



DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN SADC

BOTSWANA'S 2004 ELECTIONS



Published with the assistance of
NORAD and OSISA



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Order from: publications@eisa.org.za

EISA RESEARCH REPORT No 11

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2005

Published by EISA
2nd Floor, The Atrium
41 Stanley Avenue, Auckland Park
Johannesburg, South Africa 2006

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2006
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ISBN: 1-919814-90-6

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First published 2005

EISA is a non-partisan organisation which seeks to promote democratic principles, free and fair elections, a strong civil society and good governance at all levels of Southern African society.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BAM	Botswana Alliance Movement
BCP	Botswana Congress Party
BDP	Botswana Democratic Party
BIP	Botswana Independence Party
BNF	Botswana National Front
BLP	Botswana Labour Party
BOFESETE	Botswana Federation of Secondary Teachers
BNYC	Botswana National Youth Council
BPP	Botswana People's Party
CSO	Civil society organisation
DRP	Democracy Research Project
EISA	Electoral Institute of Southern Africa
FES	Fredrich-Ebert-Stiftung
FPTP	First-past-the-post
GDP	Gross domestic product
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
MELS	Marxist Engels Leninist Stalinist Movement of Botswana
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MP	Member of parliament
NALCGPMWU	National Amalgamated Local and Central Government and Parastatal Manual Workers' Union
NDF	New Democratic Front
PLC	Party Liaison Committees
PR	Proportional representation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SPIL	Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language
UBCD	University of Botswana Congress for Democrats
US	United States
USP	United Socialist Party

PREFACE

EISA has undertaken various initiatives, which have been aimed at facilitating the nurturing and consolidation of democratic governance in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. One such initiative is the first phase of the democratic consolidation research programme. Covering almost all the SADC countries, this research programme focused on the following key issues:

- Elections;
- Gender and democracy;
- Electoral systems;
- Electoral administration;
- Political parties;
- Conflict and elections; and
- Democratic assistance.

This first phase of the project has generated an enormous stock of knowledge on the dynamics of democratic governance in the region over and above the intricacies of elections *per se*. It has demonstrated beyond any shadow of a doubt that indeed there is more to democratic governance than just elections and electioneering. In a word, with hindsight, it is abundantly clear to us today that an election, in and of itself, does not necessarily amount to democratic culture and practice. Put somewhat differently, an election is not tantamount to a democracy, in the strictest sense of the term. Various other determinants are critical too including, *inter alia*, multipartyism, constitutional engineering and the rule of law, gender inclusivity in the governance process, electoral system designs and reforms, transparent and accountable management of national affairs including elections themselves, responsive and responsible conduct by political parties, constructive management of various types of conflict and the form and content of external assistance for democracy.

All these issues are explored in a fairly rigorous and refreshing fashion in the monographs to come out of this programme, although a deliberate focus is given to electoral engineering in the form of reviews and reforms required in the SADC region in order for the selected countries to achieve the difficult goal of democratic consolidation. This monograph will be followed in due

course by various others that are country-specific, exploring a broad array of challenges for democratic consolidation in the SADC region.

I would like, on behalf of EISA, to acknowledge with gratitude the invaluable financial support that EISA received from the Norwegian Embassy through NORAD and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) for this first phase of the programme and without which this monograph and subsequent others would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the authors for their enormous contributions to this project. All said and done, the views and opinions expressed in this and subsequent monographs do not necessarily represent an official position of EISA. Any possible factual, methodological or analytic errors in this and subsequent monographs therefore rest squarely on the shoulders of the authors in their own capacities as responsible academics and researchers.

Denis Kadima
Executive Director, EISA
Johannesburg

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study of the 2004 general elections in Botswana was aimed at analysing the process of democratic consolidation in Africa's longest surviving and stable political system. In this respect, the attention falls on six areas: the impact of the electoral system; election administration; the nature of the party system; conflict management and elections; gender and elections; and civil society and elections. Through these six areas the research hopes to probe whether Botswana's democracy is consolidating, stationary or reversing.

Primary and secondary sources of data were utilised. Interviews were conducted with a few voters that could be easily accessed within the short period of time of writing this report. Observations by the researchers prior to, during and after the elections proved worthwhile and helped in analysing what actually occurred. The research relied on qualitative analysis of data to grasp the six areas of study in order to appreciate the process of Botswana's democratic consolidation. A basic problem was the inability by researchers to directly interview Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) officials. Instead, the IEC agreed to answer a questionnaire as a corporate body and provided clarifications to some follow-up questions via the telephone. Similarly, it was difficult to find voters who were willing to answer questions relating to elections, hence only a few were interviewed.

The research reaffirmed the electoral outcome of the 2004 elections in which the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) emerged the victor with an overwhelming majority of parliamentary and council seats and votes. As usual, the opposition party won less than one-fourth of the parliamentary seats. There were three major drawbacks with the administration of elections: first, long queues slowed down the voting process because presiding and polling officers are required by the Electoral Act to explain to voters the procedure involved, both in relation to parliamentary and council elections. Insufficient polling stations prevented some resident outside of Botswana from voting. Second, the results were announced two days after voting. Third, there were some irregularities in voter registration and vote counting in a couple of constituencies.

