

The NGO Web

Khokanyan'a Phiri



January to March 2015



Inside this Issue

Maintaining Elections integrity during 2015 National Assembly Elections.

Ensuring elections' participation through Voter Education:

The current political status of women politics.



Telephone: (+266) 2231 7205/ 2232 5798

Email: admin@lcn.org.ls Website: www.lcn.org.ls



Lesotho Council of NGOs



Contents

Foreword	3
Editorial	4
Mintaining Elctions’ Intergrity during the 2015 National Assembly Elections	5
Ensuring elections’ participation through Voter Education.	10
Towards Free, Fair and Credible Elections: Lessons from LCN Election Obervation Mission.	13
The Current Political status of women in Lesotho.	17
Africa Should unite against xenophobic attacks.	20
Beyond Elections: what does the future hold for Lesotho?	22

Editorial

Kanono Thabane
Thandiwe Solwandle Ntelo

Design & layout

Thandiwe Solwandle Ntelo



FOREWORD

National Assembly Elections were scheduled to take place in 2017, in accordance with the 5-year provision stipulated in Section 83 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Lesotho. However, due to challenges within the Coalition Government, which led to the deterioration of the political and security situation in the country, SADC facilitated a process of finding political and security stability which culminated in political parties agreeing to hold new National Assembly Elections in February 2015.

Consequently, Lesotho hosted elections on the 28th February 2015 due to the facilitation led by His Excellency, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa Mr Cyril Ramaphosa. This was in response to the SADC Double Troika of Heads of States and Government plus DRC and Tanzania meeting in Pretoria on 15 September 2014 which mandated His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa the SADC Facilitation Mission. The mission indicated the need to facilitate dialogue among all political and other role players in the Kingdom of Lesotho as part of efforts to assist the country to return to constitutional normalcy, political

stability and restoration of peace and security.

In this context, the SADC Troika meeting in Pretoria built upon decisions of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security meeting held in Windhoek under the leadership of President of the Republic of Namibia, Hifikipunye Pohamba. The decisions of the Organ were subsequently endorsed during the SADC Summit of Heads of States and Government held in Victoria Falls in August 2014.

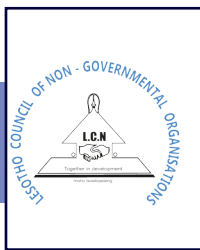
Subsequently, Lesotho held elections on the 28th February 2015 based on Maseru Facilitation Agreement. This edition of the *NGO Web* is based on the very same elections. The newsletter highlights the activities of Lesotho Council of NGOs during January to March 2015.

Feedback should be addressed to;

thabane.kanono@lcn.org.ls

Enjoy the rest of the newsletter.

Kanono Thabane,
Programmes Director



EDITORIAL

Compliments of the new year. This year kicked off with snap elections on February 28th just after two years of the three party coalition government ended abruptly. This time again, our elections did not produce a clear majority of a single party leading to a formation of yet another coalition government of seven political parties.

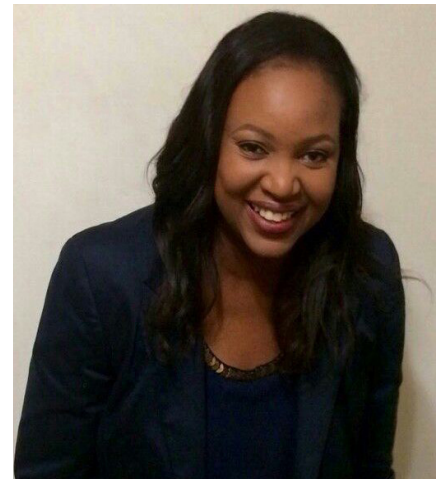
This edition of the NGO Web, covers a wide range of articles with the theme of elections. It showcases our road to towards elections. The feature articles ranges from voter observation, voter education, women representation in governance and a campaign against xenophobia.

The articles reflect the participation of Civil Society organisations in building peace and stability through ensuring that the elections are

free, fair and credible. Civil Society Organisations have partnered together in creating a voter who is knowledgeable about principles of democracy and electoral models used in Lesotho. However, there is still a need to improve participation of women in governance. Clearly women constitutes a large proportion of registered voters yet their representation in the national assembly is trivial. There are factors which needs to be explored as to why women are not contesting for elections in their various constituencies.

We conclude this edition amplifying advocacy messages by our sister organisation SADC Council of NGOs on the xenophobic attacks.

I hope you enjoy this edition
Till we meet again....



ADDRESS

House No.544
Hoohlo Extension
Maseru 100
Lesotho
Private Bag A445
Maseru 100, Lesotho



Telephone: (+266) 2231 7205/
(+266) 2232 5798
Fax: (+266) 2231 0412
Email: info@lcn.org.ls
Website: www.lcn.org.ls

MAINTAINING ELECTIONS INTERGRITY DURING THE 2015 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.



