

**THE REVIEW OF URBANIZATION PROCESS AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS ON  
SUSTAINABLE URBAN-HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION:  
PRAGMATIC VIEWS ON LESOTHO**

Moses M.M. Daemane

Department of Development Studies, National University of Lesotho (NUL).

**ABSTRACT**

This paper reviews practical perspectives on urbanization process and local governance on sustainable urban human development and poverty reduction and characteristics of the Lesotho urban poor and their participation in local governance as these are prerequisites for sustainable urban human development and poverty reduction. It provides a synopsis of urbanization and urban governance in Lesotho and pragmatic views about their implications on urban poverty and sustainable urban human development. The paper contests that social exclusion is the main factor to non-attainment of urban poverty reduction and sustainable urban human development. The economic centres are created 'Pressure Zones', a phenomenon punctuated by heavy demographic shifts from rural areas to urban centres. This heavy population in cities is a result of a number of factors including among others, the colonial legacy and the post-colonial policy of concentrating the socio-economic opportunities in specific areas at the detriment of other areas (urban-biased development). This resulted in unprecedented pressure on existing housing utilities, land resource and other infrastructure. Dimensions of poverty and lack of sustainable urban development are now obvious with those masses living in the nuclei. This mainly emanates from the fact that these masses belong to the low-income stratum that high-income group marginalize. Most often, they are excluded from the political processes.

**Keywords:** Local Governance, Urbanization, Sustainable Urban Development, Human Development, Poverty Reduction, Participation, Social Inclusion.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Lesotho's local government was mainly created to meet the needs of Lesotho citizens, reduce poverty and attain sustainable urban and human development. Within this context, this paper's gist of analysis is on urbanization process and local governance implications towards urban poverty reduction and sustainable development. The key question is whether urbanization process and local urban governance in Lesotho precipitate social inclusion of the urban poor to the point of real poverty alleviation and sustainable urban human development. Analysis' aim is to discuss and show that both urbanization process and local urban governance achieve naught in addressing urban poverty and sustainable urban human development only surmountable through social inclusion. That is to argue that urbanization and urban local governance, pertaining to the urban poor, may not be practically socially inclusive, process wise, institutionally, structurally, politically and economically when considering their inherent constraints.

This paper is organized into this introductory part, secondly, practical perspectives on urbanization process and governance on urban poverty and sustainable urban human development and characteristics of the Lesotho urban poor, thirdly, an overview of urbanization and urban governance including local governance in Lesotho and lastly the conclusive summary of the paper.

## **PRAGMATIC VIEWS ON URBANIZATION PROCESS AND GOVERNANCE ON URBAN POVERTY AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

The anti-urbanists point to the much-distorted process of urbanization in most developing countries, which is highly dependent on foreign capital, over whose decisions there is little or no local control for effective urban poverty reduction and sustainable urban human development. It brings along protected and capital-intensive industries in countries short of capital, which result in serious unemployment, underemployment and a large low-income informal sector. The process also imposes huge costs of meeting the needs for housing and infrastructure of new city dwellers within the already existing situation of highly unequal patterns of income and wealth, while on the other hand public resources are being wasted on providing high standards of facilities for the urban elite. There are also serious problems of congestion, pollution and environmental degradation in the cities, the loss of cultural and spiritual values and traditions within the 'urban melting-pot' and ever-present threat of civil disorder from a discontented urban population (Renaud, 1981). It is clear then that urbanization is not a cause for economic growth rather it is a response to it.

The rejection of the urbanization process in the developing world has arisen due to the failure of the governments/local governance to cope with its effects – the failure of governments to provide basic needs such as land, shelter and services of the growing city population. Thus, not urban growth itself is a problem but the rapid rate of growth outpacing the institutional, administrative and financial capacity to cope with it and mainly unaddressed inequity. Most problems, which are a result of urbanization, arise largely from a failure of government institutions to manage rapid change and tap the knowledge, resources and capacities among the population within each city. Governments have often helped to destroy or stifle the 'social economy'.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Social economy refers to a variety of initiatives and actions organized and controlled locally and not profit-oriented. Within each locality, it creates a dense fabric of relationships that allow local citizens to work together in identifying and acting on local problems or taking local initiatives. Social economy keeps in check, for instance, structural unemployment, insecurity, among many low-income households and youth, of being excluded from social and political processes (UNCH 1996 in Satterthwaite, 1999, p.59).

This is central to prosperity and the capacity of the inhabitants in each locality so that they can identify and act on their own priorities within cities.

