



Local Governance in Lesotho: In Search of an Appropriate Format

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Introduction

Lesotho has recently undertaken a series of measures to establish local governments, known as Local Authorities. The move is acclaimed as a “measure to increase democracy in government by giving power to the people.”¹ This, however, is not the first time that the Lesotho Government has made changes in local organisational forms with the view to giving power to the people. Previous attempts included:

- the establishment of the Basutoland Council for the 1930s;
- the establishment of District Councils in 1943;
- the establishment of District Secretariat flagged by various Development Councils and Committees both at district and village levels in the 1970s and early 1980s; and
- the establishment of Maseru Municipal Council in 1989.

These previous moves were to last for a number of years and then, for various reasons, they were either abandoned or allowed to exist mainly for political reasons. The reasons, given by both the government and other interested observers included not being either democratic enough or effective instruments for the management of development. This paper attempts to review, against the colonial background, these previous attempts with a view to identifying the factors responsible for their noted ineffective performance and also whether in introducing the new local government system the government has taken into consideration those problems or not.

¹ Training Manual 2005; White Paper, 1996

The Colonial Background

In order to place the system of local administration, which emerged in the wake of independence in context, it is necessary to review development in local government organisation during the colonial period in Basutoland². One of the first actions taken by the British colonial regime from 1871 to 1884 was to break down the existing indigenous governmental institutions and introduce direct rule. Lesotho was divided into four districts: Leribe, Berea, Thaba-Bosiu and Cornerspruit³. A Resident or Assistant Resident Magistrate, who was responsible to the Governor of the Cape Colony for the maintenance of law and order, civil and criminal jurisdiction, administration of land as well for the collection of taxes, headed each district. The system of customary local government i.e. Khotla system was not abolished but it enjoyed limited powers with specific variety of functions required by the conditions of that time. Khotla placing systems were used as mechanisms for enhancing local government administration.

When Lesotho became a High Commissioner Territory in 1884, some changes in the system of local government administration were consequently introduced⁴. The most significant change was the introduction of the system of administration known as 'indirect rule.' The objectives of colonial administration were limited to the maintenance of law and order and the collection of tax. The system led to the revival of the indigenous local government administration. *Pitsos*, public gatherings/meetings open to all adults, were frequently held. However, the placing system increasingly centralised authority within the

traditional structure. This in turn weakened the responsiveness of chieftainship and lessened the importance of the *pitso*. With the declining importance of the National *Pitso*, the need for some alternative form of popular participation was recognised and following lengthy negotiations, the first National Council met in 1903. The Council became a statutory body in 1910. Intended to discuss "the domestic affairs of Basutoland," the Council counted 100 members. The paramount chief, who was a member, could appoint ninety-four (94) members and the Resident Commissioner another five⁵.

The 1930s saw the development of a new framework for local government administration⁶. It began with Sir Alan Pim's Commission of Enquiry severely criticising the existing administrative (local government) set up in Lesotho. This paved a way to the passing of the Proclamations of 1938, resulting from the Pim's Commission's findings. The proclamations aimed at the provision of "an integral place in the machinery of administration for indigenous institutions, which had previously derived their authority from custom and tradition"⁷. Consequently, chiefs were gazetted by the colonial administration for recognition. Recognised chiefs received statutory powers and functions concerning law and order and general welfare, including agricultural practices. The Paramount Chief received powers to issue rules providing for peace, good order and welfare, subject to the approval of the High Commissioner. The 1938 reforms drastically changed the power basis of chieftainship. Chieftainship no longer derived its legitimacy from the traditional political structure. It was now a statutory

² Sanders, 1975

³ Hailey, 1953: 47-48

⁴ Hailey, 1953: 61-62

⁵ Wallis and van der Geer, 1984

⁶ Wallis and van der Geer, 1984:14-15

⁷ Hailey, 1953: 83

institution requiring the selection of chiefs to be gazetted. However, ungazetted chiefs continued to perform their functions and the effects of the 1938 Proclamations became only gradually felt. Nevertheless, it was clear that the powers of chiefs were drastically curtailed.

The 1938 reforms had given the chiefs statutory powers on judicial and administrative matters only. The establishment of the Treasury in 1944 further dealt a blow to the chiefs' powers. Finance was brought within the system of indirect rule. Chiefs could no longer keep fines and fees from court proceedings, but all such income would go to the Treasury. These financial reforms meant a further reduction of gazetted chiefs, as only those task-justified payments would be gazetted.