An electorate casting her vote during the 2015 National Assembly Elections.

By Thandiwe Solwandle - Ntelo

An essential element in maintaining free and fair elections is the credible election management body. To achieve this, we need an electoral administration which is impartial and has the institutional capacity to hold free and fair elections.

In the past years, Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) faced a lot of distrust, criticism and scrutiny. There are a few cases even today where the public and the politicians are finding it hard to separate politics from administration especially when it comes to the IEC. For example, we come from the era of “Pampiri Sekoko

to” and the unfortunate incidents of 1998 which resulted burning and in looting of the national capital. These have turned IEC technical issues and administrative matters into political issues and political issues requires compromise and negotiation and reaching decisions may be time-consuming. It can be difficult to follow the electoral calendar. In extreme cases, politicization of decision making may paralyze the entire process.

In this article we interview, Mr Lira Theko, Head Programmes (Democracy and Human Rights) at Transformation Resource Centre, to learn



People queuing outside a polling station in Khubetsoana to cast their to vote.

about his views on the preparation of the 2015 National Snap Elections. Snap Election had been recommended by the SADC Double Troika as a method of restoring peace and political stability in Lesotho. Initially, National Assembly Elections were scheduled for 2017 as per the election calendar of Lesotho.

During the interview, the NGO Web learnt that IEC's Monitoring Committees, consisting of different political parties, has assisted IEC a lot in disseminating useful information to electorates in a timely and systematic manner. If there are any threats which may tarnish the elections preparations, political party's leaders are informed so that they act hastily. He added that it is essential that the public understands democracy and its principles. Free and fair elections are witnessed when the

election date is announced on time, political parties and their members are given time to register, a campaign or voter registration is carried out on time, voter education is conducted, elections are conducted in a non-hostile environment etc. and all these processes show that a country is ready for elections, It is the responsibility of the IEC to carry out this important task and for the political parties to campaign and stimulate their followers to vote.

Mr Theko said after the date of the elections has been announced, then it is time for voter education because it is very important for the electorates to know what to do on the voting day and can make a major contribution to electoral integrity. It is through voter education that everyone will be disseminated with balanced and objective information on what

needs to be done in order to exercise their right to vote. He added that it is the voter education which made it simpler for the public especially in the last elections where there was no win to accept the results and for Lesotho to remain peacefully. He however added that voter education should be continuous and not done only towards the elections as this promotes voter apathy.

“Voters need to understand their rights and obligations and the election laws of Lesotho so that they can meet their responsibilities in a responsible manner. Informed and responsible voters help safeguard electoral integrity. They turn out to vote because they understand the importance of participating in the electoral process”, Mr Theko has said.

He added that it is important during campaigns, for all candidates to have access to the media especially the national broadcaster for the electoral success. Since this is how the most voters can be reached, it is essential to ensure fair media access for every candidate. In Lesotho we do have regulations on the media access, it is required that the national broadcaster allow time/space on equal terms to all parties. There are also candidates who are able to pay for advertising and that is allowed.

For anyone to vote, they need to have been registered to be regarded as eligible. This helps electoral administrators to determine the number of ballots needed and plan election logistics. In our country, access to registration sites has been a problem, especially in the rural areas. The centers are usually too far from some villages or of persons with limited mobility and this has increased a lot of suspicion of fraudulent registration. Just before our last elections, there were a number of incidents where registered voters who had requested transfers from one center to another but their names did not appear at the new center and they ended up not voting at all thus promoting voter apathy. He added that voter registration is one of the

stages at which there are significant opportunities to manipulate election results. For this reason special efforts needs to be made to ensure that the voter list is accurate and reliable. Accuracy in this case means that all eligible voters are listed and are able to vote on the voting day.

Usually, a copy of the voters list is usually posted in a public place so that citizens and political parties can check the names it contains. The electoral calendar often sets a time frame for inspecting and making corrections to the lists in order to rectify mistakes or remove the names of ineligible persons. Individual voters should by all means have the opportunity to conduct their own registration, and are also commonly enabled to confirm the registration of their families and residents of their property. The public and political parties can also inspect the lists, and electoral participants should have the ability to seek corrections if necessary.

***voter education
should be continuous and
not done only towards
the elections as this pro-
motes voter apathy***

The right to vote is one of the foundations of a democratic system of government. However, it is usually considered a privilege of citizenship and, as a result, every country has set eligibility requirements for voting. The requirements generally include citizenship (especially in national elections), a minimum age (widely established as 18 years) and sometimes a specific residence requirement. Voters residing abroad during elections are often placed in a separate category, so that they can cast their votes in special ways such as advance voting at spec-



IEC Commissioner Makase Nyapisi delivering achievements during the electoral calendar for the 2015 Snap Elections

ified locations.