More importantly, the research found that the elections were conducted in a free environment devoid of intimidation and violence and in a relatively

fair manner, allowing both the electorate and parties to participate. The research also found that there is some consolidation of democracy insofar as both the ruling and opposition parties and their supporters accept to play the game of politics within established structures without resorting to extra legal means, and elections are conducted according to established electoral law. However, lack of levelled party competition, unequal access by all political parties to the public media, absence of political funding of political parties, the exclusionary nature of the first-past-the-post electoral system, constant questioning of the independence and impartiality of the electoral administrative machinery and voter apathy stand in the way of consolidating democracy even further. The main problem is that the ruling party's organisational and resource capacity as well as its access to the public media far outweighs that of the opposition. The opposition remains weak, fragmented and unable to challenge the BDP effectively, either to form an alternative government or a sizeable opposition in parliament. This partly explains the fact that the BDP has been returned to power at every election since independence in 1966. Further, the research shows that there was a decrease in the number of female and young parliamentary representatives, and civil society organisations (CSOs) continue to be politically inactive and detach themselves from electoral politics in spite of a culture of political tolerance. These seem to suggest that Botswana's democracy is regressing.

Botswana's democracy could be enhanced by, first, carrying out research into the current electoral system to gauge whether or not it needs to be reformed and the nature of the required reform. Second, public funding is required to augment party organisation and performance, especially to level competition between the ruling and opposition parties. Third, deliberate efforts should be made to increase political representation of underprivileged groups, including women and the young. Fourth, access to the media should be available to all political parties to ensure fair competition. Fifth, civic education should continue to be intensified to enlighten voters on their role and reduce levels of apathy. In this respect, collaborative and intensive efforts by the IEC, CSOs and political parties are of utmost importance. Sixth, efforts should be directed at eliminating the questions besieging the IEC regarding its independence and impartiality, especially in the eyes of the opposition.

INTRODUCTION

Botswana's ninth parliamentary and local government elections took place on 30 October 2004 and were won once again by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), with the opposition as a whole securing only 13 seats. The country has since independence held elections every five years in a relatively free and fair manner on a continent where free and fair elections are not the norm. Similarly, under the BDP, the country has enjoyed unbroken political stability and economic growth on a continent that is generally characterised by conflict and economic malfunctioning. This has earned Botswana the reputation of Africa's leading and longest multiparty democracy, with a developmental state that could be emulated by other developing countries. However, the one-party dominance system due to the BDP's continuous hold on power and the emergence of multiparty democracies in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region have raised questions regarding the quality of democracy in Botswana.

This paper therefore analyses the 2004 elections in terms of the consolidation of democracy in Botswana by focusing on the following issues: the impact of the electoral system in use; election administration; political parties; conflict and elections; gender and elections; and civil society and elections. The key question is whether Botswana's democracy is consolidating, stationary or if there are signs of a reversal. There are several shortcomings that have negatively impacted on Botswana's democracy. These are, among others, voter apathy, underdeveloped political parties, weak parliament, inactive civic groups, under-representation of women and the youth, and the indirect election of the president. Its democracy also continues to face long-standing pressures such as poverty, unemployment and most recently HIV / AIDS, which threatens to reverse most of the gains realised in the past 38 years of independence. These do not augur well for the consolidation of democracy.

Democracy is now understood to mean more than just the holding of free and fair elections. Botswana has ably conducted free elections since independence and these have adhered to the country's electoral law. In this respect, Botswana's democracy is consolidated. However, a broadened

definition of democracy entails representation of underprivileged and minority groups, a level political playing field, and popular control and participation in the electoral process by all citizens.

In a nutshell, democratic consolidation involves improvement over time in 'the overall quality of democracy' behaviourally, attitudinally and constitutionally ... to strengthen the regimes to ensure its persistence and to resist and prevent possible crises'.¹ Consolidation therefore requires 'acceptance of structures and norms for peaceful resolution of conflicts', broadening of legitimation and progressive organisation and expansion of party structures and the party system as a whole, which is then able to control and integrate all forms of participation'.² At least in the case of Botswana, there is acceptance among all political parties (and civil society) for peaceful resolution of conflict within existing structures without resorting to extra legal means.

POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF ELECTIONS

The 2004 elections took place in a dismal economic climate plagued by high poverty in a country with medium income and plentiful resources, unemployment, HIV/AIDS cases and new revelations of corruption. The poor economic conditions are seen as the BDP government's failure to invest in employment-generating ventures given the enormous resources earned from diamond sales, its failure to attract foreign direct investment critical to employment creation, misconceived policies which benefit fly-by-night investors, as well as its failure to effect substantial income distribution. Revelations of corruption in land allocation in Gaborone prior to the 2004 elections reflected negatively on the BDP government.