It should be noted, however, that the Pim's 1938 reforms and establishment of Basutoland Council did little for increased participation in government. The reforms were perceived as entrenching "state of chiefs' administration." On the other hand, the Basutoland Council was seen as unrepresentative institution; its membership was largely based on chieftainship. The situation intensified the commoner struggle for increased participation in government⁸.

The struggle bore fruit in 1943 when the District Councils were established with chiefs as ex-officio members plus other nominees at the *Pitso*. They acted as advisory institutions often preparing motions and served as electoral forums for the Basutoland National Council. However, it was not long before people lost interest in these councils. The people accused them of being unrepresentative; and nationalist movements directed their anger towards them. It was an inescapable

fact that the Council's importance in relation to the chiefs was very minimal. Then in 1959, Proclamation #52 was passed. It revised the District Councils, and made them a body corporate, hence they were to be a directly elected type of institution responsible for a very small range of functions. The reconstitution of the Councils, however, did not stop people from demanding increased participation in government⁹.

At the time of independence, therefore, there were two categories of local authorities in Basutoland: The reconstituted Councils per the Local Government Proclamation, No. 52 of 1959 and the Basutoland National Council which replaced the Basutoland Council in 1960. Though little practical difference existed in the functions performed by these local authorities, the truth was that they were not yet fully representative of the electoral process by the local people; they lacked jurisdiction over non-Basotho residing within their areas, as they had no power conferred upon them to perform governmental functions in their own accord.

Thus the policy of the colonial government was merely to contain the demands for greater participation in government. It seems likely that the District Councils would have graduated to the status of fully-fledged local government agencies prior independence if there was political will and commitment on the part of British colonial government. Nevertheless this was a stark reality of the situation of local administration prior to the independence of Lesotho in 1966.

The Post-Independence Organisation Developments

Soon after attainment of independence, local government created during

⁸ Weisfelder, 1974

⁹ van Wijk, 1967; Weisfelder, 1974

colonial times in many African countries was dismantled¹⁰. Many governments resorted to control from the centre, and local government institutions were either abolished or placed under a tight control of the Central government. Lesotho was not immune from this development.

Following independence in 1966, Lesotho experienced the general tendency towards increased central control of local government. In 1968, two years after independence, the BNP government abolished District Councils through the Local Government Repeal Act. They were set up in 1943 by colonial administration as statutory bodies to manage public local affairs and resources¹¹. It was alleged that they were complicating lines of communication between the central government and the districts. According to Kotze the Councils were seen to be "disrupt [ing] a well established de-concentration system of administration to which most people were comfortably accustomed ... the strong district councils had become centres for political dissention and opposition¹².

Perhaps a more important reason for their abolition was the political one referred to in the latter part of the quote above as the opposition (the Basotoland Congress Party) largely dominated the Councils. As such, they were seen as an alternative source of political loyalty and therefore, a threat to the government of the Basotho National Party (BNP). Additionally, the existence of the Council's was perceived to be depriving the central government of local sources of revenue, besides the fact that they

lacked sufficient competence in financial management.

Thus the abolition of District Councils by the Jonathan regime saw an end of participatory institutions at the local level, resulting in increasing centralised administrative and planning machinery. Some limited degree of de-concentration, however, remained where some administrative powers were delegated to officers representing their line ministries in the fields and traditional institutions including chieftanship, but still with direct technical responsibilities to the headquarters at the centre¹³. On the other hand, in the absence of District Councils, the BNP government saw the need for other local structures. Consequently, the Local Government Act of 1969 was passed to this effect. The Act provided a framework for the execution of functions formerly performed by the District Councils. Thus, though the 1969 Local Government Act, the District Development Committees (DDC's) and Village Development Committees (VDC'S) were established.

With the Chieftainship, the Committees became the most important local structures. The Committees supposedly served as forums for popular participation, and execution of bottom-up planning and co-ordination of development activities¹⁴. Other Committees, which formed part of local structures, included the Ward Development Committees and Constituency Committees. The former, in some cases, worked jointly with the latter as " aggregate representation of the village in a specific area and commanded by the Ward and/or Principal Chief" [Mapetla and Rembe, 1989:31].