In order for cities to make full use of the potential they have, they require 'good governance' (UNCH/United Nations Centre for Human Settlement, 1996 in Satterthwaite, 1995, p.60). According to UNCH 'good governance' at the level of a city can lead to high social achievement and good economic performance and less environmental degradation. In its report on *Cities as solutions in an Urbanizing World*, UNCH argues that a successful city is the one where the social economy is allowed to thrive. Most often in the absence of good governance in developing countries, cities tend to be centres of pollution and waste. Cities have mostly turned out to be unhealthy and dangerous places in which to live and work. At least 600 million urban dwellers in the South are said to be living in very poor conditions – many of them in illegal settlements with inadequate provision of water, sanitation, drainage, garbage collection and basic services.

In the absence of proper planning framework, city expansion takes place haphazardly and often with urban sprawl over the best quality farmland. Hundreds of millions of low-income households live in illegal or informal settlements that often bear high risks for life. They live here because these are the only land sites they can afford or where their illegal occupation will not be challenged because the land site is not suitable for commercial use. Hundreds of millions of city inhabitants have been forced to find or build homes in illegal settlements, where the threat of eviction is always present ((UNCH/United Nations Centre for Human Settlement, 1996 in Satterthwaite, 1995).

It is difficult therefore to ignore the fact that people living under these difficult conditions are poor. Poverty does not encompass only low income and consumption but also low achievement in education, health, nutrition and other areas of human development. It extends to powerlessness and voicelessness, vulnerability and fear. More than 60, 000 men and women living in poverty in 60 countries of the developing world including Sub-Saharan Africa (World Development Report, 2000/2001) have voiced these dimensions of human deprivation out. Hurley (1990, p.5) indicates that, "urban poverty is growing as a consequence of rapid urbanization". He points out that the ability of the economies in most of these countries to support living standards of the poor is highly questionable. Throughout the Third World, the shantytowns, the numbers of homeless and severely deprived people are also growing. He adds that, "brutal poverty is and will be the reality of the lives of most Third World city dwellers for the foreseeable future".

From the development perspective, however, cities are regarded as a key locus in the struggle for democracy. The manner in which patterns of relationships among market participants, state and civil society and how this dynamic decision about development are handled, accounts for good local governance. Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of the economic and social resources for development (Mihevic, 1992, Olowu, 2003 and Olowu and Smoke, 1992), referring to the power of governments to define and resolve policies related to development. Broadening of this definition considers the exercise of power and governance not as an attribute only of governments but also of society and the market place. This implies that the final distribution of costs and benefits among actors in the market place, the state and the civil society depends on how we govern and on the distribution of power among these three spheres. This is confirmed by the UNCHS Habitat (2001, p.2) in its experience of working in partnership with cities that "civic engagement is the key ingredient for good urban governance".

Governance therefore emphasizes the political dimensions of government over the administrative and technical dimensions. Governance encompasses the patterns of coordination among social and political actors. In a sense it shows that, the decisions of government are not only the decisions of their administrative departments but incorporate the organizations and groups whose interests are affected by their decisions (UNDP, 1995). Peter Eigen in UNCHS Habitat (2001) maintains that transparency and accountability to the population at large are the linchpin of good governance in local government. It is stated that problems of cities and towns particularly in Africa, which have high rates of urbanization, can only be solved by better urban governance.

### **PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE URBAN POOR IN LESOTHO**

The urban poor in Lesotho can be classified into absolute and relative poverty, all lacking in sustainable coping/survival mechanisms. Absolute poverty is a situation where incomes are so low that even a minimum standard of nutrition, shelter and personal necessities cannot be maintained (Allen and Thomas, 2000). Most of the urban poor in Lesotho are rural-urban migrants due to push-pull factors. They are frequently disadvantaged where they live and work and in gaining access to basic services. Their poverty is multi-dimensional involving lack of social and cultural as well as economic means necessary to procure a minimum level of nutrition to participate in everyday life of society and to ensure economic and social production. There is hunger, lack of shelter, sickness and inability to see a doctor, lack of access to school and not knowing how to read and write. There is joblessness and therefore fear for the future, living one day at the time. This is compounded by lack of clean water and health services. They are characterized by powerlessness and lack of functional representation in urban governance and freedom or inability to access economic opportunities. Due to the fact that poor young urban children have a very small chance of entering higher levels of education or good schools, poverty is reproduced across generations and thus perpetuated lack of sustainable development.

