

Mosisili to receive serious challenge to his majority



BAC's Raditapole symbolises women's party leadership



Thabane gets first taste at party leadership



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Election 2007

The stage is set for a second election to test the merits of the Mixed Member Proportional Representation electoral model (MMP)

LCD FACES TOUGH CHALLENGE



PICTURE: TRC

Basotho support democracy - WfJ poll

How to lose an election

IEC SET FOR GOOD ELECTION



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Febrile mood for election

2007 is election time once again in Lesotho. The period is expected to generate not only widespread excitement and expectation but also nervousness and uncertainty. The latter is felt with good reason as has become customary with elections since independence in Lesotho: a period associated with fierce political contestation among the party leaders and often spilling over into intimidation, violence and conflict among the party followers.

Feelings hitherto associated with the former, may be reasonably attributed to a normal change that elections are meant to bring. That is, the possibility of a new government under a different party or the incumbent party consolidating its following and seeking a fresh mandate possibly to be driven by new members of parliament and cabinet ministers.

Beyond and between elections, political parties remain the main players on the political landscape as the ruling party, opposition and other parties in parliament. The spotlight that they attracted at elections, is meant to, though it seldom does, stay with them throughout the period until the next election. Here, the ruling party, in particular, is under pressure to deliver on the promises that it made to the people in its campaigns.

Theoretically, at least, the ruling party feels pressured by the legitimacy that winning elections would have conferred upon it, resulting in direct accountability and transparency to the people in its action and behaviour. The ability to deliver good governance is the primary assessment of such action and behaviour. The opposition, the media, organised civil society and other groupings add to this pressure to determine the style, quality and quantity of delivery.

However, Lesotho's political history since independence has undermined this formula. Where politics should have been allowed to merely create an environment for social vibrancy and economic growth instead turned into a direct impediment for national growth. It is only as recently as 2002 that the space was opened up for the expression of pluralism, accurate patronage and tolerance.

Electoral reform which ushered in the new Mixed Member Proportional model will effectively come under its first test. Basotho will be assessed on whether they are able to deliver another peaceful election after the reform-making one of 2002. This is important because every other attempt at a second election in Lesotho has ended in chaos.

In other words, Lesotho has only been able to make one step towards democratic development and each time failed to make meaningful progress beyond that. The search for reasons behind this phenomenon will always shift the spotlight onto political parties as the main agents of political change.

Sadly, despite their manifestoes promising the yearned-for goals, political parties have only served to entrench polarised political identities in an otherwise homogeneous society. The safety of a united nation has often been undermined by political labelling. One was either a BNP follower or a BCP supporter.

This compartmentalising of society in a strictly binary fashion does not necessarily reflect a national progress towards a single destiny but instead exposes a division of society into two adversaries. It even plays down the existence of other (smaller) parties as well as a diversity of issues.

As a result, we were left with political

identities of conservatism, radicalism and monarchism. While these were relevant and fashionable in pre-independence times, we certainly now need parties existing for, campaigning and delivering on socio-economic issues such as environmental protection, employment, poverty reduction /wealth creation, gender equity, crime and corruption fighting, combating HIV & AIDS and so on.

It makes no sense that people who are now, more than ever, facing real challenges that could easily wipe their individual and collective lives will not interrogate these threats through the vote.

The absence, even beyond the vote, of serious pressure for accountability on the vote winner, is alarming. It creates the impression of the existence of a chasm between politics, political parties, politicians and democracy on the one hand and governance, development and the improvement of people's livelihoods on the other.

A careful reading of party manifestoes reveals a crystallization of some of the issues mentioned above. For a developing country with limited choices, few differences among these manifestoes are hardly surprising.

Surely any elected government in Lesotho can manage to focus its attention and resources on fighting crime, improving agriculture, providing health care, creating employment and attracting investment and not worry about additional challenges such as religious intolerance, terrorism, gay/minority rights, extremist groupings and multiple other issues that confront other countries?

The perennial failure to deliver on election promises always goes unpunished. Elections and victory in them, it would appear, only secure bragging rights for the winning party against its opponents but do not act as a democracy barometer for the electorate.

The opponents, instead of carrying the fight into parliament to prepare for a better showing in the next election, seem all too comfortable to descend into despair and obscurity. Is the majority indeed too huge to be challenged? Why would the winner try harder if the opposition leadership and following do not push it to? Who can blame the winner if he then flaunts political arrogance?

Lately, the electorate had increasingly been left with the dour prospect of a virtually decided election outcome even before the election date was announced due to the absence of meaningful contest. It is hoped that Basotho will use the 2007 election to show the world that they are evolving with purpose towards full political maturity; that indeed Lesotho's post-election problems were rooted in previous electoral models and not elsewhere; that elections are really worth the effort, money, time, and heartache.

It is customary for *Work for Justice* to provide an analytical coverage of the electoral environment and this edition is no different. While politicians, political parties and voters may be taken up by the electoral storm, we resist the temptation to take a sober and objective view of the process unfolding, including the likely outcomes that it might offer.

We encourage all players, while taking an active and optimistic part in the election, to take time to sit back and reflect on the positive values that the components of the electoral process may contribute. It is important to note that beyond election victories and the installation of a new government, Basotho need to live in a happy, free, stable and peaceful country.

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"The proof of the pudding lies in the eating. The value of an election lies in the acceptance by all parties of the outcome. More particularly, the losing party should accept defeat. A rejection of the result will be that more difficult if the election is indeed free and fair."

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WfJ opinion poll

Despite suspected voter apathy to have hit Lesotho elections in recent times, the WfJ survey revealed an overwhelming interest in voting. 90 per cent of the surveyed respondents confirmed their intention to vote. This is a vote of confidence that the electorate are showing in the democratisation process despite the decline in voting figures in elections worldwide.

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IEC set for good poll



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PICTURE: TRC

The unity that Basotho demonstrated at the 40-year independence celebrations is expected to resist political divisions

The Age of Progress

As they prepare to pass the acid test of a consecutive election, Basotho have made significant strides toward democratic consolidation, to shake off the hangover of independence which seemed to have clung to their necks like an albatross.