¹⁰ Mutahaba, 1989

¹¹ Wallis, 1984:66

¹² Kotze 1972:57

¹³ Hirschman, 1984:1

¹⁴ van de Geer and Wallis, 1982; Kimane, 1982; Thoahlane, 1984

Notwithstanding the rationale for their establishment, the workings of the above local institutions became suspect. In fact, according to Mapetla and Rembe "these bodies were incapable of being effective local planning institutions".¹⁵ Their incapability was attributed to numbers. First, their structures lacked the technical and managerial capacity necessary for effective co-ordination, and the government did little to strengthen their status in relation to the centre. Additionally, formulation of plans remained centralised with the Central Planning and Development Office [CPDO] and ministerial headquarters. In fact, there was practically no involvement and communication between the latter and the centre. Second, they lacked the financial muscle to sponsor their local development programmes. In fact, they were dependent on central government funding to finance their activities. Their reliance on government funding was a disincentive in initiating, supporting and carrying out some of the development programmes. Moreover, their business was impeded by the government's perceived need to maintain central and political control. Third, there was an absence of official guidelines by way of set rules and regulations governing the composition, mode of elections and functions of these institutions.

Additionally, although they were supposed to be grassroots representative institutions for expression of popular demands as well as channels for mobilisation, the Committees could not perform as expected as they met problems of unrepresentative membership. They seemed dormant and ineffective and hence lacked the authority to perform their respective activities. If anything, they mainly performed as a

propaganda machine and institutions for mobilising political support the BNP government, and fuelled political tension in the villages.¹⁶ This undermined their capacity to become important tools for development.

Similarly, frequent central government intervention and transfers of personnel undermined their ability to facilitate development projects. Lack of support staff coupled with lack of sound education further deepened their indifferent performance. In fact, the 1970 Public Service Order, which centralises the system of personnel administration, with most authority resting in Maseru, undermines the Committees' capacity to be agents of development. The Order denied them technical backstopping as some of their programmes were considered as being 'a risk to security' by the Jonathan's regime.

In sum, the Committees were not particularly representative bodies. This was not only because the dominant civil service membership could hardly be thought of as having linkages of a representational kind with the people of the district. It was also because much the same could be said of the non-civil servants as well. The chiefs derived their positions through custom and not through processes normally accepted as being representative. The 'prominent citizens,' on the other hand, represented only the ruling BNP party. In some districts, this in effect meant that they did not represent the party of majority support. Thus, whilst the Committees could sometimes provide useful insights into local conditions, they were not bodies, which could by any means be said to reflect the opinion of the people of their districts.¹⁷

¹⁵ Mapetla 1989: 31

¹⁶ van de Geer and Wallis, 1982; Thoahlane, 1984

¹⁷ Van de Geer & Wallis, 1984:38

The Integrated Development Organisation

Notwithstanding the above, the mood for decentralisation in the 1980s intensified, with the Thaba-Tseka Integrated Rural Development Project. It was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA] and administratively, located within the Ministry of Agriculture. In 1980, the project experimented with decentralised administration of development known as the Thaba-Tseka Rural Development Programme.¹⁸

This rekindled the governing BNP government interest in decentralisation and also saw the creation of Thaba-Tseka district to serve as a model for decentralisation. The Thaba-Tseka experience was supposed to be replicated to other districts. This donor support with strong emphasis on popular participation gave birth to integrated development local organisational forms for development. With much enthusiasm, the BNP government agreed that institutions at the local level should be strengthened and reorganised to make them responsive to the needs of the people.¹⁹

With this renewed impetus to decentralisation, the BNP government introduced the Urban Government Act of 1983. It was generally aimed at making "provisions for establishment and regulation of urban local authorities and to provide for matters thereto or connected therewith."²⁰ Additionally, the Act empowered the Minister of Interior to declare any area to be a municipality, to assign a name to and alter the name of a municipality, to define the boundaries and declare that any area shall cease to be a

municipality, and how a municipal or urban council shall be constituted. With regard to the implementation of the Act, Maseru was supposed to serve as a model for urban decentralisation.