### **INCOME**

The Maseru urban poor society is dependent on cash for purchase of essential goods and services. At the time, they are sporadically employed in casual jobs, which are even insecure. Due to their unskilled labour, lack of qualifications for well-paid jobs, their labour is underpaid and exploited. Effective labour law enforcement is lacking. Low-income status is also brought by inability to hold jobs due to bad health conditions precipitated and worsened by poor living and working conditions. Maseru urban poor are in most cases staying in the periphery and due to lack of job opportunities, they have to trade off between a very long walking distance to a job and the cost of housing (renting). Owing to this, urban poor are characterized by low income earning.

This problem is predisposed by policy related factors formulated by the state or local government. The microeconomic crisis condense or devalue real incomes, thus, the lack of large operating markets which can absorb the poor promote the prevailing perilous situation as Maseru city and other urban areas in Lesotho lack job opportunities. Failure of public services such as education, health, infrastructure and transport to serve the urban poor is another factor brought in by ineffective policymaking. Moreover, the regulatory constraints on small enterprises perpetuate “informality” of work available to the poor, discourage asset accumulation and access to credit and increase vulnerability of workers. Other aspects of poverty are resultantly brought in, that is powerlessness to afford housing and land, resulting in underdevelopment and lack of sustainable development.

## **HEALTH**

Urban areas occupied by poor citizens of Lesotho are hygienically precarious. Overcrowded and unhygienic conditions affect the well-being of these people; hence why in most towns of Lesotho like Maseru, (a typical example being Thibella location and others) there is vulnerability to diseases due to poor quality air, water and sanitation. These poor souls experience unsafe working conditions especially for those in the informal sector; they are also affected by industrial occupational risks involving inhaling dangerous chemicals. Housing and industrial functions are juxtaposed in Maseru city, thus making residential environments prone to industrial and traffic pollution, further aggravating bad conditions on the health of the poor urban dwellers. Health hazards also include injuries and deaths arising from traffic and laborious unsafe factory jobs. Dumping places usually located by residents of the poor expose them to choking polluted air from burned city waste or rubbish.

Likewise, there are policy related causes of these problems. Land and housing regulations make proper housing unaffordable, thus, prices of sites differentiate between social groups that can or cannot afford it, pushing residents into disastrous polluted areas. For one to acquire a land firstly plan of the house must be produced but the payment for the land is not affordable for the poor. Furthermore, poor health is worsened by failure of public services such as environmental and health related services. For example, they are not freely provided with clean water, sewerage, vector control and other related basic needs. There is lack of safety nets, social support for families and young people and lack of labour protection. Within this country, the voices of the poor are not heard even when under terrible working conditions, considering the case of the exploited textile industry labour, mostly women.

## **EDUCATION**

In most cities of Lesotho, there is high illiteracy rate of the youth and adults. This is due to inhibited access to education owing to inability to afford higher education expenses. Although there is free primary education scheme in the country, jobless parents are unable to clothe and feed their school going age children. This is observable in Maseru city, where during school hours, there are children aged seven to twelve or thirteen who are seriously working in the market places selling fruits, sweets or even water. There are no safety nets to ensure that children continue learning in schools during family economic hardships. The impact of these factors results in inability to get jobs as formal available job opportunities are for skilled labour. The current curriculum does not provide life skills for self-employment and does not therefore promote production.

## **SECURITY**

### **Tenure security**

The urban poor in Lesotho are characterized by tenure insecurity. This is due to the fact that housing and land in authorized areas are not affordable, so the poor typically build illegal settlements or rent such inhabitable settlements. These houses lack proper construction and tend to be unsafe areas/slums prone to natural hazards. These problems are aggravated by local policies, which do not make ample developed land obtainable to the poor or upgrade the slums. Urban development policies are not flexible enough to regularize tenure or provide forms of tenure security in some unauthorized settlements as an upgrading scheme. Regulations and procedures for acquiring urban land for settlements are cumbersome and characterized by red tape. Moreover, these bureaucratic standards and codes make housing unaffordable and create lack of access to credit for the poor. There are evictions causing loss of physical capital, social and informal networks, this reduces sense of security to the poor.

## **Personal security**

Owing to over population and congestion, urban poor people in Lesotho are characterized by high crime rate and violence. There is drug or alcohol abuse and domestic violence. There are family breakdowns and abridged support for the children. There is also social diversity emergence due to income inequality in cities, which increases tension and social differentiation. This reduces personal security. Diminished physical and mental health and low earnings are recognized. There is also damage or loss of property due to robbery and increased costs for protection. The poor are prone to depreciated social capital such as social isolation and loss of family cohesion.