Many writers have argued that homogeneous Lesotho, unlike numerous other heterogeneous countries in Africa, is best placed to quicken democratic consolidation due to the absence of ethnic, religious and linguistic differences which impede singular democratic progress.

Whatever divisions that have slowed democratic progress in Lesotho are arguably man-made as is the case with the only other homogeneous nation-state, the former high-commission peer state of Swaziland.

Fresh from its 40-year independence celebrations, Lesotho looks back at a period characterized by the absence of vibrant and sustained multipartyism. While mature western democracies have evolved through centuries of democratization, Lesotho only has to realistically use 2002 as the start of open multipartyism.

The introduction of a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral model offered a great opportunity for democracy to deliver its hallowed pillars of majority rule, participation, transparency, tolerance, accountability, checks and balances, responsiveness, minority rights, pluralism and so on.

The attempt to place the blame for the nation's failure to democratize on a mere electoral model would appear rather disingenuous, for, beyond technical ingredients such as the elections, majority and proportionality, Basotho still had an obligation to live in peace and harmony.

Much of what has hitherto characterized politics in Lesotho is still pretty much defined in terms of independence issues when the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) gained massive popularity as an Africanist movement delivering the nation out of colonial bondage; the Basotho National Party (BNP) protecting the interests of the chiefs and the Christians and the MFP advancing the interests of the monarchy. These three have remained the

main political parties in Lesotho until recently when the BCP fragmented into a number of hotch-potch offshoots, the BNP becoming embroiled in unending intra party feuding and the MFP's halo effectively darkening with the departure of the independence monarch in the late 1990s.

Some smaller parties have since emerged while others such as AC Manyeli's National Independence Party (NIP) have attempted to remake themselves. These, predictably, have failed to capture the imagination of a people still fixated on the party dynamics and bitterness of independence years and beyond or who have been unable to view politics beyond the narrow prism of BCP/BNP rivalry.

It is not surprising that not only does parliament attract mainly elderly candidates but younger people are still confounded by political campaigning drawing from independence years which they know scarcely anything about.

Recent efforts at the opening up of the political landscape by the Popular Front for Democracy (PFD), The Lesotho People's Congress (LPC) and more recently the All Basotho Convention (ABC) are still to receive positive responses from the target majority electorate.

Worse, apart from the formation of the Lesotho Workers' Party (LWP) to respond to labour challenges coming with the growth of mainly textile industrialisation, hardly any other political grouping has been formed around major issues such as water and land; issues around which most Basotho are organised.

Instead, only Community-based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs have responded to issues such as women's rights, youth unemployment and HIV & AIDS. Even these formations can only manage to address these challenges from a small sectoral approach as opposed to a national one at state level. Despite all these, Lesotho has made

more progress towards democratic consolidation, given its economic weaknesses, in the last five years than other African countries have made in ten times that period. That the MMP electoral model is now being exported to other countries after Lesotho pioneered it in Africa is worth praise.

Beyond that, Lesotho has addressed the questions of the military and the monarchy, to enable them to contribute to effective nation building through ensuring stability and fostering unity. Institutionalisation within the democratic set up and in economic governance has been witnessed with the creation of relevant oversight and regulatory bodies.

In addition, the expansion of parliament to include other parties (though criticized for not demonstrating real compromise on the part of the majority party) was hailed for its potential to build tolerance capable of progressively putting an end to adversarial politics once and for all.

Still on institutionalization, the maturation of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), now led by its third set of commissioners, further demonstrates this progress. Throughout its life, the IEC has borne the brunt of legal and political storms by political parties notorious for their inability and refusal to accept election verdicts.

In all these episodes, the IEC has stood firm and demonstrated considerable integrity and professionalism. This is despite Lesotho being one country where, for its small population, it is physically difficult to run a successful election.

Sure, the elections have always been free and fair, that is, able to reflect freedom of movement, association and expression and all eligible candidates able to vote and hold office.

However, some politicians, in the absence of any other loophole to political opportunity to hang onto, would exploit the country's weak-

nesses in transportation, relevant technology, inefficient communication, poor electrification and so on to challenge election results.

The country's weaknesses have been exacerbated by inadequate voter education, party unprofessionalism, voter apathy and other challenges which still dog the IEC.

While the IEC would be reasonably forgiven in the last few elections for the few mistakes it made; mistakes attributable to inexperience and the pressures of transition elections, among others, better performances are expected in the 2007 elections and beyond.

After all, the IEC gets regular electoral practice in the form of by-elections, local government elections and foreign election observations. The expectation is for elections to act as the platform for genuine popular expression where the ballot is both entry and exit ticket for elected candidates.

Up to now, voters mainly look towards elections as the opportunity to usher in a government of their choice. The function of elections as an emphatic removal of non-performing politicians is still not being fully exercised by voters.

This calls for intensive programmes in civic education among the electorate. So far, such training has focused more on the electoral process (how to vote) and less on the substance (why vote) of political democratization.

While it had been assumed that a voting culture had filtered down well among the electorate, especially the rural uneducated majority voters, huge numbers of improperly registered voters and spoilt ballots are evidence of poor voter education.

The political parties themselves have not necessarily done much to address this challenge. They have, however, in recent times taken time to review the electoral act and respond to other peripheral electoral matters. The promotion of greater participa-

tion of women as candidates has also improved, at least since the local government elections, when women had reserved seats in councils.

With time, this is expected to gain more maturity and possibly change the nature and composition of candidacy as women make up the majority vote since they enjoy the lion's share of national population.

Furthermore, politicians are still largely content with sidelining the urban educated vote. That is, they are, at best, comfortable in and desire the absence or ineffectiveness of oversight mechanisms as well as checks and balances or at worst, suppress outright criticism.

This is not uncommon in much of Africa where majority of extremely loyal and largely uncritical electorate is resident in the countryside. As more people increasingly migrate to the towns, it is expected that they will not only migrate with their vote and register in their new work places but they will also form part of the growing urban electorate exposed to the performance of their politicians.

Greater communication among the urban voting community should hopefully transform 'identity voting' into 'performance voting'.