More energised, the BNP government also made changes to district governance. The District Coordination Office replaced the District Administration Office, and was placed within the Prime Minister's Office. The move was to enhance the status and authority of the office of District Coordinators. It was an attempt to show government commitment to the decentralisation project, and also to strengthen local administration with more senior positions supposedly gaining more power and authority. In line with the government's objectives in the Third Five Year Development Plan, the District Coordinators were to be officers with high calibre and sound administrative and coordination experience²¹[Schemes of Service, 1982]. Indeed, Walakira²² confirmed that District Coordinators were of high calibre and well qualified given the situation at the time.

However, our description of the organisational changes, which took place, would be incomplete if we did not mention the dark side of the integrated decentralisation exercise. With regard to the Thaba-Tseka experiment, the results of the decentralisation exercise were disappointing. Upon termination of Canadian's involvement in the project, the government set up an Inter-ministerial Steering Committee "to study the extent to which the philosophy of integrated decentralised district administration piloted in Thaba-Tseka had functioned since its inception."²³ The Committee was

¹⁸ van de Geer and Wallis, 1982: 129-130

¹⁹ van der Geer and Wallis, 1984

²⁰ Mapetla and Rembe, 1989: 27

²¹ Schemes of Service, 1982

²² Walakira, 1985:49

²³ Steering Committee Report, 1984: 1

further charged with "identifying the shortfalls experienced and to make recommendations for alleviating problems identified."²⁴ The overall assessment was that the Thaba tseka model would not succeed in other districts. First, it had a unique character as opposed to its counterparts. It was an agricultural project, which was supposed to be transformed to a district serving as a general model for decentralisation. Unlike the older districts, it possessed substantial resources and infrastructure, and enjoyed much government support. Despite its unique position, however, Thaba-Tseka like other districts, was also beset by serious difficulties, namely ineffective institutions, poor and uncoordinated planning, shortage of support staff, and lack of management of finances.

Second, as a donor funded project to be extended into a model district, it was beset by common problems associated with donor funding. Upon Canadian's withdrawal of funding, the following problems prevailed:

- Allowances [were] no longer paid to DDC members;
- Attendance [was] poor which results in domination of meetings by civil servants who do not usually respond clearly to the problem of the DDC²⁵

Additionally, the usual problem of co-ordination between the local and central government structures became a feature of Thaba-Tseka model. As Mapetla and Rembe²⁶ noted "the problem of co-ordination between the DC's office and Departmental Heads still persist [ed], with the latter communicating directly with parent ministries in Maseru." Generally

speaking, with its limitations, the idea of the project extension to that a model made the concept of the Thaba-Tseka being a model for decentralisation became doubtful.

Similarly, with regard to the implementation of the Urban Government Act of 1983, nothing tangible happened. The Act remained inactive since its inception and no creation of municipalities or Urban Councils took place. The delay in the implementation of the Act was attributed to a number of factors. First, it was difficult for the government to secure qualified and experienced personnel to run the envisaged municipalities. Second the streamlining of responsibilities to rid the Councils of bureaucratic interference between the District Co-ordinator and Town Clerk proved difficult. Third, indecision about how the urban government staff should be constituted also delayed the implementation of the Act.

Like their predecessors, the District Co-ordinators did not perform as expected. Political motives gained prominence over their overall governance. Over and above absence of operating guidelines, they lacked executive powers and authority over their business. They also had no autonomy over personnel and financial matters. This made it difficult for them to practically and effectively undertake their responsibilities. Worse still, little or no commitment by those involved in development activities; poor transport system and the general red tape of the central government bureaucracy beset them. Even the Vesting Powers Act of 1984 that stipulated their functions did not save them from problems. The Act remained silent on a number of administrative and substantive issues. If anything, the Act increased confusion and hostility among various

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Mapetla and Rembe, 1989: 26

²⁶ Ibid

players in the administration of the district affairs.

The picture painted above also affected the institution of chieftainship. Traditionally, this institution played a vital role in policy and decision-making. At the local level, it enabled participation through *Pitsos*. Such involvement has become fairly weak in consequence to the BNP's policies since taking government power. Throughout the subsequent years, the Chiefs lost some of their legal and traditional powers. Consequently, their participation in governance through political structures diminished. With the decentralised administration of development, the Chiefs further lost their leadership powers to the modern local institutions. This situation led to the existence of conflict and power struggles between the Committees and the Chiefs based on party politics and differences in the affairs of local administration. Despite Leabua Jonathan's policy change announcements in the administration of rural affairs following "the elections of 1985 did not change the Chiefs' predicament *vis-à-vis* the modern institutions in local administration in the Mountain Kingdom."