## **Empowerment**

Illegitimacy of residence and work, the isolation of communities that are disconnected from jobs and services, insufficient channels of information for obtaining jobs and lack of knowledge about their rights qualify the poor urban residents as disempowered. They do not have a word in decisions made concerning them and they do not possess rights and responsibilities of citizens. Oppressive bureaucracy and corruption, official and unofficial discrimination worsen the prevailing conditions. As a result, there erupts sense of isolation and powerlessness. There is also lack of access to urban services.

Maseru city consists of many of the vulnerable, rural immigrants, the disabled people, ethnic and religious minorities, women, the youth, the middle-class people, the high-class people and finally the poor. The urban poor are classified as people who lack basic infrastructural services, safe water and sanitation, solid wastes collection and disposal, drainage, public transport access roads and footpaths, streetlights and so on. They are typically more dependent on too limited money to fulfill basic needs. Their income generation is more susceptible to market fluctuations. Social cohesion is weaker, meaning that poverty is more individualized in urban settings. Moreover, the urban poor also have greater exposure to environmental risks as well as relative lack of personal safety as a result of crime that constrains economic activity.

Furthermore, urban poor can be classified as individuals, families and groups in the population who lack the resources to obtain the types of diets needed, they do not participate in the activities and amenities, which are customary, or at least widely accepted and approved in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual middle-income family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns.

In most developing countries, women have a triple role. However, their productive work, especially as domestic workers and textile factory workers in Maseru city, is underpaid and are thus treated as secondary earners. In rural areas, this usually takes the form of agricultural work while in urban areas women frequently work in the informal sector. Although poor women carry much of the responsibility, their labour is still underpaid especially in these large informal employment sectors and the formal one of textile industry. While this situation prevails, many women are now seen on Maseru city streets in the night observably engaged in commercial sex. It still remains controversial whether such income earning activity is indeed purely an economic issue/income problem. Whatever the case, not discarding other views, the involved poor urban women lack sufficient skills to make a better living.

The political process which involves the principle of equity that ensures empowerment also guarantees that women and men have equal access to decision making processes, resources and basic services and that this access is measured through gender disaggregated data; establishes quotas for women representatives in local authorities and encourage their promotion to higher

management positions within municipalities; promote equal inheritance rights for land and property but urban poor women are practically left out in this political process. Furthermore, political process encompasses ordering and influencing society at different levels, including the means by which some people or groups attain positions from which they can effectively promote their own interests and values, which is not the case with the poor in Lesotho as they lack organization and networking. The poor lack choice or a definite say on the choice of development programmes they need and as such, the urban elite continue to benefit more than the poor do.

Urban poverty in Lesotho includes lack of resources with which to obtain the type of diet or life style that is socially acceptable, the inability to obtain a minimum standard of living reflected by a qualified and absolute indicator of poverty and constrained choices, unfulfilled capabilities and social exclusion. Concisely prominent features include vulnerability, lack of housing, employment, income and physical capital.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF URBANIZATION AND URBAN GOVERNANCE IN LESOTHO**

### **Process of Urbanization in Lesotho**

The current urbanization process can hardly be understood without recourse to the socio-economic trends over the last decades. Urbanization in Lesotho like in any other developing country started in the first half of the present century with the establishment of economic and administrative centres forming the first nuclei. This triggered the influx of people to the nuclei. The heavy population has been brought by a number of factors including inter alia: the postcolonial policy of concentrating the socio-economic opportunities in specific urban nuclei to the detriment of rurality. This policy culminated in movement of the masses to the urban nucleus as a natural response toward this colonial legacy and postcolonial policy in particular for commerce, employment and education. Over time, the nuclei developed into full-grown urban centres. The influx, however, later overrun the existing urban facilities due to increased rural poverty and neglect of urban public utilities. This bred pressure on housing, land and other infrastructure like water and sanitation services, a phenomenon that still holds in many urban centres today.

One distinct additional feature with Lesotho, particularly Maseru city is that, it is a localized city, which expanded into what is known as ‘the traditional villages’ or the outskirts. That is town encroachment, most often by government declaration at the neglect of adequate urban services or lack of series of economic activity and demographic concentration normally constituting urbanization. Maseru is now an impoverished city, that is, the major concentrations of poverty are now in urban areas which used to be formally regarded as traditional villages, which now comprise the population of the ‘urban poor’. This concentration of poverty in the urban areas creates new and growing demands for urban land, infrastructure and services. Social groups that previously relied on state initiatives have been forced to seek self-help mechanisms to meet their needs and to generate strategies of survival, including provision of essential services.

