

URBAN-LOCAL GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LESOTHO

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an analytic review of urbanization and urban governance implications and/or problems versus sustainable urban development and poverty reduction. The analysis specifically dwells on the socio-economic and political status of the 'urban poor' in Lesotho. There is a need for good urban governance responsive to needs of citizens, particularly the poor. Such governance through local governance needs to concentrate on making cities more inclusive, in direct support of marginalized groups living in poverty, who are excluded from the political processes. Good urban governance ensures that everyone regardless of status, gender, race, age or religion, is enabled to participate productively and positively in the opportunities cities offer. Social inclusion is central to sustainable urban development. Development thinking is also increasingly stressing the importance of human capital, that is, the important contributions all people including the poor can make to sustainable urban development. Furthermore, decentralization has focused attention on the local level, as good entry point for addressing wide range of social issues including poverty.

Keywords: Urbanization, Social Inclusion, Good Governance, Sustainable Urban Development, Poverty Alleviation.



Figure 1: Maseru City Council within Lesotho, Showing Ha Matabata and Ha Foso Locations

Source: Takalimane, 2014.

INTRODUCTION

Cities in the Third World are becoming more important not only due to population concentration but because they are also centres of economic activity, spaces of modernization and change. Cities result from urbanization associated with rural-urban migration due to push-pull factors, population explosion, (political) administrative reclassification of urban areas and increased series of commercial activities. Beside, these are places where poverty is concentrated. As a result of this urban concentration of poverty, there is also greater heterogeneity of poverty and inequality in income distribution. The growing concentration of poverty in cities and the income inequality is among others due to working conditions of urban inhabitants. This impoverishment is further expressed in the reduction of the capacity of the cities to maintain public services including basic health services and physical infrastructure. In part, this reflects the state's diminished capacity as a re-distributive agent and custodian of social policy. Maseru, one of the cities in the Third World, in Lesotho is no exception from this scenario. This city serves as a capital to the country.

While central place theory and Lewis-Fei-Ranis theory condone growth through urbanization process and World Bank's optimism about growth together with supportive theories to local governance, inequity mainly responsible for urban poverty and lack of sustainable development remains unaddressed as good governance without pragmatic social inclusion of the urban poor is a recipe for intense urban poverty and lack of sustainable urban development. This paper assumes that social inclusion which is non-isolation or non-exclusion from the social development process, employment opportunities, the economy, mainstream political and cultural processes, security net-works and non-vulnerability, is central to sustainable urban development and poverty reduction.

This paper is organized into the following parts: firstly, this introductory part, secondly, urbanization and urban governance implications and/or problems versus sustainable urban development and urban poverty and the socio-economic and political status of the 'urban poor' in Lesotho. Conclusions in the last part embrace some potential policy options and/or conclusions. See map of the study areas in Figure 1.

IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF URBANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE ON URBAN POVERTY IN LESOTHO

Urban Governance and Sustainable Urban Development/Urban Poverty

The challenge facing Lesotho today is how to cope with the adverse consequences of rapid urbanization, which include a deteriorating living environment and high unemployment rate. According to the *Human Development Report (1992)* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the rate of urban poverty is expanding at about 7 %, particularly in urban slums and squatter settlements. Poor people living in these areas on a daily basis experience social and economic exclusion, with limited access to basic social infrastructure and services. Little credit is provided for improved housing, thus further reducing their capacity for productive activities.

By the 1970s, urban areas in Lesotho were estimated to have over 40% of their population living in slums and squatter settlements. The situation seems to have shown little improvement during the 1980s. The failure on the part of Lesotho governments to address these problems is largely due to the challenge of lack of resources, designs of infrastructure and services set at levels unaffordable to the urban poor, rapid urbanization exceeding capacities to implement city development plans/proposals, measures that have often not reached the urban poor, non-involvement of

beneficiaries/communities in planning and implementing urbanization and absence of policies and flexible by-laws to deal with problems of urbanization such as squatter and informal settlements.

A clear challenge to Maseru City Council (MCC) is that it lacks direct inclusion of the urban poor. Budget control is still centralized and the urban poor have no say, neither in the inexistent urban poverty reductive projects for sustainable urban development nor in the decision making council meetings. The urban poor beside the electoral vote for the councillors cannot further vote to enforce implementation of their proposals or decisions and priorities addressing their poverty/needs. Urban management requires capacity to fulfil public responsibilities with knowledge, skills, resources and procedures that draw on partnership. Decision making in MCC lacks partnership with the urban poor in any projects' management and implementation and council level.