In sum, the idea of a decentralised administration of development as demonstrated above proved to be a far distant reality. If anything, the experiments alluded to above provided a good example of lack of explicit policy guidelines on decentralisation and its implementation and total inertia on the part of the decision makers, compounded by uncoordinated policy and half-baked decisions. Nevertheless, the idea of a decentralised administration of development was a good one for promoting democracy, self-reliance and popular participation of people in managing their own affairs with little political and bureaucratic interference.

The Organisation Developments Under the Military Rule

The overthrow of Jonathan's government by the military in 1986 saw fundamental changes to the local administration system. The new government repealed the Parliament Act of 1983, and replaced it with Lesotho Government Order No.3 of 1986. The Order vested the legislative and executive powers in the King. The Order also established a Military Council to advise the King in performing his functions, whilst also creating a Council of Ministers to assist in the general administration of the country.²⁷ Additionally, the military government issued Order No. 4 of 1986 banning political parties and activities in the country. The Order thus hindered popular participation in development activity since *Pitsos* were suspiciously considered 'destabilising mechanisms' by the military government.

Of particular reference to local administration was Order No. 9 of 1986. The Order concerned district administration, local institutions and the chiefs. With regard to district administration, the Order repealed the District Coordinators (Vesting Powers) Act 1984. Consequently, the District Development Councils Secretariat (DDCS) replaced the office of District Coordination. A new office of District Secretary was established to perform the same functions of its defunct predecessors. If anything new, the post of Military Officer was introduced to ensure law and order at the district level.

With regard to local institutions, Article 2 (1) of the 1986 Order established Village Development

²⁷ Lesotho Government Gazette Extra Ordinary No, 3 of 1986

Committees to perform the following functions:

- consult with government for planning, formulation, implementation and maintenance of development activities and social services in the village;
- represent and lead the community in its efforts to identify village development needs;
- raise funds for its local development purposes;
- stimulate local participation in development activities; and
- make government aware of local development priorities through the DDC's.

Similarly, Article 8 of the Order established Ward Development Committees. The Committees were charged with the responsibility of scrutinising and putting together concrete development proposals from VDC's for submission to the DDC's and to monitor the implementation of development projects at the village level. Additionally, the District Development Committees were established by Article 12 of the Order to among other things to:

- promote socio-economic development at the district level;
- formulate and implement development projects in the district;
- ensure that projects in the district are in line with the national plan;
- monitor the implementation of national projects;
- raise funds for implementation of national projects.

Further changes were also effected to the local institutions through Order No.15 of 1986 by the military government. The Order replaced the word "Committee" by the word "Council". Thus Village Development Councils replaced Village Development Committees, and so on

throughout the hierarchy. This was an interesting development since it demonstrated the military mentality of governance. Alternatively perhaps, it demonstrated the military government's commitment to disassociate itself from Jonathan's legacy, and even to be seen committed to the depoliticisation of local administration affairs.

With regard to chiefs, the Order through series of articles made the chiefs ex-officio members and chairpersons of the Committees. This was case both at village and ward levels. In the district level, the Order made the Principal Chiefs the official representative of the District. Thus the Order increased the powers of the chieftainship in the governance of local affairs. Perhaps this was to replicate what was happening at the central level where the King's powers were substantially increased. Or, it could be also argued that the military government wanted to score political points for its legitimacy and gain support from the chiefs who had experienced a very difficult time under Jonathan's regime.

With regard to the municipality or urban governance, the military government implemented the provisions of the Urban Government Act of 1983. In 1989, Maseru Municipal Council was established under the military rule. The military government saw this as a way of giving people an opportunity to order their own affairs. To create a conducive environment for the Municipality government, Order No. 11 of 1990 amended the 1983 Act. The Order paved a way for the first municipal council elections held through nominated representatives mandated to campaign along non-partisan lines in 1991. Thus from the military government perspective, all these changes were done primarily to

deepen popular participation in local administration.

Likewise, the description of the organisational changes that occurred under military rule would be incomplete if they are not subjected to some analysis. With regard to local institutions, the military government through the Orders led to the changes of titles without any significant structural changes to the local institutions. The military government also introduced the idea of elections but the elections were indirect since political activities and freedoms were suspended. Furthermore, the tasks and responsibilities of the local institutions were not given technical expertise, and resource availability (financial, personnel, infrastructure, transport, training etc) was a constraint to the local institutions. Like their predecessors, therefore, they could not perform as expected hence endured public ridicule and hostility.