However, Mr Theko commended the IEC for the exceptional work they did during the 2015 Snap Elections. The IEC maintained the credibility and integrity of electoral process in Lesotho. This was seen through adherence of the electoral calendar even though the election process occurred earlier than expected. Even though there were challenges which the IEC faced, they did not taint the integrity and credibility of the 2015 National Assembly Elections.

This was further reiterated by dialogue between the political party leaders and IEC which was facilitated by Lesotho Council of NGOs. Effective and inclusive dialogue between political parties is an essential element of democratic politics. Conflicts, inter-party strife and polarized relations between political parties can block a country's development, while a basic level of trust and cooperation between political parties can pave the way for peace, stability and sustainable growth.

In order to ensure that everybody participates

Lesotho Council of NGOs convened the National Political Leaders' forum on 17 February 2015 at Lehakoe Recreational Centre in Maseru, the event brought together 67 participants of which 32 were men and 37 were women. The forum was organised to determine the preparedness and readiness of political parties before the polling day.

Leaders of different political parties raised concerns involving the display of candidates' names at constituencies, training of party agents, party funding being delayed, security of ballot papers and the voter registration roll. The issues raised by the political leaders were later addressed by the IEC Commissioner of Elections Dr. Makase Nyapisi who ironed-out issues, which related to limited accessibility of information from the IEC to the political leaders. He further assured the political leaders that some of the concerns will be flagged at their next meeting with other IEC Commissioners. Of critical importance, Dr. Nyapise assured the political leaders that IEC is in a position of holding free, fair and credible elections.

Political leaders of the following political parties attended the event; (i) African Unity Movement (AUM) (ii) Basutoland African National Congress (BANC) (iii) Democratic Congress (DC) (iv) Popular Front for Democracy (PFD) (v) White Horse Party (WHP), (vi) Tsebe Social Democrats (TSD), (vii) Progressive Democrats (PD), (viii) All Basotho Convention (ABC), (ix) Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL), (x) All Democratic Cooperation (ADC) (xi) Lesotho People's Congress (LPC)

In concluding the event, all political parties were committed to going to elections on 28 February 2015. The expressed their appreciation to the IEC for the milestones that it has achieved on the election calendar.

Leaders of Different political parties engaging with the IEC Commissioner of Elections



Dr Motlehloa Phooko – Deputy Leader, Reformed Congress of Lesotho



Dr Mamphono Khaketla – Treasurer, Democratic Congress



Mr Motlohi Maliehe – Chairperson, All Basotho Convention



Dr Lekhetso Rakuoane – Leader, Popular Front for Democracy

ENSURING ELECTIONS' PARTICIPATION THROUGH VOTER EDUCATION

By Thandiwe Solwandle

In order to ensure that everybody participates in the elections, Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) together with Development for Peace Education (DPE) conducted voter education trainings between 4 -24 February 2015 with the aim of preparing Basotho for National Assembly Elections held on 28 February 2015. The programme was conducted with financial assistance from United Nations Development Programme.

About 23 constituencies from Mokhotlong (1), Berea (11), Mafeteng (1), Mphahle's Hoek (8), Quthing (1) and Qacha's Nek (1) were covered during the assignment. In total, 115 voter educators were trained on democracy, public participation and electoral processes and later deployed in the six districts how we reached out

The team leaders were responsible for deciding on the best outreach approach, on the basis of the situation on the ground. The following approaches were used; door to door campaigns, focus groups discussions with marginalized groups, public gatherings and focus group discussions with candidates contesting for elections.

Door-to-door campaigns

LCN and DPE conducted door to door campaigns to sensitize voters on different issues relating to elections and voting procedures. Their main goal was to improve the turn-out of voters and to orientate voters on voting procedures to reduce the number of ineligible votes.



DPE Peace and Education Researcher Mr Mosala Mokutlulu training voter educators

The door-to-door campaigns were employed in all constituencies. They were very effective in some areas whereby the voter were found at home. In addition, they were very effective in reaching elderly people and women.

Focus Group Discussion with marginalized groups

The focus group discussions with marginalized groups were held at Khafung, Qhalasi and Ketane. Attempts were made to convene the focus groups discussion at other constituencies but they were not successful. The main reason being that the voter education was conducted during the weeding season where majority of voters were engaged in agricultural field work.

However, the team leaders managed to leverage on existing community activities which were successful in attracting some of the marginalized groups. For example, in Mpharane constituency, a focus group for elderly people was held at the station where people collect old-age pensions. As a result, a large number of the target group was reached.

Furthermore, in constituencies such as Khubetsoana, the electoral educators focused on the monthly meetings of the local women village savings group. The village savings group managed to provide a focus group discussion for women as a target group.

The main challenge encountered was the fact that a majority of the nation were not aware of the Maseru Facilitation Declaration brokered by Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa on behalf of SADC

Public gatherings

Public gatherings were very instrumental in providing voter education. They were used in all constituencies and they managed to attract crowds of people. They were used in instances whereby it was deemed challenging to reach the participants in their homes.