The former still captures the nature of Lesotho's political culture characterised by strong identification with parties often to be only abandoned because of personality clashes or the promise of personal gain in a different party. The performance or lack of it from politicians is still not seen as reason enough for party longevity in power or followers' continued membership and support.

Recent periods of majority presence in parliament, occasioned largely by the hitherto-used First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral model, elevated the majority party often together with its leaders, to near sacred cow status who in turn tend to dismiss as almost sacrilegious any reasonable resistance or criticism of majority party's excesses and failures.



PIICTURE: TRC

Crossed over: Did these MPs seek the voters' permission to join the All Basotho Convention?

Of Voting, Voters and Votees

The forthcoming election will be assessed on whether it will add value to the democratization process

Basotho will go for a national election on February 17, 2007 barring some major mishap. Even this is not likely as experience in Lesotho points to problems usually happening *after* elections as opposed to *before*, despite the problems often having pre-election causes.

However, it is important to gauge whether all the important players are ready for the election to enable the latter to deliver democracy, that is, firstly usher in a popularly elected new government which will indeed serve the interests of the entire nation.

Secondly, the forthcoming election will be assessed on whether it will add value to the democratization process in terms of plurality in parliament, the introduction and strengthening of democratic institutions as well as delivering on the rights of previously marginalized groups such as women.

These questions are important as Lesotho is only getting the second bite at the cherry of elections under the new MMP model. The jury is still out on whether political parties are prepared to do justice to the provisions and expectations of this model, namely to provide a fully representative voice of all the parties whose electoral vote put them in parliament.

So far, the electoral model has appeased the parties which had cried foul that the past electoral model, the winner takes all, had failed to reflect the votes which significantly qualified them to enter parliament.

Beyond ensuring the mere honour of occupying a parliamentary seat, it is still to be seen whether MMP will contribute significantly to the quality of debate and speed of legislative business in parliament. Even more significantly, it is still to be seen whether the seats delivered will indeed translate into a diversity of representative views of the sections of the electorate through whose vote the

seat was occupied in the first place. The election should also assess whether Basotho take it as a national event or dismiss it as the preserve of politicians. Firstly, these doubts have found reasonable basis from the nation's generally negative attitude to the recently held local government elections.

While some may argue that comparisons between the two may appear rather unfair, it is worth recalling that the local government elections, even more than the national election, are expected to be closer to the people in terms of delivering democracy right at their door step and not far away in the city administrative metropole.

In addition, the local government elections created opportunities for ordinary candidates who do not necessarily appear high in party hierarchy to occupy political office as councillors.

Moreover, parties were expected to use the local government elections as a dress rehearsal to the national election, to not only touch base with their supporters but to also assess the efficacy of their campaign and organizational mechanisms.

Furthermore, the local government elections were expected to reflect a geographical picture of party following: to ascertain which areas were party/ candidate strongholds.

While numerous analysts have expressed reservations about such mapping, what is certain is that, for a small country, Lesotho's geo-electoral map broadly reflects three formulations: the urban versus rural, south versus north and working class versus peasantry. These have traditionally spread their vote between two main strands in party following: the nationalist/conservative and congress/radical.

Intra-party problems characterized by infighting, splits and factionalism have seen this dichotomy increasingly coming under scrutiny

to the extent of shaking otherwise strong party/follower bonds.

This has happened throughout the entire political history of Lesotho with virtually all the parties in Lesotho emerging as offshoots of the original congress group formed by Ntsu Mokhehle.

The latest breakaway by former minister Tom Thabane to form the All Basotho Convention (ABC) has not only generated once again a new wave of renewed interest in politics, at least among the town-folk, it has also openly targeted voters who are disgruntled with the nationalist or congress movements and may seek a new political home.

This brings us to the second point. Basotho are notorious for electing a party and virtually 'abandoning' it in parliament. Little evidence has been found of continuous expression of civic responsibility on the part of the voters beyond elections.

Once the voters have put their party in parliament, either as majority, opposition or even as also rans, Basotho are not known to follow up on what form, style and impact of representation their politicians demonstrate in parliament. The electorate seem to be content to only deliver seats in parliament, thereby becoming mere stepping stones for their politicians to fame and fortune.

There is also evidence of some sections of the electorate who even lose track of who exactly their parliamentarian is. Posters showing all parliamentarians, their parties and the names and numbers of their constituencies adorn pretty much all official buildings in Lesotho.

This is a good practice that has taken root over the years to keep the nation reminded about their office bearers or to remind the opposition of who is in power. Good as this

communication exercise may be, it does not seem to be effectively used by all parties, the media and NGOs, whose mission it is to educate the nation about its civic responsibility.

In an effective democracy, each parliamentarian would be placed under strict scrutiny to monitor his actions and behaviour, his professional delivery in parliament as well as his accountability to those who elected him. There are cases of parliamentarians' chronic absenteeism from parliament sessions, failure to pass motions or even to merely ask a question as well as omission to communicate with constituency members.

The result is often a parliamentarian occupying a parliamentary seat on his own behalf, complete with all the perks that come with it and completely abandoning the constituency whose interests he is meant to represent in parliament.

The blame for such conduct should be placed more on the voter than on the representative. This is why Civil Society Organisations have always made calls, though halfheartedly, for the entrenchment of the principle of *recallability* of MPs. But it is the voters themselves who should take up the challenge and indeed recall non-performing MPs.

The fear or reluctance to recall an MP may be caused by a fear to betray the original vote. If this non-responsiveness of the electorate is not effectively addressed by the NGOs and the parties themselves, then Lesotho's democratic process is bound to remain stuck at elections.

The absence of strong voter/MP dialogue between elections has resulted in the failure by the electorate and the politicians to speak one language. The electoral mandate afforded the MPs is often limited at elections and not refreshed, modified and strengthened throughout the five years of democratic governance.

This also results in the politicians, especially those occupying the executive branch of government, running government on the basis of their own independent thinking, without strong inputs from organized civil society, academia, the media, organized labour, organized business and other contributors. After all, they argue, the legitimacy of majority votes assumes that those voters agree and endorse all their decisions.