The government finds itself under pressure of international policies and having to face a new phenomenon of good governance, which by definition sounds simple but is practically extremely complex, largely new and potentially a source of high social tension. This is because the top-down kind of governance practiced in Lesotho and inherited from colonialism only sought after its own interests. This has resulted in quite a number of conflicts along political affiliations in Lesotho among citizens, government officials and political parties at large. Political parties used to fiercely strive for centralized political power where the winner of the general elections took all of such power, whether local or national, as power was not decentralized (the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral model though mixed member proportional electoral system at national level introduced after 1998 political unrest partly blamed for FPTP weaknesses has provided relative political stability. The challenge is that Lesotho urban governance is still inclined towards FPTP, which excludes significant percentage of voters thereby consequently creating exclusion, urban poverty or lack of sustainable urban development perpetuation and instability. Urban council in Lesotho lacks cooperative action with the urban poor at planning, implementation and management and evaluation levels, either in the programmes or in the councils. This naturally creates social unrest, as poverty needs remain unaddressed.

Good urban governance must enable women and men to access the benefits of urban citizenship. Good urban governance, based on the principle of urban citizenship affirms that no man, woman or child can be denied access to the necessities of urban life, including adequate shelter, security, safe water, sanitation, a clean environment, health, education and nutrition, employment and public safety. Through good urban governance, citizens are provided with the platform, which allows them to use their talents fully, to improve their social and economic conditions. Citizens as either the poor urban youth or adults, with their various talents and skills still lack any platform to compete at least in international markets for better income. Urban council has not yet liberated and upgrade its urban poor/informal sector into international trade other than stifling them with difficult prohibiting regulations. This is contrary to the view that good urban governance implies liberal, free market-orientated democracy, legitimate enlightened and competent leaders who are committed to drive the process of sustainable governance even against huge odds. These must be followed by the relevant structural, functional and behavioural changes that are needed including access to and the appropriate and strategic use of all available resources.

The world is faced with expansion of cities and growing urban centres. According to Bromley and Gerry (1971, p.33) the urban poverty worsened due to the continuous migration of the rural poor into the urban areas in search of livelihoods

and failure to find adequate means to support themselves, which resulted in growth of road side and slum life in cities. Lesotho is one of the countries experiencing this challenge. There is overcrowding in Maseru city and there is emergence of squatter settlements and pavement dwellers in streets, street vendors also increase each day. Urbanization rather seems to be characterized by increasing poverty and unsustainable urbanization.

Maseru urban growth has been characterized by challenging problematic high rate and haphazard nature unleashing tremendous agglomeration of unplanned settlements. Most settlements have sprung up without proper planning and development control requirements. Consequently, these settlements are not recognized by the city authorities and have been described as 'illegal'. To this effect, the Municipal authorities have also tended to ignore them in the provision of the necessary services such as water, refuse collection, electricity and sewerage disposal.

The rate of urban growth in Lesotho as already mentioned is determined by natural population increase coupled with urbanization, which is the result of commercial, industrial and administrative development in the urban areas. There is a fairly direct link existing between the size of a city and housing conditions. The rate of urban growth in Lesotho has an effect of creating an imbalance – this is in terms of demand and supply of urban housing as well as between the income of families and housing costs. The urban authority fails to keep up with the demand for urban housing. In his report on housing in Maseru, Metcalf (1981, p.24) refers as follows to the relation between demand and supply of urban housing: “The Maseru housing market has been poorly served by the economics of demand and supply. There is a service shortage of decent, safe and sanitary shelter for low and middle-income families that cannot be alleviated in the near future.”

When looking at the position regarding the relationship between demand and supply in urban housing it is evident that it is in no way improving. There are still some very considerable problems in the housing sector, for instance, poor conditions, lack of physical planning and infrastructure, lack of finance for private house construction, land tenure problems-the list is endless. The most central problem is the high cost of housing. The heavy cost of acquiring land impinges on municipal financial resources. It is not in every case that the municipal has extra or excess accessible amount of developed residential land/sites/plots for the people who need land or houses. In the case of Lesotho, such is particularly impossible since the country itself is in debts and crippled by corruption/mismanagement and embezzlement of public funds.

Although the current government does not recognize the informal economic activities in the city, the informal sector workers have organised themselves into civic associations and have secured licences to operate within the city. These include inter alia, street vendors and hawkers. Urban governance is to a greater extent, encountering a big problem of confrontation between the city council and the legal as well as the 'illegal' vendors in and around the city centre. The Urban Council dominates the decision-making but the civic organizations also exert a substantial pressure through protests and use of the media in determining direction of urban development.