Consequent to Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), there has also been modifications of the labour market, which reduced the number of the permanent jobs and raised the qualifying standards for participating in the labour force. This has led to the rise in an informal market where “the urban poor” suffer more losses through income generating activities with meager incomes below living wages/standard while most lack any capital to start such activities. These activities are characterized by non-saving and dissaving. This change has created social atomization, individualism, anguish, insecurity, and marginalization of the poor people living in the city.

## Governance in Lesotho

Before colonization, Lesotho had its own way of administering its political affairs like any other African country. The political affairs were run through traditional chiefs who were appointed by inheritance. However, since 1966 political independence, after being a British protectorate from 1868, there has been a transition of governance, which was originally imposed by colonizers. There has been an introduction of political system entailing political parties, which were then formed in the hope to fight for national independence, mainly. CIJC Bulletin, no 23 notes that the human rights were not entirely protected even though people elected leaders in these parties. The rights of people were violated and power abuse reached its peak especially in 1970s when government suspended the constitution (i.e. Basotho National Party that had won the first national elections of 1965 and refused to step down after 1970 general elections). As a result, from 1970-1986 Lesotho has been characterized by political anarchy. From 1986, military rule utilizing orders took over and prepared for democratic rule reinstatement that took place in 1993 where Basotho Congress Party won the general elections. These dynamics, which Lesotho has experienced, resulted in poverty and lack of sustainable development because since independence there has never been 'good governance'. This is because the majority of the people were not socially included, especially the urban poor. There was pressure of the international institutions like IMF and World Bank around 1990s to spread the ideology of good governance. There were even policies that were set for many developing countries so that they could follow good governance, for example, structural adjustment programs. However this ideology affected many countries negatively, that is, socially, politically and economically so much that there was a massive transition in the state of political affairs which resulted in poverty for the majority of people in many parts of the world. This means that participation of the masses has always been excluded in many societies and this has resulted in a state of uncontrollable poverty and lack of sustainable development. Lesotho with its urban areas is a typical example. The implication of the imposed historical background resulted in poor participation of the urban poor in Lesotho.

The postcolonial administration in Lesotho has followed closely the colonial legacy of concentrating development in specific urban areas and Maseru has become the capital and the centre of commerce and education. This has precipitated massive rural-urban drift as migrants sought employment and education in the urban nuclei. This is further explained by Todaro model of urbanization, which states that rural-urban migration is primarily an economic phenomenon, which for the individual migrant can be quite a rational decision despite the existence of urban unemployment. This model postulates that migration proceeds in response to urban-rural differences in *expected rather than actual earnings* (Todaro, 1989, p.278). He further shows that the migrants consider the various labour market opportunities available to them in the rural and urban sectors and choose the one that maximizes their expected gains from migration. This then shows that urban high unemployment and population growth rates will increase. Nonetheless, this analysis is unrealistic in the context of institutional and economic framework of most Third World countries. These countries have high urban unemployment and therefore a typical migrant expects to secure high-pay urban job immediately. However, in entering urban areas, they know they are likely "to either become totally unemployed or will seek casual and part-time employment as vendors, hawkers, repairmen... (Todaro, 1989, p.280)". Rural-urban migration particularly in Lesotho has been worsened by retrenched mostly male migrant labour force from the South African mining sector.

Until late 1990s, the urban centres were struggling to cater for the growth of the population in the areas like infrastructural services. However, at the end of 1998 there was a political turmoil brewed by opposition political parties over the accuracy of



general elections' results, which led to the destruction and collapse of the industrial and business centres in the capital. Consequently, foreign industrialists fled out of the country for their lives. That culminated into the decline of the formal industrial economy. This problem exacerbated by the decline in the revenue base resulted into the collapse of the institutional capacity including that of municipality while the population growth in the urban centres remained on course. Corruption and lack of accountability in the public service became an order of the day making it difficult for the government to provide infrastructural services for the growing population.

### **Local Governance in Lesotho**

Local government generally refers to the government of an area smaller than a country, state or province. Such areas include cities, towns and villages. Each unit of local government has some important responsibility for the welfare of its citizens and provides certain services. Most local governments are run by elected officials and have some power of taxation. The main functions of local government vary from country to country. They often include road building and maintenance, regulation of building standards, public health, refuse collection and local amenities like public parks.