It is more discouraging when it comes to legislative work in parliament. Most of the parliamentarians are not appropriately qualified to make informed debates on proposed laws in parliament. This is exacerbated by the absence of public hearings on the said laws resulting in inadequate public participation in the parliamentary process which makes for weak participatory democracy.

The result is the making of laws with the influence of the external liberal stimuli, and such influence overtaking the steady evolution of society. For instance, the recent law on the equality of married persons, while it takes its cue from the fast paced progression of women's rights worldwide, may not recognize Basotho's readiness to integrate its provisions in their day to day family relations.

Such legislation, while reasonable and progressive, may not accurately serve the society it is meant to serve. Who is to guide the making of such a law except the electorate themselves?

The challenge is for the voters to be responsible for the entire life of their representatives in parliament, from election to election. Voters should critically determine who to vote for, how they use that vote, whether the vote keeps them in parliament until the next election and if they deserve the vote in the next election. This will confer on the vote its true power as is so often banded about at election time.

Who will win the election?

No matter who the Basotho voters will choose as their next government, what is certain is that they are ready for change.

Twenty one parties will contest the national election next year. This is an addition of two parties, the Basotho Democratic National Party (BDNP) and the All Basotho Convention (ABC) to the 19 that competed at the 2002 polls. The entry of the two is akin to the formation of the Lesotho People's Congress (LPC) just before the 2002 election.

A closer look at the voting changes over the years shows that more parties have contested, with the MMP model recognising the votes of some smaller parties with a parliamentary seat through a 40-seat PR alternative. It is interesting that none of the parties without either a Congress or Nationalist linkage has made significant inroads into the majority congress support base.

Even the 30 346 votes accounting for 5 seats for the NIP are suspected to have come as a result of the similarities between the LCD's symbol (an eagle) and the NIP's bird. An observable trend is the decline in the percentage of the congress vote from 1993 when the BCP won 74.7 %, 60.7 % in 1998 for the LCD and in 2002 the same party amassing 54%.

This confirms that the congress has indeed been hurt by splits since 1993. Still the most popular party considering its massive showing in the 2002 national and the local government elections three years later, the LCD is challenged to keep its support or increase it.

That the ABC had become the second party with 19 parliamentarians in the recently dissolved sixth parliament and upstaging the LPC, presents interesting permutations ahead of the 2007 polls.

Will the LCD work harder and restore its overwhelming majority? Will the congress alliance pull back traditionalist congress hard liners who may still have misgivings about the formation of the LCD? Will the BNP haemorrhage votes or keep them. Will the NIP get votes for what it is or decline with the ageing of its nonagenarian leader? Will the LWP throw its weight behind the ABC as their leaders have presented themselves as bedfellows? Will the prospect of a PR entry encourage other smaller parties to work harder to increase their PR seats?

The BCP, BAC and the LPC alliance also adds to the competition, in which it is hoped that no clear victor can be predicted and all the parties, including the traditional major parties, can also face the real possibility of their support declining or even failing to enter parliament.

Worsening infighting in the BNP, if it results in a decline of the support for the party, will certainly rob democracy of a significant player in the political history of the country so far. Rival Thabang Nyoe's new breakaway BDNP, ostensibly formed to restore the party to its aristocratic background may not necessarily earn more votes for the overall nationalist family. Instead, it is another clear symptom of the all too palpable fractiousness of not only the BNP but Lesotho's parties as a whole. Despite its unenviable record, the



PICTURE: TRC

Having done very well in the 2002 National and the 2005 Local Elections, Mosisili is the man to beat in the 2007 Election.

BNP still has its own support base of followers who still see it as their political home. Whatever outcome the election will dish out, it will be interesting to see if the vote will bring about a change in the complexion of parliament; whether the election will indeed bring about a change in the leadership of the country.

Despite the presence of PR candidates in parliament, the majority of the LCD has been a constant cause for grousing by other parties. Their chance has come now to change that and deliver a parliament that churns out tough debates and progressive legislation. For this to happen there needs to be party supporter movement or the shifting of allegiance, otherwise the result will be similar to 2002.

The situation is pretty much the same as 2002 when political allegiances had remained static until Maope defected from the LCD. Even now, those who had probably been disappointed by the LCD would have either chosen to re-elect it, try another party or stay away from the polls until Tom Thabane came and encouraged them to cross over.

The crossing over campaign endorses the fact that Thabane is aware that his hope for support lies in supporters deserting the LCD and joining him. Who else to chip supporters from than from he who has the most? The danger here is that the crossers would in all likelihood not necessarily join Thabane for his political qualities but to merely run away from Mosisili. True, Thabane is hailed as the most efficient minister but he has no party leadership experience that say, Mosisili, Lekhanya, Raditapole, Manyeli and Rakuoane have gained. The fact is that the ABC has not been tested at the polls and rides largely on the popularity of its leader.

If a week in politics is a long time, then the few weeks that the ABC has been in existence for, is sufficient for voters to decide to cross or to stay. Thabane's trump card has been his unequalled cabinet performance, a feat even reportedly recognised

with the award for the Best Communications Minister in Africa.

In further exploiting this and exposing the LCD's weaknesses, Thabane's campaign kick started with a gimmick to wash his hands clean of the now infamous mercedes benz deal.

Corruption being a strong modern day campaign issue in most elections in Africa, not only would the mercedes benz issue cast him in brighter light against his former colleagues, it would also have the potential to convince the public that indeed all is not clean within cabinet.

Still, this depends on whether the issue interests the majority rural electorate. Despite having mounted a countrywide campaign of reportedly successful rallies, Thabane's party certainly does not make the next election a two-horse race.

The legacy of Ntsu Mokehle still looms large and other parties, certainly the BCP and the BNP have the requisite experience to make a good showing. Thabane's attempt to woo voters from the established National/Congress tradition, while probably desirable, may appear overly ambitious, at least as it is meant to be achieved in the next polls.

An objective prognosis of the election would recognise a small shift in support. The LCD will still do very well, as will the congress alliance, the BNP and other parties. The ABC, for all its new-kid-on-the-block fanfare, is not likely to inject a major shake up. The best it can do is to perform better than its carbon-copy, the LPC, or merely perform like any new party. If indeed the ABC does so well as to even win the election, it will cause a huge embarrassment to Mosisili who, in addition to being credited with leading the LCD through its most difficult times in 1998, is still seen as Mokehle's anointed heir.