The municipality has extended into areas that were formally agricultural settlements under the jurisdiction of traditional authorities (chiefs), it has become difficult for the municipal authorities to enforce laws and standards that regulate urban life. Town encroachment has resulted into conflicts between the Municipal land allocating department for urban settlements and the chiefs who with their swallowed up (urban/city-encroachment) 'rural' community strive for retaining

control over land (for burial grounds, settlements, grazing e.t.c). This usually happens in cases where land for urban settlements has been officially declared as part of Municipal's property for urban development and allocated without consent of the traditional leadership which later opposes by refusing the new urban settlers with among others graveyard sites and allow grazing of animals on their residential sites (The Ha-Matala location case, June-July, 2005). Moreover, in Ha-Foso location, chiefs continued to haphazardly allocate for residential purposes land earmarked for urban development regardless of several warnings by the Municipal land-allocating department. In this context, urban governance in Lesotho lacks a sufficiently clear policy at least to the chiefs about their role in it, other than only being elected into urban councils (discussed further in later pages).

Although urbanisation has resulted in increased productivity and competitiveness of the economy and has to a certain extent led to prosperity of most individuals, it has also widened social inequalities. This has resulted in low income and vulnerable populations, which are now classified as the 'urban poor'. Poor urban governance and the political turmoil, which have fuelled further deprivation, have worsened the situation. The intensity of the problem is epitomized by slums, shanty housing with lack of proper sanitation and water facilities in urban centres.

These challenges defy the good theoretical view of both good governance and local governance, which is regarded as a way of making the government more responsive to local needs and preferences. Improved local governance is critical for better service provision and greater responsiveness to urban poor people's priority problems, still naught concerning Lesotho's urban governance. Good governance has the following characteristics, which unfortunately Lesotho urban governance is constrained by inherent limitations of the FPTP model (discussed further in later pages), budgetary constraints and requisite inadequate administrative infrastructure being, participation, accountability, transparency, rule of law, strategic vision, consensus orientation, effectiveness and efficiency, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness and corruption minimization. The challenge is that MCC lacks these aspects and there is incomplete or asymmetric information concerning municipal decisions and opportunities that could be available to the urban poor.

Besides inherent limitations of good urban governance, one other challenge it faces is globalization regarded as the intensification of free movement of services, capital, information and other factors of production like labour across national boundaries. Globalization has proved to be the major driving force in shaping urban development, while many effects have been positive it has been imposed unevenly thus exacerbating inequalities within and among cities. Due to globalization, urban management responsibilities have been shifted from the central to local governments, which have become actors in urban decision-making. However, the majority of the poor people are often excluded in decision-making. For example, when the 'Mpilo road' (the Maseru city current main by-pass) was constructed there were many poor people who lived along the hill across which the road passed, their squatter settlements were destroyed without any alternative dwelling place given. Intensified international trade has brought about physical development that is socially exclusive and disruptive to networks of the urban poor. Government is also confronted with a set of new challenges in alleviating poverty. There has to be creation of jobs for the majority of urban poor. Migration to Maseru urban leads to the majority of people seeking jobs but in vain and resort to criminal activities.

The government is also faced with a pressure on environmental issues, which have become a global concern. The government of Lesotho has to implement policies for environmental protection and also sensitize the masses about the

environmental issues. Air pollution from Thetsane and Station industrial areas, traffic congestion from inadequate roads, squalid places, unmaintained sewage spilling over on streets, noise pollution, inadequate mechanisms to cope with garbage and littering, insufficient sanitary facilities and so on have added more to Maseru city environmental problems.

Decentralization in Urban Lesotho: Challenges and Implications

Local governance involves a process of decentralization, which is the transfer of planning, decision-making and administrative authority from the central government to local governments. It cures managerial constipation, giving more direct access for people to the government and the government to the people, stimulating the whole nation to participate in national development plan (Mawhood, 1993, p.1). Decentralization takes four main forms, namely: Deconcentration, Devolution, Delegation and Privatization. These four forms of decentralization are distinguished based on the powers central government transfers to the local units. The different forms reflect different arrangements for representation of the local community, different degrees of decentralization of government power, different approaches to decentralization, different climate of rules, regulations and expectations and different resource control arrangements.