Lesotho Local Governance has been steadily promoted for several decades and culminated in the establishment of district councils in respect of the country's nine districts in 1959. However, these councils were abolished after about eight years and their functions were taken over by various government departments and traditional chiefs under the political supervision of a local government appointee with cabinet status.

The country was ruled by a council of ministers and a king as a nominal head of state. Parliament was suspended in January 1970 during the second general election held after attainment of complete independence in 1966. Although the constitution had also been suspended, the council of ministers ruled in the spirit of the old constitution. A number of "orders" replaced certain parts of the constitution, clarifying matters such as position of the king and chieftainship.

Later on, various advisory bodies were established. In each case, the main objective was to obtain representative expression of public opinion and consultation between central government and local people. The second objective was to encourage public interest in the management of public affairs through the creation of opportunities to elect the representatives and to express public opinion in local public meetings.

Today there is decentralization of power from main governance to local level as good entry point for addressing wide range of social issues including poverty and lack of sustainable development. Local governance is generally used to refer to a decentralized, representative institution with general and specific powers, devolved upon it and delegated to it by central or regional governance in respect to a restricted geographical area within a nation or state, and in the exercise of which it is locally responsible and may to a certain degree act autonomously. This suggests a local political process, which is analytically separated from the nation-wide process because the issues around which it revolves have local characters.

At independence in 1966, the District Councils had disagreements with the central government. The result was Government Notice No.8 of 1966, which suspended the Councils, and new councillors were appointed. The Local Administration Act of 1969 was now more than a framework for further regulation providing the Minister of Interior with a basis to make provision for the execution of functions formerly performed by the District Councillors. In 1970s, District Administrative Secretary became the District Administrator and Assistant Ministers were appointed as District Government Agents.

The districts now had political and administrative heads combined in one office. The politicians were supposed to supervise the execution of government policy and to facilitate communication between grass roots and the centres of policy formulation in Maseru city. It proved very difficult to fill the posts as incumbents tended not to live up to expectations of combined offices. As a result, the post was quietly abolished in the 1970s and the District Administrator became the head of government in the districts.

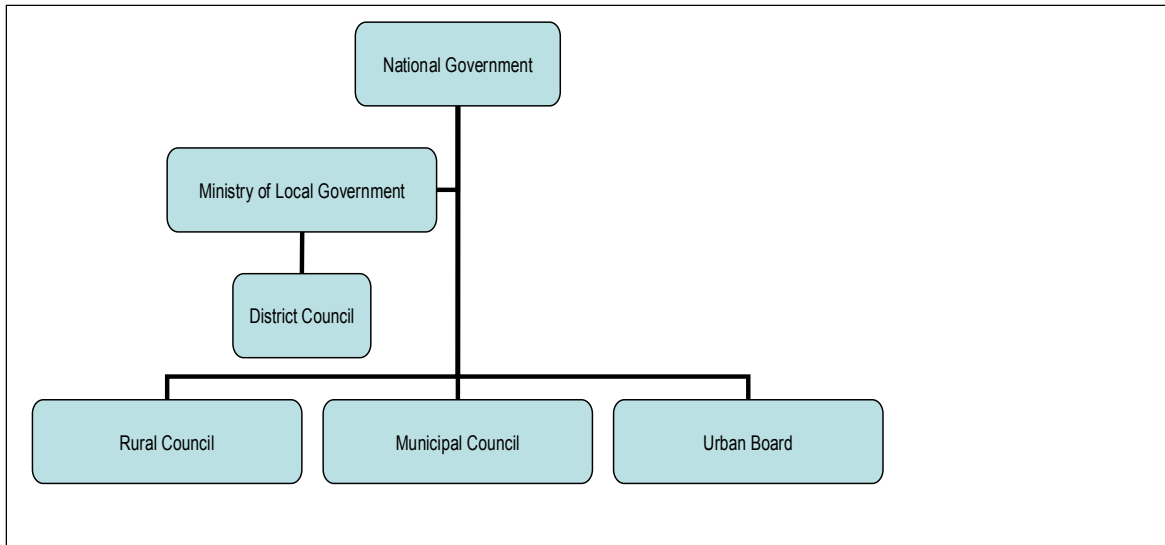
Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, decentralization received more attention. In 1977, the Institute of Development Management organized a national seminar on local administration and Local Government and in July 1980 a Government Workshop on Decentralization, held on the campus of the National University of Lesotho prepared proposals on decentralization for consideration by Cabinet. As a result of these continuing discussions, further changes took place.