However, some were quick to point to Mosisili having besmirched Mokehle's legacy by making such utterances as "he will govern the nation until it gets accustomed to it". If this and other gaffes were to prove suicidal, they should have been

picked up by the opposition parties and exploited to the full when they were made, and not now evoked and made to haunt Mosisili and his party.

The reality is that Mosisili needs a serious challenger. If the BNP scored less than half the LCD's votes in the last national election to come second, it means for any party to dislodge the LCD, it would first have to perform better than Lekhanya in 2002.

This is going to be difficult considering that the campaign would, in all reality, have to prise voters away from Mokehle and Jonathan as opposed to from Mosisili and Lekhanya. To a large extent voters still swear by these giants of Lesotho politics and it would take another generation to wipe their legacies from their firm imprint on the people's psyche.

In general, the best hope for the most votes to any party lies not so much in the party's charismatic leadership but more in the party organisational and strategic capabilities. True, the party leaders remain the face of the party but real recruitment is done as part of the party's membership campaigns. Party conventions and rallies are

common outreach campaigns but have never assured parties of the vote. Huge attendance at rallies does a lot to motivate voters in favour of elections but may be easily dismissed as empty showmanship.

The painstaking process of membership recruitment and maintenance in the villages, sub-branches, branches and consituencies holds the secret for party support at the polls. In this case the better resourced parties are most likely to do better than the poorly funded parties. For the more professionally run parties, this takes place continuously throughout the inter-election period such that rally campaigning when the election comes serves as the crowning moment for the hard work done.

All the parties are known to be involved in these direct recruitment methods including door-to-door canvassing, distribution of campaign material, public and private meetings, late-night caucussing, and so on, but some parties are more thorough than others. So, as election day nears, everyone cannot wait for the vote to decide.

Table 1: Election Results in Lesotho, 1965 - 2002

Year	Parties	No. of Votes	% of votes	No. of seats
1965	BNP	108 162	41.6	31
	BCP	103 050	39.7	25
	MFP	42 837	16.5	4
Total		259 825	100.0	60
1970	BCP	152 907	49.8	36
	BNP	120 696	42.2	23
	MFP	7 650	7.3	1
Total		285 257	100.0	60
1993	BCP	398 355	74.7	65
	BNP	120 686	22.6	0
	MFP	7 650	1.4	0
Total		532 978	100.0	65
1998	LCD	355 049	60.7	79
	BNP	143 073	24.5	1
	BCP	61 793	10.5	0
	MFP	7 460	1.3	0
Total		582 740	100.0	80
2002	LCD	304 316	54.8	77
	BNP	124 234	22.4	21
	LPC	32 046	5.8	5
	NIP	30 346	5.5	5
	BAC	16 095	2.9	3
	BCP	14 584	2.7	3
	LWP	7 788	1.4	1
	MFP	6 890	1.2	1
	PFDP	6 330	1.1	1
	NPP	3 985	0.7	1
	CDP	1 919	0.3	0
	NLFP	1 671	0.3	0
	SDU	1 541	0.3	0
	KBP	1 155	0.2	0
UP	901	0.2	0	
SDP	542	0.1	0	
Independents	10363	1.8	0	
Total		564 749	100.0	120

Source: Matlosa, 2003 and Makoa, 2005



How to lose an election

Elections, as does any competitive contest, have a clear outcome, to win or to lose. Thus, all who participate in them are orientated in the spirit to develop the grace to accept defeat and to build the honour to celebrate victory.

However, since the goal of participation is primarily to win, a loss is all too often too bitter to accept especially when either the margin of victory is paper thin or the expectation of victory is sky high or the prize of victory too glittery to resist or the contest itself too emotional to contain.

For whatever reason, no one wants to lose and no one remembers the loser. In Africa in general and in Lesotho in particular, the recurrent non-acceptance of defeat in elections, the latest happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo only last month, is always cause for worry.

It is a phenomenon that reverses the political and economic progress that elections are meant to advance. It also leads to turmoil which nations take ages to recover from.

Often, politicians are forced to reject their election defeat as a way of appeasing their followers whom they had convinced of victory beyond doubt or "at any cost". As a result, it is important for politicians and their followers to be trained in expecting to lose as much as they hope to win.

Without this, elections have the potential to lose their integrity as the noble arbiter of the people's will. An apt quote from Steytler goes: "The proof of the pudding lies in the eating. The value of an election lies in the acceptance by all parties of the outcome. More particularly, the losing party should accept defeat. A rejection of the result will be that more difficult if the election is indeed free and fair."

Firstly, the challenge to build an election's integrity lies more on the loser than on the winner. The loser needs must concede defeat and congratulate the winner *before* the latter may be declared victorious.

This confers on the loser the mantle of integrity and leadership and safeguards a halo of sanctity on the election. A good loser's leadership is judged by his ability to steer his followers from certain and determined action.

After all, it is easier to lead people to do what they want to do than to convince them to do what they don't want to do, including accepting defeat. It is worse when leaders encourage their followers to reject an election outcome.

The value, secondly, of an election lies in the loser sacrificing his interests and ambitions in favour of the election. By doing so, the loser would be elevating the election beyond his and his supporters' immediate goals and respecting the numerous noble ingredients that the election represents. These include the country, the nation, the constitution, the voters, the resources, the observers and all contributors who make the election happen.

Political analyst Khabele Matlosa writes: "when contestants in an election accept the election outcome, they pass a vote of confidence in the electoral system, while at the same time according the verdict of the electorate the necessary respect."

Thirdly, losing an election demonstrates the loser's positive competitive spirit, a spirit likely

to rub off on the other contestants, including the winner. This attitude teaches everyone how the game should be played, which hopefully will encourage others to emulate it.

