Debate on the Business of the House

The Standing Orders provide that a member who wishes to rise on the matter to be deliberated by the House as a matter of urgency and public importance shall hand in a written notification to the Speaker. However for this to happen, the Speaker should first be satisfied that indeed the matter is definite, urgent and of public importance. In the event that the permission is not granted by the House, 15 members who support the request shall rise and if that happens the Speaker shall treat the matter as having got the approval of the House (Standing Order # 29).

In this way, the issue may be discussed. The parliamentary proceedings of the 20th March 2014 in particular the ruling of the Speaker was within the provisions of the Standing Orders and therefore orderly.

The Commission called upon Basotho to remain cool and allow democratic dynamics within the constitutional framework to take their course. In order to entrench the culture of democracy, Basotho particularly those holding different political views and affiliated to the different political formations should engage and interact yet apply high level of political tolerance.

As political parties continue to exercise their democratic right to solicit support, canvass their view points, they should be mindful that their members irrespective of positions they hold, have full rights to hold political views and opinion which they should be allowed to express and advance within the legal channels.

In their active and enthusiastic role in the coverage and reporting of the current situation, the media is advised to remain factual, responsible, cautious and refrain from sensationalism.

The Commission urges the government on the one hand and political parties on the other to ensure that the Constitution and other laws of Lesotho should be observed and protected. Basotho should be reminded that their ability to deliver peaceful elections in 2012 and the peaceful transfer of power is a huge achievement that cannot be reversed by any standards.

Calendar of Events

April - June



Mr. Sekonyela Mapetja
Economic Justice Coordinator

Economic Justice Commission

- ➔ Policy Dialogue Forum for Economic Justice Commission members, general LCN membership as well as host communities in Mokhotlong, Lekokoaneng, Ha Ntsi and Kolo.
- ➔ Capacity Building through training of 30 CBOs in each districts of Mohale's Hoek and Quthing.
- ➔ Policy Dialogue in Maseru for organizations working at a national level.



Mrs. Mamathule Makholla
Health and Social Development Coordinator

Health and Social Development Commission

- ➔ Health Advocacy Forum meeting with member organisations working on health advocacy in collaboration with MSF.
- ➔ Quarterly Commission meeting for member organizations under Health and Social Development Commission.
- ➔ Post Training Assessment Exercise for trained organizations under the HIV/AIDS Technical Assistance Project in the Leribe, Thaba-Tseka, Mohale's Hoek, Maseru and Mafeteng districts.
- ➔ Community Dialogues with women associations with the purpose of creating demand for the use of female condoms.



Mr. Thato Konstabile
Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Coordinator

Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Commission

- ➔ Community Dialogue on Food Security for CBOs in the 20 Community Councils under Deepening Decentralisation and Non-State Actors project.
- ➔ CAADP process reporting and engagement of the Commission members and all relevant stakeholders in agriculture sector.
- ➔ TOT - social audit, budget tracking, rights based advocacy, for Partners and Associates under Deepening Decentralisation and Non-State Actors project.
- ➔ Mapping Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources commission members to revive their participation in the commission.



Mrs. Relebohile Senyane
Women and Children Coordinator

Women and Children Commission

- ➔ Quarterly Commission Meeting with members under the Women and Children Commission.
- ➔ Commemoration of the Day of the African Child with the Ministry of Social Development on 16th June 2014.



As a follow-up to the Annual General Meeting which was preceded by the 14th NGO Week under the theme "Towards Just, Fair and Equitable Democratic Governance" the AGM business was not concluded. The reason being the delay in the finalisation of the Audit Financial Statement, therefore the AGM resolved that a special AGM be convened specifically to consider and approve Audited Financial Statement on its sitting, the Board of Director of the Council resolved that the Special AGM be held on the 30th April 2014.