Candidates Forum

A candidate's forum was convened at Thupa Kubu constituency in Berea. The event was held convened on 20 February 2015. The candidate's forum attracted 600 participants which were mainly supporters of different political parties. The event was successful in promoting participation in the upcoming elections. The candidates from different political parties exchanged views and debated on a number issues pertaining to local development.

Even though LCN and DPE encountered technical challenges with respect to the implementation of the programme, non-technical challenges are described below;

Lack of awareness of the Maseru Facilitation Declaration - The main challenge encountered was the fact that a majority of the nation were not aware of the Maseru Facilitation Declaration brokered by Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa on behalf of SADC. This meant that people had to be sensitized on the declaration and why Lesotho was heading for Election on the 28th February 2015. As a result, electoral educators spent more time than required with an individual household.

Limited methods of disseminating information to people with disabilities - most of the disabled people, particularly the blind, reported that they do not have access to information. They emphasized that the material provided on issues related to elections and national development are not converted into braille. They mentioned that braille is only available to the elite and the rest of the blind are left out of processes. In some instances, the electoral educators were required to use sign language which is a very limited skill.



Herd-boys formed part of the vulnerable groups which were sensitized about the elections

Demarcation of constituencies and the need for cartographical images in urban areas

the electoral educators indicated that the demarcation between constituencies is very confusing and the IEC should provide maps. This presented as a problem in constituencies such as Khubetsoana. On numerous occasions the electoral educators found themselves working in a constituency different to the one they intended to work in.

Lack of cooperation from voters and community leaders

- In some constituencies such as Hloahloeng, electoral educators were not welcomed by the members of the community. For example, in Hloahloeng, the electoral officers were ridiculed and the members of the community called the constituency candidates for their respective parties seeking guidance on the matter. Furthermore, in Qhalasi constitu-

ency, the village chief was not cooperative in providing assistance in convening the public gatherings.

Voter apathy - the electoral educators reported that voter apathy was prevalent in the constituencies they worked in. The majority of voters indicated that voting does not produce economic development and as result they will not participate in the process. These challenges should be taken in consideration by the Independent Electoral Commission in facilitating future voter education activities.

The following number of voters was reached through the different activities:

- (a) training of electoral educators – 111 Voters
- (b) door-to-door voter education and delivery of key messages – 63119 voters
- (c) political leaders' forum – 67 voters

We were successful in maintaining voter turnout in most of the constituencies where it was implemented. However, significant declines in voter turnout were witnessed in southern rural constituencies (Hloahloeng, Lebakeng, Qhoali, Mpharane and Qaqatu). In addition, the programme managed to impart knowledge on voting procedures to voters as this was evidenced by significant decrease in the number of rejected votes in majority of the constituencies where the programme was implemented.

TOWARDS FREE, FAIR AND CREDIBLE ELECTIONS IN LESOTHO: LESSONS FROM LCN ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION.



Election Observer at Khubetsoana #28 during the 2015 snap elections.

By Thandiwe Solwandle - Ntelo

Lesotho Council of NGOs through the Democracy and Human Rights Commission deployed over 320 Observer drawn from its member organisations participating in its Democracy and Human Rights Commission during the 2015 Snap National Assembly elections dated 28th February 2015.

These elections were held in the 80 National Assembly constituencies where political parties and independent candidates contested the elections against a background of fallout of the coalition government that affected the security formations of the country, thus inflicting the high density of insecurity in the country. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) appointed the facilitator, His Excellency Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa the Deputy President of the

Republic of South Africa, to support Lesotho in addressing these critical challenges faced by the country and it was agreed that one way to move forward was to hold general elections.

Our objective was to enhance the integrity of the electoral process by ensuring that credible elections were held and also that we can assist in future on areas of development in election management. In order to achieve these, the LCN Observation Mission conducted extensive refresher trainings as to facilitate their work. The checklist was used as a standard instrument for all observers to determine whether the elections complied with the generally accepted standards for democratic elections. When formulating the checklist, careful consideration of local laws, SADC principles for democratic elections and international conventions guiding democratic elections was made.

Although the LCN Observer Mission covered some pre-elections activities such as political parties' stars rallies and candidates' forums that have the direct bearing on the electoral process, the thrust of this observation was on the Election Day. On the elections day, the Mission observed the voting process, the conduct of Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), vote counting and the general atmosphere around the elections.

On March 3rd, the Council released an interim statement which quantifies its findings from the observation that voting stations were generally accessible to the voters but most areas had a challenging terrain and could not be reached easily by both elections observers and voters (people with disability). The observers complained about visibility of most voting stations in the past, but there is a notable improvement on the matter as there were visible IEC banners for most polling stations. It is noted that some voting centres which have been stipulated in the IEC list of voting stations were no longer the same, for instance people were returned from Moeti Primary School to Souru Primary school in the Tsoelike # 71 as a result of changing voting station.