Why then would the winner not have the courage to concede defeat when he's defeated in the next election? After all, the loser would have, in all expectation, carefully examined and addressed his weaknesses in readiness to ensure victory in the next contest, having also taken advantage of the winner's likely comfortable arrogance. "Next time!", he shakes the winner's hand, like a seasoned competitor in friendly acknowledgement of defeat.

It is often tempting to liken poor election losers to the proverbial poor workman who blames his tools. In trying to hide the embarrassment of defeat, election losers often target the IEC as a scapegoat, to search for reasons why the institution and not the losing parties themselves could be held responsible for their poor showing.

Fortunately, the IEC has always resisted this harassment. The winning party too, is not immune to the loser's desperation as it is often accused of having rigged the election.

However, it is worth mentioning that, to be passed as (free and fair, elections, like any competition are not an imperfect phenomenon. There will always be problems, natural, accidental or deliberate. It is worse for elections which have to contend with so many variables.

In trying to minimize the margin of error, elections may have to be conducted under the highest standards of technology and management. The "dimple/pregnant chad" saga of the Florida state election in the US general election of 2000 showed that even with the highest levels of technological sophistication, fairness could still be compromised.

What more in Africa, where the immaturity of democracies demands the highest standards of fairness? In short, the possibility of elections not to be fair in Africa is greater than in developed countries. This is however, not to condone or acquiesce in the reality. There are always attempts to reach the highest standards of election fairness even in the poorest of developing countries in Africa and elsewhere.

The challenge is to acknowledge the limitations, weaknesses and shortcomings ahead of elections so as to invite all stakeholders to own the circumstances peculiar to a particular election.

While the basic requirements must never be compromised, there must be agreement on those circumstances that would naturally affect the best delivery of an election. Issues of illiteracy, inefficient information dissemination, poor infrastructure, inexperienced management and others should be noted well ahead of elections by all competitors as important factors capable of affecting the perfect election outcome.

They should be made part and parcel of the entire electoral process and not be used as cheap ways to reject the outcome. Reasonable winning and losing can happen in these circumstances and the electoral code of conduct for all participants is guided by the spirit of peace, stability and progress. What good is an election victory if it does not advance these?



PICTURE: TRC

The entry of the All Basotho Convention (ABC) has generated excitement in elections

Election excitement no surprise

Voters will go to the polls to freely express their democratic right without the cloud of previous troubles having to be left behind.

The excitement that the forthcoming election has already generated was not to be unexpected for a number of reasons. First, it is another attempt by Lesotho at a peaceful consecutive election after all previous such attempts have ended in chaos.

Each consecutive election has followed an epoch making election. The 1970 election, which followed the successful 1965 independence election led to the now infamous state of emergency which plunged the country into twenty-three years of brutal one-party iron fist rule including military authoritarianism.

The relief of 1993, which was part of the 90s transition cauldron in the entire region was reversed by the 1998 post-election mayhem which resulted in widespread conflagrations in the kingdom's major towns.

2007 is the latest attempt at a consecutive election to test the merits of reform started at the 2002 election. The pressure is on the Lesotho politicians to show the world that Lesotho will not fail in an electoral model she pioneered for Africa five years ago.

Second, the embarrassing debacle of the local government elections has also put pressure on the politicians to prove that Lesotho is, in fact serious about democratization. It must endorse the excuse that the local elections were a result of genuine attempts at democratic growth which only suffered from inexperience.

This is because the world would now have reason to lose patience with a poor Lesotho which, due to numerous electoral failures, was close to being dismissed as an "undevelopable" backwater.

Democratic stability was expected to create firm hopes for the return of international financial assistance, which had started to seriously dwindle because

of recurrent electoral conflicts.

Third, the political parties have seen that the new MMP model can work and are aware of the huge possibilities of entry into parliament. While in 2002 the 40 PR seats were set aside as a compromise to include other (smaller) parties, this time the parties are aware that if they garner a few more votes they may indeed avoid the ignominy of a PR entry.

Fourth, there is a genuine opening up of competition with the entry of the new All Basotho Convention (ABC). Hitherto, the mainly two-horse race between the Congressites and the Nationalists has been changed to a multiple contest encompassing all the parties.

Even in 2002, the BAC, LPC and NIP took huge chunks from the major parties. This time competition is expected to be wider with no party assured of any majority. Politics has become more exciting with the expected entry of many other new voters and a focus on new issues.

Fifth, unlike the 2002 election, 2007 will not be a forced election. Its main objective will be to advance democracy in relaxed conditions of peace and stability. Voters will go to the polls to freely express their democratic right without the cloud of previous troubles having to be left behind.

It will be recalled that each successful election in Lesotho has owed that success to the popular support influenced by a need to depart from a previous undemocratic order: colonialism, authoritarianism and non-inclusiveness. Last, election preparations have matured even more than 2002. While 2002 distinguished itself by advancements in technology, the period between then and now has seen the improved participation of political parties in the process as partners responsible for the

success and flaws of the process.

This openness and ownership of the IEC, has minimized chances for parties to reject the outcome but instead add value to the electoral process from start to end. The parties, civil society organizations, academic institutes, chieftainship and other stakeholders have engaged in continuous dialogue on numerous election challenges such that they could now be said to constitute a cohesive electoral community.

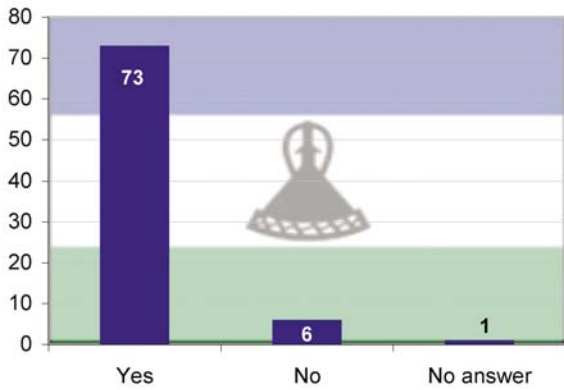
This group is structured into committees responsible for various components of the electoral process, namely voter education, logistics, the media, security, data management, conflict management, election coordination and law. Whether these committees are fully functional and efficient is another question but their existence is an important focal point for efficient conduct of elections.