More importantly, unlike previous elections, the BDP entered the 2004 elections bruised by factional fights between two leading groups jostling for leadership and control, and disillusionment arising from the outcomes of primary elections. Although primary elections are not required by law in Botswana, they have been held by the ruling BDP since 1984, and subsequently since 1989 by the opposition party, the Botswana National Front (BNF), and much later by the Botswana Congress Party (BCP). The other parties do not hold primary elections. Primary elections are a source of internal democracy as they shift the responsibility of choosing candidates from the party's central committee to a broader membership, and allow each

party to present agreed upon candidates to avoid competition between two or more candidates from the same party in the same constituency or ward.

In the absence of any law to guide primary elections, it is usually the BDP's Central Committee which sets up regulations and rules governing primary elections. Since 1984, the Electoral College voted for candidates to represent the party in general elections. However, the BDP in 2002 introduced a new form of primary elections popularly known as Bulela Ditswe, which allowed the rank-and-file members to choose their preferred candidates.³ Any candidate can contest primary elections as long as one is a good member of the party and resident in the constituency and ward. Regulations require contestants to start campaigning for support only when they have been formally allowed. Unfortunately, campaigns for the 2003 primary elections started long before formal permission was granted and were characterised by intense and aggressive competition based on personal attacks, flouting of regulations and (alleged) cheating. Some contestants accused the BDP Secretariat of favouring certain candidates.⁴

Contenders expressed their differences through both the public and private media; a characteristic not common to the BDP. Primary elections took the form of personality contests and factional fights because issues were not the deciding factors – just as in the general elections – as each candidate and faction tried to out do the other to represent constituencies, and gain control of the party and, eventually, government posts. Losers cited administrative irregularities, open rigging, intimidation of their supporters and absence of some of their supporters' names on the voters' rolls.⁵ In addition, losers in primary elections created friction within the party as they challenged the electoral outcomes by appealing to the party Secretariat to call fresh primary elections, and court action. There were even allegations that some losers and their supporters would vote for the opposition just to get even with the party.

Tension and intense competition arose because the BDP's membership and aspiring candidates (both old and new, retired civil servants, educated and non educated) have increased over time, while the political cake in terms of the number of constituencies and council seats have not increased proportionally. Leadership struggles between the two factions were replicated

in the youth wing of the party, which remained unresolved at the time of elections. In view of such tensions within the party, the leadership – primarily the president – cautioned campaigners against aggressive campaigning (which went on unabated) and strongly condemned such behaviour. The vice president also tried to ‘mend fences’ by getting the losers to accept the electoral outcomes for the sake of democracy and party unity.

As a result of factional fights the BDP had become like the opposition, but fortunately such factionalism did not result in splinter parties or disintegration of the party. Given these conditions one would not have expected the BDP to do very well. However, to its credit, the BDP still comes out as the best party relative to opposition parties which are beset with severe factionalism and a decline in legitimacy, and do not offer credible policy alternatives. These partly explain why people have continued to return the party to power at every election since independence.

The BDP has scored a number of successes in spite of its inability to ameliorate poverty. It has managed high economic growth rates, welfare services (e.g. support for orphans, the elderly and destitute, heavily subsidised health care and education) beneficial to a majority of the people, government assisted programmes (e.g. credit, food for work – especially during drought), maintained high standards of democracy (Botswana, Mauritius and South Africa are tops in SADC) and relatively low levels of corruption. Botswana is ranked high by international assessors on good governance, economic management, and (relatively low) levels of corruption (according to Transparency International). Similarly, the BDP government – especially its political leadership – has been commended worldwide for its will and commitment to combating HIV/AIDS. The government has a national policy, awareness programmes and anti-retroviral drugs in public health facilities as well as support programmes for orphans. It is on this basis that Botswana has received foreign assistance for the fight against HIV/AIDS from both public and private donors. In a nutshell, the BDP’s government programmes benefit people across party lines, without which the situation would have been much worse. One could say that it is capitalism with a human face.

The opposition continued to suffer from the worst forms of factionalism

and disintegration, with the National Democratic Front (NDF) as the latest splinter party from the BNF formed in 2003. More importantly, disunity among opposition parties continued making it difficult for them to form an electoral alliance to challenge the ruling BDP effectively. For example, the Pact, a very loose alliance, was formed by only three opposition parties – the Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM), BNF and Botswana People's Party (BPP) – with six parties outside the alliance. This in effect split the opposition vote and helped to give victory to the BDP. Opposition parties, including the BCP, refused to join the Pact in the belief that they could single handedly challenge and oust the BDP from power in the 2004 elections. The NDF found it uncomfortable to work with the BNF within the Pact. Both the BCP and NDF are splinter parties from the BNF, hence the old friction primarily based on personality clashes prevents unity. Smaller parties like the Marxist Engels Leninist Stalinist Movement of Botswana (MELS), the Botswana Labour Party (BLP) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) have not yet come to appreciate the advantages of electoral alliances and have failed to secure a single seat since they entered the electoral contest.