In 1980, the District Administrator was abolished and its functions were split into two other posts. Those functions directly concerned with the Ministry of the Interior were taken over by the newly created Local Administration Officer, whose post was part of the established Ministry of Interior and responsible for, among others, the administration of land and chieftainship affairs. The head of Government at district level was then the District Coordinator, part of the establishment of the Cabinet Office and responsible to the Senior Principal Secretary. When central government in 1986 was taken over by a Military government, the Head of Government at district level became a Military officer. This was the case until early April 1993 when the civilian government came to power. The head of government at District level is now the District Secretary/Administrator.

Another experiment by the Lesotho government in decentralization was the introduction of the Urban Government Act of 1983. The Act was generally aimed at making provision for establishing and regulating urban local authorities. This Act entrusts certain powers to the Minister of Interior. He/she was responsible for declaring any area to be of the municipal, to assign a name to, alter the name of a municipality defining the boundaries, and declare that any area shall cease to be a municipality and how a municipal or urban council shall be constituted.

The municipal in Lesotho started in 1989. It was established through the Urban Government Act of 1983. It was a pilot project financed by the World Bank but the bank stopped financing the project because of corruption allegations in the project. From there the government of Lesotho took over. Now the municipal falls under the government under the ministry of local government. The municipal is financed and controlled by the central government, thus making it unaccountable to the urban poor.

The new government (of 1993) considered putting in place a more democratic Local Administration, which involves participation of local communities in the management of their affairs. The management of urban centres was thus structured along the Anglophonic lines, which vested power for urban development control in the local urban authorities as mandated by Lesotho Local Government Act 1997. The Act empowers local urban authorities to control urban development and provide services which include solid waste management; opening and rehabilitation of roads; development control; primary education and public health through the local government organogram/figure 1 below followed by its objectives, composition of councils and their functions;



**Figure 1: Lesotho Local Government Structure**

Source: Lesotho Local Development Programme Concept Paper, 2004.

Objectives of the Lesotho local government include;

- The provision of a democratic and accountable government.
- The provision of sustainable services and the promotion of social and economic development by giving priority to basic community.
- To promote the involvement of the community and organizations and individuals in local government issues.
- To enhance participation in national and community programmes.
- To combine the municipality and urban boards, which will be combined to the rural and urban areas, thus creating a mechanism, which will integrate the historical separate part of economies.

Local Government Act 1997 says:

1. There shall be established a District Development Coordinating Committee (hereinafter referred to as “the committee” for each district).
2. A committee shall consist of the following:
  - (a) The mayor and two elected members representing an urban council; and
  - (b) The chairman and two elected members representing an urban council; and
  - (c) The chairman, two elected members and three chiefs representing a rural council.
  - (d) The following public officers:
    - I. The District Administrator who shall be the Secretary of the committee.

II. An officer representing the District Planning Unit.

III. Such other public officers as may be determined by the Minister, to represent other ministries that are operating within the administrative districts.

### **Composition of Councils**

In accordance with the provisions of this Act (Local Government Act of 1997), the following councils shall be constituted:

(a) Community Council shall consist of not less than 9 elected members but not exceeding 15 elected members and not exceeding 2 gazetted chiefs (other than Principal Chiefs) who shall also be elected.

(b) Urban Council shall consist of not less than 9 elected members but not exceeding 13 elected members and not exceeding 2 gazetted chiefs (other than Principal Chiefs) who shall be elected.

(c) Municipal Council shall consist of not less than 11 elected members but not exceeding 15 elected members and not exceeding 3 gazetted chiefs (other than Principal Chiefs) who shall also be elected.

(d) A Rural Council shall consist of not less than 37 members but not exceeding 45 members representing each of the Community Councils, within its jurisdiction as follows:

I. The chairman of Community Council.

II. A member of a community council elected by the councillors from amongst them and

III. Three gazetted chiefs, (other than principal chiefs) who are members of a community council and elected from amongst the chiefs who are members of a community council.

At the meeting convened under subsection (1) or subsection (4), the councillors shall in the case of a municipal council elect one of their members to be the mayor and another member to be the deputy mayor and in the case of a community, rural and urban council elect one of their members to be the chairman and another to be the vice-chairman.

Mayor's functions are as follows;

- Will be responsible for chairing meetings of council in an impartial manner.
- Will act as the political head of the council and be responsible for giving policy directives to the district secretary / town clerk.
- Will not be responsible for managing staff, issuing cheques or administrative matters pertaining to the council.