Similarly, Maseru Municipal Council could not perform as expected. First, perennial conflict rocked the Municipality relations with the military government. The Councillors saw themselves on a par with the Ministers and passed a resolution that they should be declared 'Honourable Councillors' and should enjoy fringe benefits as did the Ministers. They also resolved to work for the termination of the Town Clerk position since they perceived it as inhibiting factor regarding the Municipality operations. This conduct entrenched the conflict between the Council and the military government, and seriously damaged the operations of the Municipality.

Second, the political colour of the Council clouded the smooth operations of the Municipality. The majority of the Councillors were BCP members, and ironically, the Town Clerk was a

BNP member. Consequently, party politics rocked the operations of the Municipality. Basically, both parties used the Council as a forum for pushing their respective political agenda; thus both the BNP and BCP factor was vigorously displayed during the Council meetings. This hindered the Municipality in making a meaningful impact in its attempt to deliver services to the populace.

Third, ignorance of the Councillors regarding their operations and sphere of jurisdiction in relation to the central government impaired the Council's operations. This demonstrated that training was ignored prior to the establishment of the Council. Consequently, lack of training and clarity over roles regarding the Councillors inhibited the effective performance of the Council.

Finally, the Council was subjected to ridicule by the staff and the public. The bureaucrats, particularly the Town Clerk viewed the Councillors as 'illiterates.' This remark led to the Councillors' declaration of war against the Town Clerk and the bureaucrats, and stood as an obstacle to Council operations. Similarly, the Council also received a hostile welcome from the public. Politicians labelled it a 'dummy council' used as a rubber stamp to the military government decisions. In desperation to save its damaged reputation, the Council ended up violating the Standing Orders that established it, culminating its suspension by the Military government.

Notwithstanding the above, the record of the military government proved to have certainly gone some way towards putting decentralisation and creation of local institutions on a sound legal basis. Hence, the military government's efforts towards the restoration of civil rule warranted a

credit on its part. However, 'clumsiness' and hastiness coupled with eagerness to make an impression to the Basotho and the international community dealt a resounding blow to the efforts of the military government. If anything, the military managed to reinvent the wheel of Jonathan's legacy.

The New Organisational Measures Problems and Prospects

The restoration of civil rule in 1993 was followed three years later in 1996 by the repeal of the following

- Local Administration Act 1969;
- Urban Government Act 1983;
- Development Councils Order 1991;
- Development Councils (Amendment) Order 1992; and
- Development Councils (Amendment) Act 1994.

• The Local Government Act 1997 replaced the Acts. Prior to the above, in accordance with section 106 of the Constitution, the Ministry of Local Government was established. Consequently, the Ministry was charged with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the 1997 Act. However, there was delay in establishing Local Authorities for reasons known to the governing LCD government. Nevertheless, it could be speculated that the political legitimacy crisis that rocked the ruling LCD government since 1998 coupled with the magnitude of budgetary implications of the local authorities' project, forestalled progress. That said, however, there have been notable initiatives undertaken by the ruling LCD government to fast track the implementation of the 1997 Local Government Act. Such initiatives included the passing of the following legislation:

- Local Government Elections Act No. 9 of 1998;
 - Local Government (Amendment) Act No. 5 of 2004; and
 - Local Government Elections (Amendment) Act No. 6 of 2004
- Additionally, the Local Government Election date was already scheduled as 30 April.

The 1997 Local Government Act and its subsidiary legislation had somewhat reorganised the current decentralised system in the Mountain Kingdom. At the local level the structure remains very much the same as it was under the previous system except that chiefs have been drawn into election frenzy. At the district level, however, the District Council and the District Administration have been given powers, authority and responsibilities similar to their respective predecessors. A major difference from the past system, however, is that in the envisaged system all development activity is integrated under the management of the District Council supported by the District Planning Unit. Additionally, the Districts are also to have direct management over their human resources supported by the Local Government Service Commission and Local Government Service Tribunal. Furthermore, Local Authorities elections this time around are the business of the Independent Electoral Commission, and that certain Local Authorities' constituencies have been reserved for women. Central government would only be represented at the district by non-developmental departments as well as the law and order arm of government.