Our observation checklist also entails determining whether the voting stations opened on time and closed on time. Some of our key findings were that most of the stations opened and closed on time as prescribed by the law, except in one station in Mabote # 29 where ballot boxes did not have lids, thus delaying opening. The only hiccup was with Correctional Services voting stations which mostly opened way after the time prescribed by the law. Although reasons for such delay is beyond IEC control, it is regrettable that inmates nearly failed to vote because of wardens grievances which are not election related. In Thaba-Tseka # 73 the inmates were

only allowed to vote around 16:30hrs.

LCN was informed that elections materials used for these elections including relevant forms as required by law were packaged at the central level and distributed to the polling stations. It was generally observed that elections materials were in voting stations on time in most cases though once again LCN notes with concern that the lighting equipment was still not adequate in some voting stations and where it was provided, it was of poor quality. 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 concluded that the majority of the polling staff had little or lacked proper training about the electoral process. The other observation is that in the urban areas some polling staff were very casual in the case of Hoohlo Primary school in the Maseru # 32 and in the Machache # 39 in almost all polling stations engaged new time polling staff. Most polling stations staff especially polling station managers could not reconcile figures on time in this constituency.

Our mission observed that some of polling stations were not aware of the role of observers and they did not want or expect observers in the stations. It has been observed that in the polling stations some of the political parties did not have agents at polling stations and further, it was difficult for agents to comprehend English as it was used in every IEC documents.

In the Botha-Bothe # 5 Constituency in one polling stations two political parties did not appear in the ballot book thus causing a delay. In resolving the matter, the secrecy of one voter was not secured.



A woman casting her voter at Khubetsoana #28 during the elections.

In this elections, our 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.

To ascertain that the elections were free, they looked at all prevailing events that could have a bearing on the election processes. The general observation depicted a conducive environment where a general calm reigned. However, some political parties campaigned beyond closure of campaigning period which is 24hrs before election time and this is

against the provisions of the Electoral Act as it discourages campaigning on elections day and there were some people who were in their political parties' regalia on the elections day.

There were few incidences observed where there were social activities in the vicinity of the polling stations, for instance in Mphosong # 7 there was an initiation school pass out which is against electoral act.

The security features of the ballot were visible. It was sad that, short people were not able to use booths to make their marks. In some areas where voting occurred in thatched roofed rondavels the space was so small that



either IEC or Party Agents could see how an elector has voted. However, IEC equipment such as ballot boxes were always sealed with sealing keys.

The mission has observed there was a possibility of compromising secrecy of the ballot, as booths were exposed to party agents and IEC officials. The marking pen used in the booth was so thick that one could easily see through what the voter has voted for. Our observation is that the electoral process did not provide a special treatment and/or support for the voting of the disabled people particularly the visually impaired and those with speech and hearing impairments for most polling elections. Voting for visually impaired is still done through the assistance of another person in most places. 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.







Counting was done in a transparent and open manner, however in some instances counting was done under poor lighting, which needs to be improved. Further as it has already been indicated in Machache # 39 where reconciliation was a challenge.

It is vital that disputes that arise during electoral process be resolved as and when they arise through an all-inclusive and participatory decisionmaking. This principle was fairly applied as IEC officials managed to lead the process.

The LCN appreciates the overall conduct of electorates, IEC, political party agents, media houses and security agents who have contributed towards conducive environment for this elections. Our Mission also observed that the elections were peaceful and calm. Further, our Mission also applauds that a day preceding election and the Election Day were declared Public Holidays. The conclusion

drawn from this elections is that the electoral process contributed to transparent and peaceful elections which are the cornerstone of credible election and that these elections are true reflection of the will of Basotho Nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

-  It is recommended that registration of electorates should be conducted using modern technologies as to allow every voter to vote everywhere within the constituency they registered into.
-  It is recommended that the current voters roll should be overhauled and IEC should undertake new voter registration that will be integrated into civil registration. This should be given an urgent attention as the country is preparing for 2016 local government elections.
-  IEC personnel should be given intensive and practical training on their facilitative role during voting and counting to improve their confidence and efficiency.
-  It is recommended that the IEC should provide adequate resources towards smooth running of the elections in order to procure necessary facilities and materials such as lighting, enough space, vehicles etc.
-  It is further recommended that election materials should also be presented in accessible formats such as, in Sesotho, in braille, large print etc. to ease and promote participation of people with disabilities.
-  It is recommended that the Parliament should review all laws regarding elections to move towards harmonized elections.

THE CURRENT POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN LESOTHO.