Deconcentration: this is the shifting of responsibility and workloads from central government ministry headquarters to staff located outside the national capital. It also refers to institutional changes that shift the authority to the national civil service personnel posted at dispersed locations. In this arrangement, staff and resources are transferred from headquarters to lower units of administration to take operational decisions without reference to the headquarters. With deconcentration, the central government is not giving up any authority but relocates its offices at different levels or points in the territory (Mawhood, 1993).

Devolution: this is the transfer of discretionary decision-making, planning, administration and *financial management* to independent local government units with powers to sue and be sued. The political base of officials in these units is the locality not the centre. They spend or invest resources at their discretion; provided they are operating within the legislative limits and that their actions do not conflict with the constitution and other laws of the land.

Delegation: this is the shifting of responsibility for administering public functions previously done by central government ministries to semi-independent organizations, which are not wholly controlled by the government but are ultimately accountable to it. Such organizations include marketing boards and other parastatal bodies, public corporations, regional planning and area development authorities, housing, project implementation units and single multi-purpose functional bodies (Ibid).

Privatization: it is a World Bank's initiated policy, which prohibits state intervention in a market. It refers to the transfer of government responsibility in the market to the private sector. It is done primarily for reasons of efficiency of certain functions and services to various sections of private sector namely; business entities, community groups, co-operatives, associational groups and non-governmental and community based organizations. This is the deregulation by the government in the market.

The foremost challenge of Lesotho urban governance with regard to the role of decentralization effecting good governance is that there is usual tendency towards the development of patron-client relationships between central

government level politicians and local level politicians. Locally elected officials are often sanctioned by the party hierarchy at national level, upon whom they depend not only for patronage resources but also for their appointment to party electoral lists and hence political office (Beck, 2001). Politicians at the national level often fear that local politicians may use their enhanced powers to build independent networks at the local level and challenge the power and interests of politicians at the national level. This clientelist system results in formidable obstacles to the political participation of non-party constituencies of local communities. This promotes deconcentration instead of devolution.

As already indicated, Lesotho urban governance has adopted FPTP model with implications to be categorically pointed out here as the electoral model that is used to elect the political leadership at the local level can be a major challenge to processes of decentralization through devolution. Much of the debate on electoral models, at the local level, focuses on three main alternatives: (1) the FPTP (first-past-the-post- model); (2) the proportional representation model and (3) non-party participation. In the first-past-the-post model, the party that wins the highest number of votes is allocated all the council seats. Consequently, all members of the specific council are members of the same party. Within the context of the debate on leadership, this model has five major limitations. Firstly, people who have good leadership qualities may not be elected into a council simply because they do not belong to the party that has won the council election. Secondly, the system fails to represent, at the leadership level (i.e. the local council) the interests of those whose party lost the elections. This is particularly problematic in two respects: (a) the legitimacy of the winning party is often undermined when the winning party has won by a narrow majority; and (b) the connection between elections and representation, if not that between democracy and elections is weakened as it is implausible to suppose that the candidate of the winning party represents those who voted for other candidates whose parties did not win the elections (Reeve and Ware, 1992). Thirdly, this model weakens the accountability of the leadership elected. As argued by Blair (2000) parties in power all too often have strong incentives to evade accountability whilst the participation of opposition parties in the council provides a balancing force against this tendency. Fourthly, the model creates an opportunity for central governments to misuse their powers of control to target, settle political scores or victimize councils controlled by opposition parties (Olowu, 2003). Finally, the model discourages debate on policy matters with the leadership at the council's level as they all more or less come from the same political orientation at the level of the party.

The proportional representation model apportions the seats within the council in relation to the proportionate sum of votes won by each party. The major advantage of this system is that it makes power sharing between parties and interest groups more visible and offers a better hope that decisions are taken in the public eye and by a more inclusive cross section of society. The system however increases the role of party organizations in determining who is placed on the party list, which weakens the level of accountability of representatives to their electorate.

In the no-party system, political parties are prohibited from contesting local elections. Individuals campaign to be elected into office on an individual basis, with no overt affiliation to any political party. In Sub-Saharan Africa Ghana and Uganda are two countries where this model is currently being used (Olowu, 2003). The greatest advantage of the no-party system is that the voters directly elect the candidate whom they think best represents their interests, without the baggage of the influence of political parties. This theoretically takes out issues of bickering over issues that emanate from the 'party-line' or ideology to addressing local issues more directly. The no-party system option is often dismissed on grounds that political parties permeate the system anyway which often creates a de jure no-party system yet de- facto

party system at the operational level. This would mean that local issues would still be articulated along party lines anyway. Furthermore, it is argued that political parties are better organized to articulate local problems than individuals would be (Blair, 2000).