To what extent has the government attempted to deal with the problems associated with the previous arrangements in the present arrangements? It is noted that in the pre-1997 organisational arrangements

the major problems included the following. First the political colour of local authorities has been a problem in development at the local level. Historically, the Councils have been rocked by party politics, culminating in their failure to make an impact in the development of local areas. If anything, the Councils have been systematically used as a forum for pushing political agendas of political parties. More so, political parties have used the Councils as propaganda machinery to score political points. This political factor has always landed the Councils in deep conflict with the ruling government, culminating into their suspension and/or abolition.

Second, training relating to the operations of local government has always been ignored or neglected prior to the establishment of the local authorities. History has it that lack of training has always made it difficult for the Councillors to have the necessary clarity on their responsibilities. This position has in the past, led to a situation in which the Councillors find themselves not being clear on their sphere of jurisdiction in relation to the central government. This has always resulted in the entrenchment of the conflict between the Councils and the central government.

Third, local authorities have always lacked the expertise and competence necessary for running the local government business. Evidence has shown that in the past, the calibre of the Councillors was not up to the desirable standard needed to meaningfully participate in the policy and decision making processes. The Councillors were not skilled and knowledgeable in the state-of-the-art of public administration and management. This resulted in a situation in which the Councillors found themselves at the mercy of

technocrats, whose policy and decision agendas as a consequence dominated public agenda in the management of local affairs.

Fourth, lack of finance and financial management has been the common feature of local authorities in the past. History has it that the Councils were incapable of either raising funds or managing the funds allocated to them by the central government. This led to a situation in which the Councillors could not be paid their allowances. Thus the Council were simply insolvent mainly due to inadequate generation of revenues, poor resource base or simply inefficient management of revenues. Additionally, resource base imbalances among the local authorities led to their indifferent performance in the generation of revenue. This culminated in varying degrees of development among them sometimes fuelled by the purposeful lack of central government support.

Fifth undue political interference in local affairs in the past has denied local authorities an opportunity to create order their own affairs. They lacked the necessary autonomy and independence to manage their affairs, culminating in their inability to deliver services to the public. This factor earned the Councils the ridicule and hostility of the public. They were labelled 'rubber stamps' to the decisions made by the ruling government. Additionally, the Councils lack of autonomy and independence has resulted in situations in which political motives gained prominence over merit as a criterion for management of personnel. This has retarded the operations of the local authorities in the past.

Sixth, little cooperation and coordination among the various technical agencies on the one hand and the Councils on the other hand tended

to frustrate development initiatives at the local level. Even the Thaba-Tseka integrated experiment failed to reduce or eliminate the historical standoff between technical agencies and the Councils. If anything, the Councils were surrounded by ridicule from the technical agencies. The technocrats viewed the Councillors as 'illiterates' who simply could not translate the government documents into action. As such, technical agencies felt that it was a waste of energy to spend considerable time trying to translate government documents to the Councils. This attitude stood as an obstacle to the development of local areas.

Seventh, the new Councils are likely to have more top-heavy bureaucracies than their predecessors, which tend to add to the operating costs of the Councils. The top-heaviness of the bureaucracies is also likely to manifest the dominance by the bureaucrats on the decision making system at the local level on the one hand and lead to the near disappearance of participation by the citizenry on the other. Additionally, it is likely that the red-tape associated with bureaucracies might find its way in the administration of the Councils, culminating into their inefficiency and ineffectiveness in managing the local affairs.

Finally, the consequence of the reinstating participatory devolutionary decision making under the existing financial arrangements, however, could lead to the emergence of acute geographical disparities and inequalities, since areas with rich resource endowments will, as in the past, tax themselves into development whereas the poorly endowed areas cannot afford to do so. This situation may lead to conflict between the centre and the local areas. This will be the case because responsibilities have not been devolved into local areas on the basis of varying local capabilities to manage such responsibilities.

In sum, the above does not represent a full catalogue of the issues that should have been given close attention by the ruling LCD government in the reestablishment or reinstatement of local authorities in Lesotho. The fragility of decentralisation process in Lesotho requires commitment and consciousness on the part the government on the one hand and of other stakeholders on the other. This joint effort and commitment over a decentralised system would go a long way to restore decentralisation initiatives at the local level, which were progressively on the decline.

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