Adv. Rethabile Mathealira - Molapo

Women around the world have fought long and hard through various global and national movements for various civil, political and socio-economic rights, and their struggle still continues. In the report for Lesotho entitled: African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2006, 08) the Government made a statement that rings true even today:

“Politics in Lesotho are generally a male-dominated affair; since Independence in 1966, Lesotho’s Parliaments have had minimal representation of women. This imbalance in representation stems from cultural norms in Lesotho where women have been systematically excluded from participating in political affairs. The patriarchal nature of the Basotho society confers decision-making powers and headship on males and contributes largely to the absence of women in mainstream politics.”

In Lesotho, the participation of women has increased since its first democratic elections in 1966. Yet, the representation in the National Assembly is still trivial. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the representation of women in the National Assembly has increased significantly since 1965 when one woman namely Agatha Griffiths, one of the wives of Chief Seisa Griffiths contested the elections for Thabane Ntsönyana constituency.

In 1993, women constituted 4% of the National Assembly and this figure has increased to 22.5% in 2015. This can be attributed to

women taking advantage of legal mechanisms, such as the quota system under the local government elections which sets aside certain constituencies for women; and the zebra model which governs the structure of the Proportional Representation party lists. Despite the fact that women account for a greater number of the population, they are still severely under-represented in parliament. In addition to that, participation of women in elections exceeds that of men - there are more registered female voters than males.

So the stark question would be: Why is it that the representation of women in the National Assembly is insignificant yet when their participation in elections exceeds that of men? This article provides a modest explanation of factors constituting to low representation of women in the National Assembly. These factors are described below;

(1) Women classify themselves of an inferior status as compared to men. It will always be difficult for women to actively participate in elections and contest against men if they regard themselves as persons of inferior status as compared to men. Anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that women in Lesotho consider themselves as inferior as compared to men. This inhibits their ability in capacity to contest against their counterparts.



We need to empower our girl child from a tender age in supporting and promoting interests of other women

(2) Women have to compete between traditional family roles and actively engaging in politics. Women at a recent International Women's Day Dialogue convened by Action Aid Lesotho with the theme of *Women in Political Leadership; Making It Happen!* identified some of the challenges affecting representation of women in parliament. Some of the challenges holding them back included the pursuit of a political career having to compete with their traditional family responsibilities as wives and mothers. Their family responsibilities do not allow them enough time and space for them to operate on the same playing field as men thus limiting their ability to actively campaign during elections as much as their counterparts.

(3) In political party structures women have their "own leagues" which are usually defunct and have trivial impact in decision making on the appointment of party candidates in elections. Majority of political parties in Lesotho have Women Leagues as part of their structures. These Women's Leagues are structures of political parties which constitute of women only. However, the Women's Leagues for most political parties are defunct thus limiting their role in decision making for most political parties. The Women's Leagues cannot advocate for equality in terms of appointment of party candidates to contest for elections. As a result, most political parties have a few women candidates contesting for elections.



Women waiting to cast their vote outside a polling station during the National Elections

(4) Economic status of women. Another stumbling block is women's weaker economic status when compared to men. Women struggle to convene public gatherings and campaign effectively due to their weaker economic muscle and lack of necessary resources. These issues further exacerbated by the fact that they cannot actively campaign in areas which are considered to belong to certain political parties on their own and defeat intimidation of rival party members.

These points discussed above have been instrumental in shaping the representation of women in the National Assembly. In this article, the following recommendations are provided

- Legal quotas should be put in place
- Seats should be increased
- Parties should adopt formal quotas for their list candidates
- Adoption of Internal party leadership policies aimed at improving women's representation inside the party leadership and parliament by all parties.

While there might be progress in the representation of women in both local and national governance, the dialogue reflected that women at the grassroots level are neither aware of the existence of the laws protecting them, nor are they aware of their rights.

AFRICA SHOULD UNITE AGAINST XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS

By SADC Council of NGOs

The SADC Council of NGOs released a press statement on the recent xenophobic attacks in South Africa where it called for condemnation of the attacks in the strongest possible terms by all peace loving people. The events have erupted from simmering anger and hostility in South Africa as people lash out in violence against other Africans from what they perceive as the undue advantages they enjoy.

It appears that a significant section of South Africans are expressing their displeasure at their own lack of opportunities and laying the blame on so called “foreigners”.

The warning signs have been there for some time. The 2008 outbreak of xenophobia shocked all of us. Then in January 2015 shop-keepers and non-nationals were the victims of looting, theft and violence in Gauteng. The tragic history has shown a serious lack of proper, consistent and principled leadership on the part of the South African government to combat xenophobia. The responses, when they happened, have all been after-the-fact and have often lacked the sustained seriousness that is required.

Spurred on by the comments of the Zulu King this violence has now exploded in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Fellow Africans from Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Somalia, Mozambique, the Congo and other countries have been brutalised and are forced to leave their homes, businesses and possessions as they flee in fear of their lives. The gratuitous and the barbaric nature of these attacks serves to underline real social tensions and a breakdown of social cohesion arising from growing poverty, unemployment, equality and sense of despair in South Africa.