Social, minority and ethnic identity gained momentum prior to the 2004 elections. The Basarwa rights dominated both the domestic and international arena, as Ditshwanelo (Botswana Centre for Human Rights) tried to promote their rights, and Survival International campaigned vigorously to the point of threatening the diamond industry. The government in turn countered the campaign by Survival International through international lobbying. The confrontation between the government and Survival International has to date reached a deadlock. Recently, the leaders of Basarwa returned from a tour of the United States (US) where they congregated and networked with other associations for indigenous and minority groups. The case of the Basarwa challenging their removal by the government from the Central Kalakgadi Game Reserve remains before the High Court.

Ethnic divisions seemed to have gained prominence more than ever before when minority, non-Tswana tribes – primarily the Kalangas – became vocal about being recognised as entities not subject to chiefs of the eight tribes identified in the constitution, and to use their own language in schools. The Kamanakao association even took Botswana to the United Nations over violations of their ethnic rights. In response to claims of recognition and

language rights by the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language (SPIL), Pitso ya Botswana tried to safeguard the predominance of the Tswana culture. The Balopi Commission set up by the government tried to instil a sense of homogeneity in Botswana by recommending amendment of the section of the constitution that identifies only eight tribes of Botswana. This section is to be amended by the ninth parliament.⁶

Economically, Botswana entered the 2004 elections with a mixed picture of reasonable growth rates and economic disparities. The economy continues to grow at six per cent although there was a drop in revenue from diamond sales. The growth of the economy resulted in an increase in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of over 50% from P13,400 a year in 1999 to P20,500 by 2003.⁷ The economy also has relatively low inflation; however, poverty and unemployment continues to plague a large number of citizens in spite of the middle income status of the country. Although poverty has declined from 59% in 1986, to 47% in 1994, to 36% in 2001 and to 30% in 2003, unemployment has remained high, increasing from 21% of the labour force in 2001 to 24% in 2003.⁸ Similarly, income inequality among households increased slightly between 1993/94 and 2002/03.⁹ The poverty and unemployment situation is made worse by the HIV/AIDS rate, which is considered one of the highest in Southern Africa affecting 38% of the population.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The electoral system with its specific electoral rules determines the winner, the composition of parliamentary representatives and government. Botswana has used the first-past-the-post (FPTP) or simple majority electoral system since independence and remains one of the countries in the SADC region that continues to use FPTP. By contrast, Namibia and South Africa introduced proportional representation (PR) with the end of white rule in 1990 and 1994, respectively. Lesotho uses a blend of FPTP and PR electoral systems following the 1998 disturbances. (The case of Lesotho bears testimony to the argument that FPTP could lead to political instability.)

In terms of the FPTP electoral system, seats in council or parliament are ward or constituency based. A ward or constituency therefore has to be won and represented by one representative. The candidate who obtains a simple majority in a ward or constituency wins that council ward or constituency. Under the simple majority system, the victorious candidate represents even those who voted for his or her opponent but the system attaches people's representatives to the constituency, thus ensuring accountability. It is also credited for producing governments that are stable¹⁰ thus adding to the country's political order. In Botswana, the system has largely worked to the advantage of the ruling party as it has benefited greatly from it. The system works to the disadvantage of smaller parties and minority groups as it alters the relationship between seats won and votes each party received in an election.¹¹ Further, apart from excluding certain sections of the population from the political process, 'the FPTP system does not only produce predominant party systems and two party systems but also leads politics into a zero-sum game where governance takes the form [of] government versus opposition' thereby sidelining opposition parties.¹² To date, the only argument for reform of the FPTP system, which has worked so well since independence, has been the need for increased inclusion of the opposition in the political system (which is a contradiction as the opposition are supposed to remain a government-in-waiting until they win elections), matching votes to seats, and following in the footsteps of other SADC member states. However, the PR system which is craved for has its own disadvantages that are detrimental to democracy. Jackson and Jackson¹³

maintain that it 'has the potential to destroy democracy from within by creating a fragmented, multiparty system ... may also give rise to extremist or narrow-interest parties ... all cabinets must be based on fragile coalitions of parties ... promotes cabinet instability and increases the possibility of government problems'. Unfortunately, no research has been undertaken to determine the impact of PR in Botswana, especially in view of the existence of a multiplicity of opposition parties and latent social tensions.