One other major challenge with respect to the issue of leadership in local governance is the role of the chieftainship in processes of local governance. The juxtaposition of traditional institutions (chieftainship) and democracy at the local level has always been problematic. At the theoretical level, the two are often treated as mutually exclusive sets, which interact through a zero-sum-game. The chieftainship is often seen as an ascriptive form of leadership, which is not consistent with democratic norms of leadership, which is earned through election and merit. Within this context, the sustenance of the chieftainship is seen to undermine meritocracy that comes with democratically elected leadership. This disarticulation of local democracy and the chieftainship may be misplaced for two reasons. Firstly, there is evidence to suggest that traditional administrations retain much popular support, particularly in the rural areas as they are better understood and appreciated than imported institutions by rural residents (Hope, 2000 and Owusu, 1996). Bearing in mind, that, with Maseru city there is continuing town or city encroachment. Secondly, there is evidence to suggest that in many Sub-Saharan African settings, chiefs do not see central authority as their adversary but as a partner (Owusu, 1996 and Miles, 1993) though central authorities who often maintain a very ambivalent and perhaps opportunistic relationship with the chieftainship do not always reciprocate this perception. The relationship is ambivalent, as the inability to reach remote rural areas has often led central governments to rely heavily on the chieftainship for local administration. On the other hand, the rhetoric of many post-colonial governments is littered with insinuations that the chieftainship shall be abolished, as chiefs are seen as impediments to the development of the modern state (Miles, 1993 and Quinlan, 1994).

Concerns about the leadership roles of chiefs are also not limited to what central and local government authorities think of chiefs. There is also often a level of distain for chiefs at the local level. This distain "... stems from individuals' personal grievances about chiefs' actions and demeanour which fuel concerns about the ability of chiefs to address their subjects' concerns" (Quinlan, 1994, p.6). From a perspective of good governance, this does raise concerns about the accountability, responsiveness and leadership capabilities of chiefs. There is, however, also considerable support for the chieftainship at the local level, as the institution provides an alternative avenue for the articulation of needs, rights, entitlements and duties outside the structures of the state and political parties.

It is precisely against this background that there is a growing consensus to the effect that the institution of chieftaincy, despite its limitations, is unlikely to disappear any time soon (Alexander, 1997, Miles, 1993, Nyamnjoh, 2003, Owusu, 1996, Quinlan, 1994, Sanders, 1998, West and Koeck-Jenson, 1999). The vibrancy of the chieftainship in the politics of Ghana (Owusu, 1996), its survival in Africa's most successful democracy – Botswana – (Nyamnjoh, 2003) and its resurgence in Mozambique and South Africa where it had almost completely been obliterated (Alexander, 1997 and West and Koeck, 1999) are all indications of the resilience of the institution in very diverse circumstances through space and time. The integration of the chieftainship into processes of decentralization and good governance, at the local level/urban governance, therefore remains a major challenge.

While MCC to a large extent of around 30% of membership is women (as councilors), the other major challenge relates to strategies intended to address the gender question of leadership. One commonly articulated strategy to increase

women's participation in leadership roles is the allocation of quotas in the constitution of leadership bodies such as local councils, parliaments, development boards, civil society organizations and the business sector. In this respect, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (1990) recommended that women (UNDP, 1995) should occupy at least 30 per cent of leadership roles. The argument behind this was that where representation on leadership bodies is not mandated, women have generally been poorly represented (Blair, 2000). Tickell and Peck (1996), nonetheless draw attention to the fact that women's representation is a qualitative as well as quantitative matter. The inclusion of women in local councils through quotas is only a starting point. The location, structural influence as well as constraints to women's participation need to be taken into consideration (Tickell and Peck, 1996 and Geisler, 1995).

The presence of women in public office of MCC does not guarantee that the interests of poor urban women will be represented. Political beliefs, ideology, race and class all intersect and sometimes compete with claims of gender, thus complicating the relationship between women in power and their presumed female constituency (see Beall, 1996). As argued by Geisler (1995, p.546) "...this raises questions about the efficacy of increasing the political representation of women as a way of increasing influence on policy formulation and about the nature of the representation of women's interests as such". This gives rise to what Geisler (1995) sees as a serious predicament as to whether women's interests are better served in independent lobby groups in civil society or in national political party structures. In the case of political party structures, Geisler (1995) argues that party divisions often outweigh gender divisions, in which case even when a 'critical mass' of women is achieved in decision-making bodies, it does not guarantee that they will speak in one voice on issues relating to women. Here allegiances to the party often prevail over the need to speak in one voice on women's issues. She very clearly notes that

... the majority of women politicians ... do not see themselves as representing women only, nor do they stress their gender unduly. They campaign on a party ticket and not a women's ticket. They contribute to the discussion of women's issues if and when that is appropriate (Geisler, 1995, p.574).