Despite all these, threats to the excitement remain. Splits have continued to ravage the parties even though the coming together of the three former congress splinters has symbolized a rare spirit for political reconciliation. This also holds the cue towards future coalition-making so typical of democracies elsewhere.

The lack of a clear emphasis on the female vote in this election has failed to project an important democratic ingredient that has come into vogue lately worldwide. Recent unsolved high profile murders may threaten a return to the political killings of the past and may leave some with some bitterness that may derail a collective drive towards peaceful democratization.

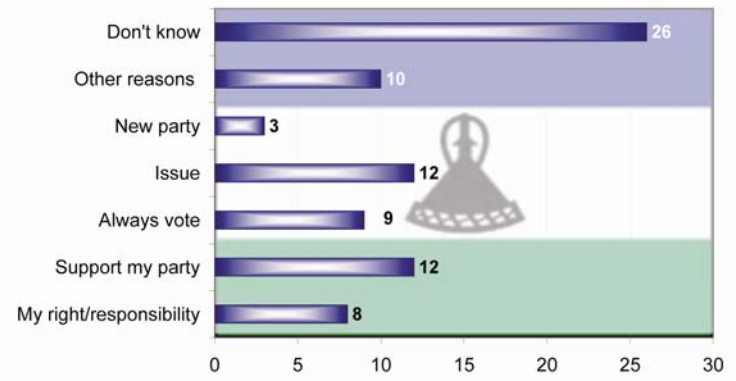
The disagreement over the appointments of IEC commissioners should also hopefully not be used to nullify the positive gains made. The expectation is for the election to come and pass without any major troubles.

Are you going to vote?



Graphic: TRC

Why will you vote?



Graphic: TRC

WfJ Election 2007 Survey

WfJ carried out a small survey in rural south and north to find out people's reasons for voting. A total of 80 respondents were asked whether they were going to vote in the next general election; why they would vote; whether their needs were addressed in the interim and what issues they would like politicians to address in the next election.

While many have always suspected voter apathy to have hit Lesotho elections in recent times, a trend most likely to continue in the next election and beyond, the survey revealed an overwhelming interest in voting. 90 per cent of the surveyed respondents confirmed their intention to vote. This is a vote of confidence that the electorate are showing in the democratisation process despite the decline in voting figures in elections worldwide. Whether the poll results will translate into actual votes is still to be seen. It had been feared that the low turn out in the local government elections in 2005 betokened a progressive decline in voter support for the elections, with the national election likely to follow suit. But this initial interest gives hope in the future of elections in Lesotho. In fact, most of the respondents indicated a sense of obligation with regard to voting (10 per cent). This is an important gesture which lays the foundation for strong civic responsibility. The reasons to vote are evenly spread among support for the party (15%) and voters' habit (11.3%). Despite commonly held speculation that the new party, the All Basotho Convention (ABC), would encourage voters to vote, results indicate only 4% of the voters being influ-

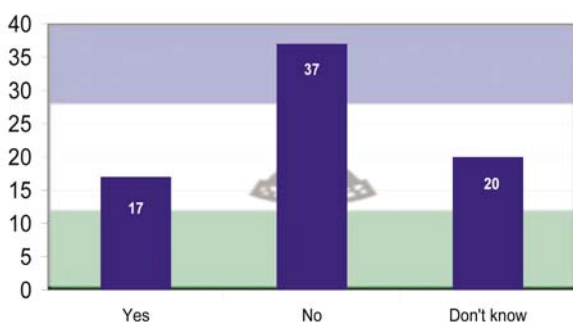
enced by the party to go to the polls. Most analysts and commentators had expected that the ABC in particular and other parties in general would get their following from voters who either stayed away from the polls or had no other political home after being disgruntled or disillusioned with party fractiousness or electoral politics in general. The picture might change as campaigning gathers momentum. In addition, the respondents were not asked to specify which party encouraged them to vote nor would they easily and literally nail their true political colours to the mast. Most respondents said that the politicians had not addressed their needs since the last general election but they were going to vote anyway. It remains to be seen whether voters will vote for the same parties which failed to positively fulfil their 2002 election promises or in fact voters will issue them a red card in 2007. But given the voting trends in Lesotho's political history, parties have not lost votes as a result of unfulfilled promises but because of splits, factionalism and infighting. 33 per cent of the respondents either did not know or did not wish to say whether their needs had been addressed. This may indicate an already hugely suspected trend of voters separating issues from voting. As far as Basotho

voters are concerned, voting may exist side by side with delivery with neither influencing the other. However, interesting responses were received on the issues that the voters expected to be addressed by the next government. It is not surprising that at 28% employment was the main issue. This is to be expected in a small landlocked, resource dry country with limited investment options. As poverty bites in a stiff capitalist environment, people have to earn money to be able to afford goods and services. Even the 12% response to agriculture and farming issues shows that where employment could not be found, a strictly peasant existence would still need government support. Clearly, the government is challenged to stimulate the creation of opportunities for livelihoods with development projects receiving a 16% response share. It is often said that election promises are meant to increase the politician's chances of winning the vote and do not necessarily indicate the prospective government's delivery intentions or plan. In short, in campaigning, the politicians are wont to say what the people want to hear, a message not known for its sincerity. This creates an interesting scenario when it comes to people's expectations, politicians'

promises and actual policies at delivery time. There's usually little congruency between the three. While the respondents have shown a keenness with traditional issues such as employment, services, food security among others, politicians have so far campaigned on social security for the elderly, crime busting, lower taxes and education. Although these are not necessarily too remote from the normal development agenda, they are not high on the list of what people would like to hear. In addition, some politicians have promised increased wages for factory workers and better conditions for civil servants. However, analysts and experts have identified the need for greater spending on HIV & AIDS, fighting crime and combating unemployment as priorities. Except for employment, respondents have not shown any interest in HIV & AIDS as a priority. There are a number of reasons for this. First, despite its devastating effects, the people may have still not fully accepted the full reality of the pandemic's rampancy among them, either due to insufficient information or due to denial. The stigma that still surrounds the disease is another possible reason such that people are not ready to accept that they are dying from it.