It is the 'unfairness' of the FPTP system that has prompted the opposition in Botswana to lobby the government to reform the electoral system. Civil society supports the opposition's call for electoral reform. Opposition parties favour PR or a blend of FPTP and PR.¹⁴ According to the Pact, the electoral system in use 'does not reflect the political preferences of the electorate and thereby creates a feeling of exclusion amongst those who vote for the opposition'.¹⁵ Representations for electoral reform were made by the opposition at the All Party Conference in 2000 and most recently to the president, but with no success. The BDP government has so far not seen the need to change the electoral system. The faction of the BDP that is opposed to reform and wants to retain the FPTP electoral system appears to be led by Ian Khama.¹⁶

Khama, a former chief of the Botswana Army, paramount chief of the biggest ethnic group in Botswana and the current chair of the BDP, is the first born son of Botswana's first president, Sir Seretse Khama. President Mogae brought him in to the BDP to boost the BDP's chance of winning the 1999 elections by capitalising on the first president's popularity, appealing to the biggest ethnic group and to strengthen the technocratic capability cum discipline of the administrative arm of government for the sake of development. President Mogae and Vice President Khama provide a formidable combination of technical efficiency and discipline to the developmental process. President Mogae has been well known for his consistent and strict economic discipline through his opposition to government over-expenditure and subsidies to non-performing citizen-owned businesses. Since September 2000, Ian Khama's vice presidential office has been empowered to direct and coordinate ministries to improve their performance. The vice president is expected to report regularly to the president to review progress in the implementation of projects. More

significantly, as is the custom in Botswana, the vice president is expected to succeed the president if the latter leaves office before the stipulated time.

Calls by the opposition for electoral reforms are substantiated by past electoral outcomes, but not by practical experience in countries using methods other than FPTP. For instance, Molomo¹⁷ demonstrates that in the 1999 general election 'the BDP polled 54% of the popular vote and won 83% of the seats, and the BNF polled 25% of the popular vote and only emerged with 15% of the seats'. The BCP obtained some 11% of the popular vote in the 1999 elections yet it won only three per cent of the seats in parliament.¹⁸ This means that the votes of the losing candidates and parties are not taken into consideration. It is women and the youth candidates who are the prime losers as they do not normally perform well, and find it difficult to make their way into parliament in large numbers. It is in this sense that the system is seen as undemocratic.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

In a democracy, free and fair elections are considered essential to: ensure equal opportunity for both parties and candidates to campaign and compete; uphold rights of the electorate through easy access to polling stations, with no long queues; ensure that elections are free of fraud, irregularities and rigging; and safeguard proper counting and announcement of votes to reflect voters' preferences. For free and fair elections to become a reality, an independent and neutral administration is essential. Equally important is an independent judiciary capable of resolving election conflicts impartially by upholding the constitution, including electoral laws, without siding with the incumbent leadership.¹⁹ These elements of electoral administration that guarantee the legitimacy of an elected government have been present in all elections conducted since independence without serious significant omissions.

In August 2004, SADC outlined guidelines for elections to ensure full participation by citizens and equal competition between political parties. The SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections include: political tolerance; an independent judiciary and impartial electoral administration; equal access by all political parties to the state media; an updated and open voters' roll; early announcement of polling date; transparent campaign financing for political parties; polling stations in neutral areas; ballot counting at voting stations; international observer missions for monitoring prior to and during elections; impartial voter registration; free, fair and peaceful elections; and constitutional guarantees of the freedom and rights of citizens.²⁰ By and large, SADC provisions mirror those of Botswana's electoral laws, with important variations regarding public funding for political parties, access to state media and counting of votes.

THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

In Botswana, elections were conducted by the Supervisor of Elections until 1997 when the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was established following a national referendum that paved the way for the Constitutional (Amendment) Act of 1997. Reform of election administration came into being

following complaints of election rigging by the opposition. The opposition was also protesting the impartiality of the Supervisor of Elections who was appointed by the president. The 1997 Constitutional (Amendment) Act also lowered voting age to 18 and allowed Batswana who reside outside of the country to vote. This constitutional amendment was aimed at making the IEC independent and *impartial*. Following this amendment, the first IEC came into being in 1998 thus making the 1999 elections the first to be conducted by it. The IEC is appointed in terms of Section 65A of the constitution and is composed of seven commissioners: a chairman (who is a High Court judge) and a legal practitioner, both of whom are appointed by the Judicial Service Commission (JSC); and five other members – who are required to be fit, impartial and proper – are appointed by the JSC from a list of names recommended by the All Party Conference. The All Party Conference is a loose body that promotes an exchange of ideas between political parties.

The appointment of the second IEC was marred by controversy as the main opposition parties boycotted the All Party Conference that recommended the names to the JSC. Only the BDP and two smallest parties (the Botswana Labour Party [BLP] and MELS) were present at the conference. Nevertheless, the appointment went ahead putting the IEC's legitimacy into doubt. However, the IEC maintains that its legitimacy remains intact by virtue of the fact that its appointment was done by the JSC according to the law.²¹ In terms of Section 65A(12), the commission is charged with a number of responsibilities, among others: the conduct and supervision of elections; the conduct of a referendum; giving instructions to the secretary of the IEC; and ensuring that elections are conducted in an efficient, proper, free and fair manner. The secretary of the IEC is appointed by the president in terms of Section 66 of the constitution and his/her functions entail the general administration of the registration of voters and the conduct of elections in the country.

Despite the existence of the IEC since 1998, the president continues to issue a writ of elections, much to the chagrin of opposition parties. For example, when the president delayed announcing the date of the 2004 elections, the opposition accused him of advantaging his party, which was alleged to have knowledge of the date.