More radical approaches to the gender question on leadership have thereby argued that women's specific needs are better served in women's organisations, in which case women need to focus their leadership efforts in women's civil society organizations (Geisler, 1995). Such lobby groups are often particularly attractive to professional women who feel alienated by the lack of influence in political party structures, where they have to comply with particular templates that do not necessarily enhance women's interests. A major challenge in this approach is that such organizations are often weak in status and budgetary endowment and are weakly linked to formal policy formulation arenas (Geisler, 1995).

In a summarizing manner, based on the implications and challenges of urbanization and governance on sustainable urban development or poverty alleviation in Lesotho, discussed from above may also be analytically demonstrated as below on table 1.

Table 1: Urban-Local Governance Impacts/Implications on Sustainable Development in Lesotho

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Goals
<p>What inputs are there to effect Legal statutory reforms to strengthen local governance: administration, political and resources dimensions? Administration? Councillors in LGUs pass recommendations to the LGUs that draft the policy recommendation to be a drafted bill through the minister to submit for amendment by the parliament. The minister may reject/approve and gazette.</p> <p>Political reforms? Councillors hold public gatherings and submit people's suggestions in the council that requests for parliament review or amendments through the minister. Resources (human + financial) There are no clear mechanisms to increase the capacity of the LGUs' personnel and resources mobilization and use.</p> <p>Which local governance focused projects and programmes sponsored by central governments, donors & NGOs? LGUs have no such projects and have not yet networked with the NGO's, they just deliver some services.</p> <p>Who is responsible for and how is the coordination among donors, governments and NGOs in local governance projects and Programmes? There is no such coordination or networking with donors and NGOs</p>	<p>To what extent has decentralization brought legitimate lawful LGUs and democratic participation? LGUs' have been enacted by a defective exclusive legal process maintaining the first-past-the-post electoral model lacking inclusive proportional representation.</p> <p>To what extent has decentralization brought about strengthened local finances, revenue sources and their management? More centralization has been effected because the minister actually controls everything, there are no financial systems/clear financial legislation, no accounting procedures, no financial manual, no sustainable revenue sources like supplying of apportioned water, electricity and the like to be offered by MCC through the efficient prepaid billing systems, no measuring yardstick in terms of service delivery and agreements' & performance stds.</p> <p>To what extent has decentralization effected transparent, effective and accountable local administration? There is no political will to relinquish political, administrative and financial and human resources' control by the political rulers. The lower spheres of governance just legally exist as consultative forums not as autonomous functionary spheres with any power.</p> <p>To what extent has decentralization resulted into effective partnerships among LGUs, governments, NGOs and donors? MCC and other LGUs completely lack any partnerships with any other institutions or civil society. Lack of such effective partnerships normally creates LGUs free from any pressure thus no delivery if not poor one, all being here the case.</p>	<p>How has decentralization contributed towards basic education & what is the % of children enrolled in schools due to it? Ministry of Education and Training has taken entire responsibility of education through a free and compulsory education. LGUs do not provide education.</p> <p>How has decentralization contributed to the access of potable water & what is the % of LGU Population with water? WASA and Rural Water Supply departments are central parastatals responsible for potable water supply. CCs limitedly installed piped water to 5% of rural households.</p> <p>How has decentralization contributed to the survival of 5 year olds & is the percent of such children who survive to five year? MCC has through PPP two clinics on this programme and at least more than 50 of such children are given health services per week.</p> <p>What is the percent of increase in number of businesses licensed in previous year in LGU? & percent of change in number of violent incidents from previous year in LGU? Business licenses are mainly for street vendors at 15% increase per year, it is difficult to control them as many are illegal due to the fast growing informal sector.</p>	<p>What has been the impact of decentralization on (a)education None (b)environment Creation of parks & environmental projects owned by NES (c)health Clinics with various health services (d)good governance Legal structures are nominally there contrarily functioning to the values of good governance (e)gender equity No such programmes though elected women constitute 73% of councillors (f)poverty reduction Rotated community contracting and intensive labour are used in refuse collection and road building by MCC. (g)local peace and tranquility There are no conflicts so far.</p>

(Field Survey/Interviews, July, 2009 to July, 2010)

‘Urban Poor’ Participation in Lesotho Local Governance: Challenges and Implications