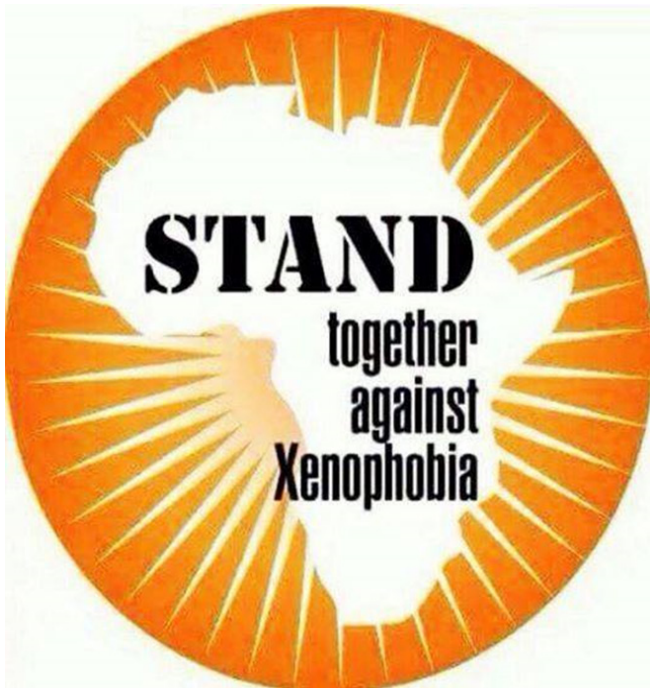


SADC Council of NGOs, Executive Director, Mr Boichoko Ditlhake



“The events have erupted from simmering anger and hostility in South Africa as people lash out in violence against other Africans from what they perceive as the undue advantages they enjoy.”

In South Africa is a country that has reached a tipping point; it must either return to the path of democracy, rule of law and justice for all or unravel in violence, lawlessness and anarchy. The government of South Africa must face the responsibility of closing the gap of social injustice and political grievances coming from its citizens who are disaffected and disenchanted.



The various causes and complexities of the current xenophobia must not blind us to the need for urgent action; “we can analyse this situation and its root causes - which is of cause vital - but the moment requires deliberate action which demonstrates that our governments truly understand and are capable of listening to our people. A clarion call must be made to the South African people reminding them of the sacrifices made by their fellow Africans in the neighboring countries and beyond in support of the freedom they enjoy today, South Africans must understand that many fellow Africans are not coming to South Africa to bring crime or steal but are fleeing conditions of real poverty, conflict and dictatorship. This requires all of us in SADC and Africa to improve the conditions of our people together”. said the Executive Director of the SADC Council of NGOs, Mr Boichoko Ditlhake.

What we are seeing is the explosion of build-up frustration across board. Black South Africans are tired of being at the bottom of society where others live in great luxury. Other Africans are tired of being the scapegoat and victims of the anger and violence from South Africans”.

As the SADC Council of NGOs we have been actively campaigning for all SADC governments to remove the impediments to the free movement of people in the region by ratifying and domesticating the SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of free Movement of Persons. We have been campaigning for the removal of unnecessary restrictions and the simplification of cross-border travel and trade. The answer to xenophobia is the fullest freedom of our people to make and take the economic opportunities that arise from regional integration and Inter-regional trade. The goal of SADC and its predecessor, the Frontline State, was always to achieve collective economic self-sufficiency. Today regional integration is dominated by elite interests and are not driven forward to enable our people to meet the needs.

Going further he said: Our leaders make pronouncements and declarations. However they fail to act at once they return to their countries. We have seen the great victory of black students from all our countries as they mobilised at UCT with the “Rhodes must fall” movement. This social mobilisation of students shows us that fundamental transformation can occur if we are organised and conscious of the historic barriers created not only to keep Africans poor and dispossessed but also divided: by ethnicity. For the Rhodes and his entire legacy

to be dismantled our leaders must listen to the people. The legacy of migrant labour must be overcome. Our people must trade, move and interact across borders. We remain convinced that the free movement of Free People is a necessary condition to avoid these types of attacks from ever happening again”.

The SADC Council of NGOs call on SADC to place the issue of xenophobic attacks and the free movement high on the agenda of its forthcoming special summit in Harare, Zimbabwe (29 -30 April 2015). It furthermore urges governments to refrain from making populist statements and inflammatory actions to exploit the current crisis for political gain. SADC CNGP urges all member states, particularly

South Africa, to convene a SADC multi-stakeholder forum to combat xenophobia, tribalism and promote respect for cultural diversity.