The independence, legitimacy, credibility and capacity of the IEC are important in a democratic process. In particular is the capacity of the IEC to adhere to the electoral rules regarding voting procedures and avoiding irregularities. In discharging its mandate, the IEC is guided by the Electoral Act. However, it is capability that is key to IEC operations. The IEC is constrained by inadequate staff and reliance on temporary staff. The dilemma with regard to staffing is that elections are an event that comes once in five years; temporary staff are therefore relied upon to run elections. The IEC acknowledges that it would be cost ineffective to keep permanent staff who would be redundant for most times except during an election year.²² Most of the staff are former government employees, which means that they are already skilled as information or education officers, or as administrators. What remains unclear is their skill in election administration, which in essence raises the question of the ability of the IEC to administer elections effectively and efficiently.

Without divulging the number of staff, the IEC explained that it has senior management comprising the secretary and his deputy, and an elections chief administrator. In middle management are four heads of units of Information Education, Information Technology, Administration and Elections. There is also support and temporary staff.²³ In addition, as a way of improving its electoral administrative and delivery capacity, the IEC has principal election officers who are responsible for the coordination, direct monitoring, supervision and evaluation of electoral activities within constituencies, and they identify all electoral materials and distribute the materials as required.²⁴ For the 2004 elections, the IEC had to administer elections for an increased number of constituencies: from 40 to 57 in 2003 following the 2002 Delimitation Commission exercise. As a result of staff inadequacy, the IEC depends heavily on government employees (especially district commissioners) as returning officers to conduct elections. This calls into question the IEC's impartiality, thereby undermining its credibility as the neutral administrator of elections. The other concern is whether temporary staff are given sufficient training to administer elections effectively and efficiently. In terms of training, the IEC maintained that it prepares guides for returning, presiding and polling officers in line with relevant sections of the Electoral Act.²⁵ The IEC also conducted workshops for polling officers in different constituencies to prepare them for running the 2004 elections.²⁶ In addition,

polling officers tried to assure voters, parties and candidates of impartial administration by showing them that ballot boxes were empty prior to the start of the voting process in the 2004 elections. Elections in Botswana have not been characterised by vote rigging and conflict, with the exception of a few cases that were resolved through the High Court. To date, the judiciary has acted independently and in accordance with electoral laws in adjudicating electoral disputes (very few and not of great magnitude), and no political party has questioned its conflict resolution role.

Unlike the BDP which is content with the reforms of election administration resulting in the IEC, the opposition seems to be still suspicious of election administration and has continued to question its independence and impartiality in a number of areas. At the July 2004 workshop on political leadership organised by the IEC and sponsored by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), opposition parties repeatedly questioned the IEC's impartiality and independence. First, the fact that the president appoints the secretary suggests a not so independent and impartial administrator. Second, the fact that its employees are subject to government regulations and are recruited from it raises questions as well. Opposition parties promised that if elected they would effect electoral reform to enhance the independence of the IEC and proposed to abolish the use of district commissioners as returning officers if voted into power.²⁷ The Pact further promised to give the IEC powers to establish a delimitation committee which would be responsible for demarcating constituencies, setting the election date, and deciding when voter registration should end, as well as to create an elections tribunal.²⁸ Election observers added their own viewpoint on the lack of independence of the IEC, thereby buttressing those held by opposition parties. For example, some SADC observers pointed out that Botswana's IEC is not independent as its employees are governed by government general orders.²⁹ However, the IEC believes that it is independent as it does not take instruction from any person or authority when it discharges its duties. It adds that it tackles its duties 'without fear or favour'.³⁰

VOTER APATHY

It is still too early to fully assess if the IEC has the administrative capacity to administer a free and fair election as the 2004 election was the second to be conducted by it. However, the IEC's function is further constrained by the

growing apathy among voters which has led to a decline in voter registration and participation, and this is likely to threaten the enhancement of democracy. Over the years fewer people have registered to vote in elections as compared to the number of people who qualify to vote. Some 188,950 registered to vote in 1965 out of a possible 243,365 voters, 293,571 out of 416,996 in 1984 and 459,663 out of 800,000 in 1999.³¹ A reduction in the number of people who actually register to vote contributes to a decline in the number of possible voters.³²

Although there are varied factors that contribute to voter apathy, at times administrative mistakes play an important role. The correctness of the voters' roll and problems associated with it were issues of concern in 1999.³³ During that year an administrative blunder resulted in the president declaring a state of emergency – the first in Botswana's history – when around 67,000 people were almost disenfranchised. The state of emergency was meant to reconvene parliament so that the Electoral Act could be amended to allow those people to vote.³⁴ The state of emergency went largely unnoticed. In September 2004, the magistrate's court in Selibe Phikwe disqualified and removed some voters from the voters' roll, as they were not properly registered. The disqualified voters face possible prosecution in line with section 144 of the Electoral Act, which makes it an offence for a person to give incorrect information to a registration officer.³⁵ Similarly, a day before polling day, a magistrate's court in Gaborone affirmed that 16 people were not lawfully registered and their names were struck from the Gaborone Central constituency's voters' roll.³⁶ However, the IEC pointed out that cases of irregularities in voter registration were few and were primarily cases of voter trafficking, which resulted in the disqualification of those voters concerned.³⁷