One of the profound signs of social inclusion is the participation of the urban inhabitants including the poor. Participation can be either formal or informal. Formal participation is the type of participation where members of the public or individual groups, property owners or investors exercise participation by law. Formal public participation may be initiated by decision makers or by independent public initiatives. Examples of formal participation are public meetings of local authority organizations such as town councils, obligation to inform the public in good time about major planning projects at local authority level and finally, polls. The informal participation is seen as a type that has various forms. No restrictions are placed on the extent or nature of such participation provided it does not contravene legal regulations. Participation of this kind is voluntary and supplementary in character. It helps the authorities such as the city council in decision-making power. The urban poor must feel that involvement is worthwhile, that they will be listened to and that arguments and ideas they put forth will enable them to exert an influence. Some informal public participation has different forms such as municipal forms, round-table discussion, future prospects workshops, local referenda, public experts’ reports, future search workshops.

The problem is that in Lesotho particularly in urban local governance there is comprehensive evidence demonstrating gender differences in access to opportunities, resources and participation across the range of civic services and social and economic life chances. Poor urban women are weakly represented in the decision-making and are socially excluded from their proportionate share of the health and wealth of their societies including decisions about urban infrastructure services, yet this is a precondition to ensure that public resources positively affect the livelihood of the poor urban people.

While participation is regarded as good regardless of who participates or gains, councillors who participate in MCC and gain are only a local elite, the poor and disadvantaged still end-up worse, not taking part in real decision-making and resources distribution. This is one other limitation of representative participation. The natural tendency is for those who are empowered to be men and few female condoned elites rather than poor urban women, the better off rather than worse off and those of high status gaining rather than those of lower status.

In a brief sense, the focus of social inclusion calls for attention to the need for active intervention by government and social processes of resources allocation to rectify inequality. However, in MCC, the urban poor are not effectively included in strategic planning and decision-making on how the resources are going to be allocated within their society, rather these ‘representative’ officials determine and decide on their behalf with least consultation and accountability.

Elitist oriented representation as in MCC has limited knowledge of local problems concerning the urban poor. Statistical data or information about the problems of the urban poor cannot exactly express how the urban poor feel about their problems or how the suggested solutions fit into their cultural traditions. Often times this representative decision-making does not take complaints of urban poor seriously. There are no specific projects targeting the urban poor by the MCC. Political climate is therefore unfavourable for the functioning of grass roots democracy or there is no such tradition. As a result the urban poor do not serve as a source of useful ideas, such as those from indigenous technical knowledge in decision-making in MCC, hence, they cannot help tailor technical ideas imported from outside, so that such innovations

are more workable under local conditions. The voice of the urban poor lacking in decision-making has led to development projects without commitment to alleviate poverty, thus irrelevant development. The urban poor as stakeholders, therefore, lack the capacity to influence and share control over priority setting, policy-making, resource allocations and program implementation. This affirms that representative democracy, indeed, does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable like the urban poor in society will be taken into consideration in real decision-making. The urban poor are denied co-determination and remain disempowered. Representative democracy is not enough when political decisions are made. It should therefore be complemented by elements of direct democracy.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STATUS OF THE 'URBAN POOR' IN LESOTHO

Urban governance is not wholly good in responding to the needs of citizens, in particular the urban poor. Every government has policies that it uses as its guidelines on how to serve its country but basically, the government has to see to it that incomes are equally distributed. Nonetheless, there are cases where the fruits of development go to a small group of people while masses live in poverty. On economic grounds, it is a well-established fact that a skewed distribution of income distorts the pattern of consumption towards luxury goods, which necessarily have to be imported, against the basic necessities/goods which could be manufactured locally. In effect, the country undercuts its chances for development. If the money used for luxury items would be spared on the urban poor through relevant projects establishment, the urban poor would at least be able to benefit over such incomes. Recently the government of Lesotho purchased imported fleets of extremely luxurious vehicles using millions of money in both local and US dollar currency, which were peculiarly auctioned only to most senior government officials and ministers at the rate of 1% real value of these vehicles that were only a year old in use. The rich desire to utilize the income or tax money as they wish, having protected themselves with legal clauses, is the main reason for the urban poor to have their needs not addressed. This is reflected by practices like this and severe under funding of MCC, which also lacks specific urban poverty reductive projects for sustainable urban development. The urban poor are legally powerless and lack entitlements.