The Executive Council of the municipal is composed of Heads of Departments with the following responsibilities;

- Planning and Development
- Works
- Health and Environment
- Parks and Recreation

- Finance
- Administration

From the interviews conducted on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2006 the budget of the municipal authority comes from the central government while

- Other forms of revenue come from people who are within urban area on property, sewerage, water and waste disposal rates.
- House to house garbage collection.
- Street vendors paying M1.50 though should pay M32.00 according to Public Act Order of 1970 that was amended in 1992.
- Public toilets.
- Building permits.
- Market fees.

**Titles and Roles of Senior Councillors and Staff of Local Authorities**

The titles and powers of key office holders in local authorities will be prescribed in law. The titles of the chairman and most senior staff member of councils will be as follows:

**Table 1: Council Type and Senior Staff Membership**

Council Types	Most Senior Elected Representative i.e. chair of Council	Chief Executive of Council
Rural District Council	Council Chairman	District Secretary (Now called District Administrator/DA)
Municipal Council	Mayor	Town Clerk
Urban Board	Board Chairman	Town Clerk

The district secretary / town clerk will be responsible for:

- Keeping council minutes and records.
- Acting as secretary to the management committee of the council.
- Attending and supporting the work of other committees and sub-committees.
- Serve as the chief accounting officer.
- Coordinating and providing leadership for his or her management team.

- Providing policy and legal advice to the council.
- Follow up on the implementation of council resolutions.
- Carry out such powers as may be delegated to him or her by council.

Local government is constituted by councillors, civil servants and statutory bodies such as tender board. However, according to section 4 of the local government Act of 1997 as amended in 2004; representatives of gazette chiefs shall be members of local authorities; therefore, chieftainship is part and parcel of local government system (Lesotho government, 1993, 1994, 1997, 2004 and Lesotho Local Development Programme, 2005).

Councillors are the pillars that support functionality of local government. Poor people are supposed to be able to raise their concerns and views during their meetings with the councillors held before the council meeting. This is representative participation because they are represented by the councillors in the decision-making body and practically remain outside decision-making domain. The councillor notes every thing raised by the society (poor) and during the meeting of the council, he/she presents such issues before the council. For instance, society may agree on addressing the issue of electricity or water. Then they will tell their councillor what they have agreed on as a community. The councillor will then talk about that issue during the council meeting. A councillor sets aside at least a day in a given period for meetings with the community (poor) in his/her electoral division. During this period, both parties share views about emerging issues. The poor are free to present before the councillor their different problems and in turn, the councillor tries to solve their problems where necessary. This is because the councillor sees himself/herself as a leader who is in a position to solve problems. Councillor reports to the community (poor) the general decisions of the council and the actions it has taken to solve problems raised by those people who are poor in the electoral division. Then the poor are in a position to criticize the decisions taken if those decisions fail to address their problems.

However, it is important to point out that representative participation does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in the society are taken into consideration in decision-making. This is the true reflection of our urban areas. Taking Sea Point and Stadium area in Maseru, both areas are under one municipal rule but because most vulnerable people live at Sea Point, Stadium area is better off in terms of housing conditions and water supply. In Sea Point, for people to access water for domestic use, they have to stand in long queues at public taps and this is not a case at Stadium area, in this area, every household owns a tap.

## **CONCLUSION**

Urbanization and local governance in Lesotho primarily characterize representative democracy lacking direct support for the poor or their empowerment through participatory development processes that can surely effect sustainable development. The two processes may be traced back to the colonial era and still seem to be in practice missing the target of alleviating poverty and bringing about sustainable urban human development even in their combination as processes of political development. This paper has reviewed practical perspectives on urbanization process and local governance on sustainable urban human development and poverty reduction in Lesotho. It has also reviewed characteristics of the Lesotho urban poor and their non-existent participation in local governance though these are prerequisites for sustainable urban human development and poverty reduction. It manages to provide a synopsis of urbanization and urban governance in Lesotho and pragmatic views about their

implications on urban poverty and sustainable urban human development. The paper contested that social exclusion is the main factor to non-attainment of urban poverty reduction and sustainable urban human development in Lesotho.

Social exclusion of the urban poor is evident in Lesotho in that the poor lack any official decision making participation/power in policy formulation, resources and financial administration and in the processes, mechanisms and structures in the performance of the functions of the local government. Such functions often include road building and maintenance, regulation of building standards, public health, refuse collection and local amenities like public parks. This exclusion denies the urban poor an opportunity for participatory development that can bring about sustainability in urban and human development.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHORS:**

Moses M.M. Daemane (PhD) is a lecturer in the Department of Development Studies at the National University of Lesotho, Roma, Lesotho.