Voter apathy also poses a serious problem to Botswana's democracy because voter participation has been declining over the years. For instance, Mpabanga³⁸ argues that an average of 45% of the possible voters took part in the elections from 1965 to 1999. Of all the elections held since independence, the highest turnout was in 1965 with 58% taking part, while 1974 recorded the lowest turnout of some 31%. This went up to 55% in 1984 before going down to 42% in 1999.³⁹ Voter apathy was also experienced during the 1997 national referendum that led to some political reforms, including the creation

of the IEC, the lowering of voting age to 18 and the provision for voting for Botswana resident abroad. Some 17% of those registered took part in the referendum.⁴⁰ This does not augur well for Africa's longest multiparty democracy. Participation in the electoral process is lower than in countries in the SADC region that have recently introduced multiparty democracy.⁴¹

Mpabanga⁴² identified a number of factors which contribute to apathy. These include, among others: the electoral system; an inactive civil society; the use of national identity cards; the media; socio-economic factors; organisation of political parties, especially opposition parties; and a youth that does not actively participate in politics. After realising the negative impact of the problem to Botswana's democracy, the IEC following the 1999 elections commissioned the Democracy Research Project (DRP) of the University of Botswana in 2001 to conduct a study on voter apathy. The main function of the study was to spell out the forces that contribute to voter apathy and to come up with ways of addressing the problem. The DRP study identified four factors that contribute to voter apathy, namely: the electoral system that allows a disproportionate relationship between votes and seats; constitutional exclusion of a large number of people who are expected to be politically neutral and non-partisan; lack of funding for political parties which limits the opposition parties to reach out to all voters countrywide; and absence of fixed terms of office for members of parliament (MPs) and councillors.⁴³

Financial constraints have a bearing on the administration of elections. Although Botswana has abundant resources, elections are generally a costly exercise; and the expenses have risen with every election. In preparation for the 1999 general election the IEC expended around P19 million for the period between 1 April 1998 and 12 November 1999.

'Considerable expenses were incurred on the acquisition of materials, supplies, personal emoluments and other election related activities/services including registration exercises, voter education workshops, and advertising and publicity.'⁴⁴

For the 2004 elections, the IEC claimed that it had sufficient funds to acquire all the materials and run the elections.⁴⁵

The problem of voter apathy contributes to the rising costs of conducting elections in Botswana as the IEC has to spend much money on voter education. Since its establishment in 1998, the IEC has invested a lot of money in voter education aimed at teaching people about the importance of elections, and encouraging them to register and vote in elections. *Kgotla* meetings were held to teach people about the electoral process. For the 2004 elections, the IEC conducted voter education in partnership with local and external assistance. For example, the IEC spearheaded the voter education programme with the assistance of local CSOs. With the financial support of FES, the IEC conducted a faith sector workshop to reach out to churches so that they could impress upon their followers the need to vote. Similarly, with financial sponsorship from the British High Commission and the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, drama performances took place at various locations throughout the country. The British High Commission is said to have financed 14 such drama programmes.⁴⁶

In spite of all these efforts at combating apathy, some voters remained doubtful about casting their ballots a few days prior to actual voting. For example, despite having registered, some possible voters interviewed by *Mmegi* newspaper⁴⁷ a few days before polling did not know when the actual day of polling was. One of the possible voters interviewed by *Mmegi* pointed out that he might not vote because politicians fail to deliver on promises they make to the electorate. Generally, people are disinterested in politics partly because they perceive politicians, irrespective of party affiliation, as self-seeking individuals. This shows that many people do not know the value of a vote, partly explaining why apathy is such a big problem in Botswana. This suggests that much voter education still needs to be done. However, the IEC reported that there has been improvement in voter turnout as 76% of registered voters cast their vote in the 2004 general elections.⁴⁸

Similarly, voting for residents outside the country was prohibitive. External voting was held on 16 October 2004. Of the 2,430 external voters, only 1,207 managed to cast their votes.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, the IEC partly due to resource constraints could not provide as many polling stations as it did internally. This led to complaints by voters, especially in the US who were availed of only two polling stations, which proved too few for voters scattered across the vast country.