The SADC Council of NGOs will rally with its allies in the faith community, trade unions and social movements to do all that is necessary to prevent a further escalation of these horrific attacks, while it seeks long-term interventions to prevent any future recurrence,. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of all the victims of these senseless attacks. While we mourn with them, we will move with the great determination and speed to ensure that justice for all is their lasting legacy.

BEYOND 2015 ELECTIONS: WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR LESOTHO?

By Seabata Motsamai

As it became clear that voters in Lesotho not going to give any party a majority of seats in parliament it was clear that a coalition government would not be avoided.

Apart of this fact, the Lesotho organised these elections under an environment mapped with so many issues, notably insecurity, partisan civil service and rife corruption perception in the country. These challenges were identified as causes of early elections because the coalition government comprised of All Basotho Convention, Lesotho Congress for Democracy and Basotho National Party was not solid to continue. Due to the fall out amongst the coalition government, SADC appointed a Fa-

cilitator to support the Lesotho government to address issues related to security and reforms.

Post elections results, LCN called stakeholders to define what kind of grand coalition could be best for Lesotho since the voters did not give any party a majority seat. Unfortunately this call did not find its way to the leadership of political parties hence a coalition of seven political parties leaving another second strong party, at least as per the 2015 elections results.

The second coalition government comprise of seven political parties that need to broaden



The Second Coalition government during their coalition agreement signing

participation of all stakeholders including the main opposition party if meaningful changes or programmes could prevail in Lesotho. This can be achieved by holding a national dialogue with the aim of defining key challenges facing the country of which new structures could be identified and be given the mandate to deliver. At the moment some of the challenges which keeps on knocking at the door of Lesotho are the reforms in the security sector, public service and the constitution of Lesotho to allow it to respond positively to the coalition government formations including securing and the independence of the judiciary.

The national dialogue is the only platform at the moment that could help Lesotho to positively address these challenges without being seen as one agenda from a certain political party since it would attract all different sectors of society and build consensus towards attaining stable democracy in the country.

The issue of national dialogue is not new in the culture of Lesotho and we can refer to the 1991 national dialogue under the leadership of Civil society which helped the country to transit well into new democratic dispensation and the lessons learnt from that dialogue could be brought in as good ingredients for building stable nation that is able to accept one another. All the political formations that took part in the February general snap elections have realised that Lesotho should build strong democratic institutions for her to prosper and this is evidenced by their different political manifestos.

Perhaps, the reforms that are highly needed should be driven by two processes; Parliamentary and extra-parliamentary processes. It is our strong believe that all the actors in governance and development could buy these approaches while the development partners and SADC should be seen as support of these local initiative.

Calendar of Events

April - June



Mr. Sekonyela Mapetja
Economic Justice Coordinator

Economic Justice Commission

- ♦♦ EJC Commission Meeting
- ♦♦ Training NGOs, CBOs and Support Groups on NGO Governance and Leadership, Financial Management
- ♦♦ Training in Matelile in Mafeteng District, Thaba-Tseka, Qacha's Nek and Mohale's Hoek
- ♦♦ Hold Public forum on Women Rights in Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing
- ♦♦ Hold Public forum on the Rights People With Disability in Mafeteng
- ♦♦ Hold Public forum on the Rights of Youth in Quthing
- ♦♦ Support CEF in implementing activities in Deepening Decentralisation



Mrs. Mamathule Makhota
Health and Social Development Coordinator

Health and Social Development Commission

- ♦♦ HTAP Mentoring of trained organisations
- ♦♦ Stakeholders meeting on the report on female condom community dialogues
- ♦♦ CSOs training on HIV/TB Coinfection
- ♦♦ Community Dialogues on HIV/TB Coinfection
- ♦♦ Commission Meeting
- ♦♦ CSOs Health Advocacy Forum meeting
- ♦♦ NGO Governance and Leadership Training- Nqoe: Kao and Likila community councils
- ♦♦ Commission study assesses how HIV and Food security is addressed at community level



Mr. Thato Konstabile
Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Coordinator

Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Commission

- ♦♦ AENR Commission meeting
- ♦♦ EIA Training to member NGOs – Stakeholder Engagement, Proposal writing and Project Management
- ♦♦ Conduct Field Visit to one project with Environmental impact (e.g. Rothe Waste disposal site)
- ♦♦ Awareness campaigns on EIA with selected community councils under DDP
- ♦♦ NGO Governance and Leadership training at Siloe, Thaba Mokhele and Mashaleng community councils
- ♦♦ Attend TOT on Policy and Research Advocacy – DDP
- ♦♦ Deliver training on Policy and research Advocacy to the community councils under DDP



Ms. Tlaleng Kaaba
Women and Children Coordinator

Women and Children Commission

- ♦♦ NGO Governance and leadership training
- ♦♦ Research and Policy Analysis training
- ♦♦ Commission study on status of women in Lesotho
- ♦♦ Hold public dialogue on women's rights