One of the potent factors causing more inequality has been government's policy with respect to agricultural prices disparity in relation to urban wages. Many of the urban poor sell agricultural produce in the informal sector but the problem is that agricultural prices are often kept much below their world prices while urban wages are continually pushed up. Tariffs and licensing fees the poor have to pay for informal trade networks are too high and down press them to cyclic urban poverty and lack of sustainable urban development, there are too many market entry and operating and intermediary costs they have to pay and therefore remain incapacitated as lowest or non-income earners. As a result, the urban poor including mainly small agricultural produce retailers and farmers as a group fall considerably far behind wage earners and other groups generally. As far as the Lesotho economy is concerned there is some evidence to believe that farmer's terms of trade have fallen, that is agricultural prices remain unfairly too low, worst of it all lacking any subsidy. The urban poor that sustain their lives on crop products they get from the rural or the other local surrounding the urban suffer heavy losses. This is because the crops they buy and sell to the urban people make meagre income that can sustain them for no reasonable time, as non-agricultural commodities are too expensive. The too low agricultural prices problem is further complicated by heavily subsidized agricultural imports from the Republic of South Africa. On grounds of economies of scale and (hidden) subsidies, imports are often of too low prices thus stifling local efforts of profit making and thereby ultimately perpetuate urban poverty by the short-lived unsustainable desired food security. This creates a

private sector that condones impoverishment of the urban poor who wherever they may be employed earn below minimum living wages. This is extreme income inequality.

One of the most powerful sources of restraint to the urban poor in utilizing economic opportunities is the government of Lesotho itself. Local authorities apply regulations inappropriately or strictly for their unfair gain through the 'under the table costs' like in licensing, hygiene and other required standards the urban poor cannot afford to maintain. This is further complicated by over policing well intended, again, for bribes collection from various small income generating activities in which the urban poor are mostly involved. The 'legal' constraints on the income earning activities of the poor amount to abuse of power rested in government officials. Licenses for the street vendors are seldom obtained without bribes being paid to the relevant officials. Similarly, the exploitation in illegal and risky activities such as prostitution, alcohol making and selling and trading in certain goods, also child labour, offers opportunities for powerful government employees to abuse the system and the poor, even where the state policies are designed to help the poor, as no one is there to enforce them.

The urban poor in Lesotho are those people who do not have access to quite a number of basic services. Actually, there are a number of indicators that can be used to measure the extent to which the poor urban inhabitants experience poverty. These all focus on hunger, poor health, no education, improper shelter and too low income from inequity worsened by joblessness. The urban poor in this country are actually found in squalid places characterized by unsanitary conditions, lack of or contaminated water and improper disposal of domestic and body waste.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The participation of the 'urban poor' in Lesotho local governance through MCC is inherently restricted by representative democracy promoting indirect participation instead of direct one. Decision making on behalf of the urban poor still disempowers them in terms of (budget) prioritization and poverty specific urban development projects. Thus, urbanization process and local urban governance have not yet achieved any significant urban poverty reduction and sustainable urban development. This failure can be reversed through direct social inclusion of the urban poor in Maseru. The urban poor thus still remain in the low-income stratum and continue to be marginalized in actual decision-making processes and hence left out in effective functioning of the political processes. Insufficient, ineffective and inefficient participation of the urban poor in Lesotho local governance cannot serve as a pre-requisite for sustainable human development and poverty reduction. The urban poor who lack power to pass decisions concerning their lives need not have their participation confined to sporadic opinion expression and mere voting of councillors as is now the case.

A clear challenge to Maseru City Council/MCC and other urban local authorities in the ten districts of Lesotho is that they lack direct inclusion of the urban poor. Budget control is still centralized and the urban poor have no say, neither in the in-existent urban poverty reductive projects for sustainable urban development nor in the decision making council meetings. The other challenge is that Lesotho urban governance is still inclined towards FPTP, which excludes significant percentage of voters, consequently creating exclusion, urban poverty or lack of sustainable urban development. Urban council in Lesotho lacks cooperative action with the urban poor at planning, implementation and management and evaluation levels, either in the programmes or in the councils. This creates social unrest, as poverty needs remain unaddressed, perpetuating lack of sustainable development. This paper in a wide and in-depth manner has

indeed covered the implications and challenges of rapid urbanization and poor governance on urban poverty and sustainable development in Lesotho, decentralization in urban Lesotho and its challenges and implications on sustainable development. Table 1 went further to reveal such urban-local governance impacts/implications on sustainable development in Lesotho. The challenges and implications of the poor participation of the urban poor in Lesotho Local Governance and their low, deprived and powerless socio-economic and political status is also analytically illuminated.

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