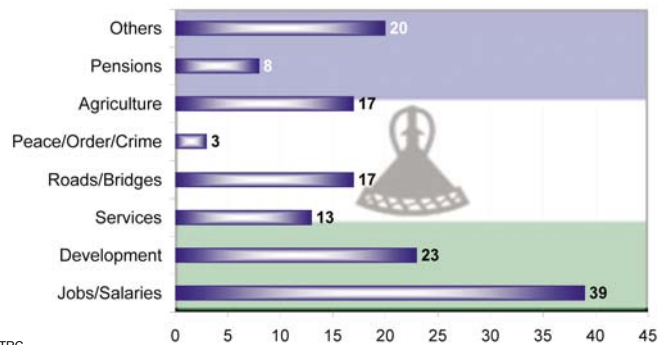
Second, there may still be a belief that campaigning against HIV & AIDS is not the stuff of politicians. This is despite Lesotho politicians having gone all out to advise people to become HIV & AIDS competent. The politicians, it must be noted, have preached this message more as honest national leaders and less as politicians hoping to win votes on HIV & AIDS campaigning. Although this WfJ poll was rather limited, its findings do not differ significantly from other surveys such as the *Afrobarometer 2005*, a joint survey of the *Institute for Democracy in South Africa*, the *Ghana Centre for Democratic Development* and the *Michigan State University*. The key finding from these studies is that the majority of citizens in Sub-Saharan Africa want democracy. But while democracy lost some of its excitement in most of the countries since the first polls in 1999, the survey recorded the largest increase of "democrats" in Lesotho (from 40% to 50%). In the Mountain Kingdom the researchers also found the greatest increase in support for the statement that "it is necessary to have many political parties for citizens to have a truly democratic choice." The support for this statement rose from 31% to 59%, showing that Basotho favour multiparty democracy.

Were your needs addressed?



Graphic: TRC

What are the issues for 2007?



Graphic: TRC



A Voter Registration officer sits in wait to register voters. Some registration sites reportedly register up to 3 voters on good weeks. Deadline was December 8 PICTURE: TRC

IEC set for good poll

IEC speeds up election preparations but registration turn out poor

Still reeling from the low turnout in the 2005 local government elections, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has fast tracked preparations for the forthcoming national election. The speed of registration of voters has had to be quickened because of the uncharacteristic early election date.

While all were looking forward to the election in April or May, the King took all by surprise by dissolving parliament and announcing February 17, 2007 as the election date. At the time of going to print, the IEC had announced that around 900 000 voters had already registered with many more still expected to register.

It is possible that the figure is not made up of solely fresh registrations but may include voters who registered in 2001 and are still eligible to vote in 2007. In fact, the validity of the 2001 registration would nullify any uninformed re-registration.

Voters are therefore encouraged to check with their original registration centres to verify their status. With the increase in urban migration, some voters are keen to transfer votes from their original stations (mainly in the countryside) to the towns where they expect to vote at on the day of the polls.

This is likely to create an additional burden of work for the IEC as it would have to ensure that such changes do not disenfranchise the voters. It is possible that some transfers may not be done efficiently leading to confusion about the exact registration/voting station for some voters.

In addition, it is feared that an already apathetic electorate may not have the patience to follow up on their registration status, and depend on the IEC's efficiency. Furthermore, trends are that most voters tend to leave it until the last minute to register resulting in long queues at the registration centres as the closing date draws near.

Mistakes cannot be ruled out and the pressure on staff and equipment will certainly be immense. The worst outcome would be for political parties latching onto this as an excuse to reject the election outcome. It will certainly worsen the huge levels of disinterest observed among the electorate who would start wondering if it is indeed worth all the effort, what with politicians failing to deliver on election promises.

As a result, any extensive voter education programme to stimulate voter's interest in the election would be fraught with problems from the outset since politicians and their parties, not voter educators, lie at the centre of the electoral process as the main players and attractions.

Voter education programmes have so far been carried out mainly through public gatherings. Other media include radio, pamphlets, manuals, workshops and so on. The target has been to ensure that voters understand the electoral process from the electoral law, registration and the actual polling.

The emphasis on process as opposed to content is likely to leave out important attitudes, thought processes and decision-making challenges on the voter. This falls within the domain of broader civic education which the IEC shares with civil society organisations and the political parties themselves.

Civic education seeks to highlight the full *meaning* of the vote whilst voter education reflects more the *power* of the vote. The difference is not hard to find. The meaning of the vote refers to the implication to each voter of choosing a particular candidate against another.

The power of the vote, on the other hand, is the capacity of the vote to change the outcome of the election. Civic education should be promoted more intensively to ensure that voters make informed choices about their preferred candidates.



What your vote means

- You are a mature, responsible citizen;
- You are exercising your right to self-determination;
- You are contributing to democratisation in your country;
- You are declaring your right to hold your government accountable;
- Ability to make critical and informed choices on political candidates;
- Knowledge of development and governance needs of your country;
- Care and concern for your country and people;



As it is currently, voters know which candidates they will vote for. It is doubtful whether the candidates are selected on the basis of their nominal significance to the voter or their functional one.

Can voters indeed say they have voted for so and so because the candidate has proved or convinced them of their capacity to add value to their lives, the democracy and the country's development?

If this and similar questions are not answered, it might lend credence to the suspicion that Basotho voters' democratic participation fails to move beyond elections for they have not shown the ability nor interest follow their chosen candidates throughout their stay in parliament.

However, a departure from this is urgent and may be guided by NGOs and political parties playing a more effective role in election promotion, monitoring and management. After failing to make good on its earlier commitment to monitor and support the local government elections, the Lesotho council of Non-governmental Organisations (LCN) is challenged to inject a greater influence in the conduct of the forthcoming elections.

Together with its affiliate NGOs the LCN has immediately embarked on a programme of observing the registration process. Training of prospective civil society election observers will also follow.

Attendant to election monitoring is conflict resolution mechanisms which will be called upon should the conduct of a peaceful election be under threat.

Here, NGOs, the donor community, security and public safety agencies, the business community, the religious community, have already started making calls to the political parties and voters to approach elections in a spirit of peace and nation building. The nation is challenged to heed the call.