POLITICAL PARTIES

CHARACTER OF MULTIPARTYISM

Botswana's multiparty system is characterised as a dominant one-party system with a multiplicity of registered opposition parties numbering 12. This partly explains why the ruling BDP has been returned to power at every election with a substantive majority since independence, as well as the lack of alternation in government. The perpetual winning of every election by the BDP has contributed to voter apathy in that opposition supporters see the electoral process as closed, with little chance of their parties forming government. Similarly, apathy can be explained by the fact that once voters convince themselves that the BDP will win anyway they are bound to refrain from voting. The dominance of the BDP was demonstrated by the fact that more than a month before the national elections, the BDP had already secured one parliamentary seat and nine council seats as its candidates were unopposed.⁵⁰ The ruling BDP's strong resources, both financial and organisational, are no match for opposition parties, giving it advantages in electoral campaigning, in the provision of a party manifesto, as well as in terms of mobilising voters and sponsoring candidates in all constituencies.⁵¹

The opposition parties include the BNF, BCP, BAM, NDF, BPP, the United Socialist Party (USP), MELS, BLP and Kgarametsa One Time. The opposition is weak, fragmented and ineffective primarily because they are many, small and prone to splinters prior to and after every election.⁵² Most of the splits are from the BNF, which was once seen as the major opposition party. For example, the BCP and NDF are break-away parties from the BNF. The absence of public funding of elections further disadvantages the opposition giving rise to the need to level the political field for fair competition. These factors, together with apathy and good economic management by the BDP, have prevented the opposition from mounting an effective electoral opposition to the ruling party and have contributed to a steady decline in voter support for the opposition.

The issue of public funding is said to partly determine the nature of Botswana's multiparty system as lack of resources undermines the opposition by weakening their organisational and campaign capability. Moreover,

according to the IEC,⁵³ lack of public funds leads to leaders owning parties and poor party governance. Sebudubudu⁵⁴ argues that the ruling party has access to more sources of funding while opposition parties are under-resourced and depend on unreliable sources of funds. The opposition parties have through the All Party Conference and direct appeals to the president pressured for the introduction of public funding. However, the BDP has so far resisted as it has plentiful resources and benefits the most from the current arrangement. Part III, Section 80 of the Electoral Act Chapter 02:09 covers election expenses which are not expected to exceed P50,000 per candidate, once an election writ has been issued, but does not provide for funding of political parties. The IEC admitted that it monitors only election expenses that have been declared by the candidates to the returning officer.⁵⁵ In addition, compared to past elections there have been no revelations of any party receiving external funds for electoral campaigns for the 2004 elections.

Apathy affects the ruling party as well. The current trend points to a general dissatisfaction on the part of voters with the representative role of almost all politicians (except the president who received a positive rating according to the Afro Barometer research). Most people interviewed by local newspapers expressed the view that they would not exercise their right to vote in the 2004 elections. Primarily, politicians' pursuance of selfish interests at the expense of public concerns – which in essence means that there is no representation of voters – has been cited by most interviewees.⁵⁶

Seven parties contested the 2004 elections, which gave voters choices in terms of party policies and candidates. The ruling BDP had candidates in all the 57 constituencies, as has been the practice in every election, and had the maximum number of candidates for all 490 council seats. Two major opposition parties fielded the highest number of candidates. Of the 57 constituencies, the number of contestants ranged from 54 for the Pact, 50 for BCP, 12 for NDF, and four for MELS.⁵⁷ In the 1999 elections, opposition parties (BCP and BNF) put up candidates for 38 of the 40 seats, the rest of the opposition parties had less than half of the required contestants. As in 1999, four presidential candidates (indirectly elected by MPs) were nominated in the 2004 elections: F Mogae by the BDP; O Koosaletse by the BCP; O Moupo by the Pact; and D Bayford by the NDF. These might signify that the organisational and financial capacity of opposition parties has improved

tremendously, and hence their confidence in securing enough seats to form the next government. The huge billboards and posters mounted by some opposition parties, especially some BCP candidates in the Gaborone area, in competition with those of the BDP suggest some improvement in their financial and organisational capability relative to past election years.

For the first time in Botswana's electoral history three things have happened: more parties have presented their manifestos to the electorate; the electoral alliance of opposition parties has remained united; and the media has covered electoral campaigns of all political parties. The BDP, BCP, the Pact and NDF were able to present their manifestos to the electorate for the 2004 elections. However, it was only the BDP which was able to produce enough copies of manifestos to circulate throughout the country⁵⁸ and had both English and Tswana versions. In the 1999 elections, only two other parties produced manifestos, while before then all opposition parties failed to do so.

The BDP 2004 manifesto had the motto 'There is *still* no alternative' to persuade voters to return it to power once again. The BDP manifesto highlighted the achievements of the past five years in terms of high economic growth rates, high GDP per capita, reduced numbers (per cent) of people living below the poverty datum line, decline in unemployment and inflation and best investment grade credit rating.

Promises for 2004-2009, that reflect the ideals of Vision 2016, include: building an educated and informed nation; a prosperous, productive and innovative nation; a compassionate, just and caring nation; a safe and secure nation; an open, democratic and accountable nation; and a moral, tolerant, united and proud nation. To achieve these goals, the BDP manifesto outlined policies of education and training, corporate and public sector collaboration for sustainable economic growth, development and diversification in agriculture and manufacturing, strategies to fight HIV/AIDS, elimination of crime and violence, good and accountable governance, and Botho, respectively. Specifically, the BDP hoped to achieve these goals through self-reliance, performance measurement, public sector reforms, economic diversification, accountable governance and resource mobilisation.⁵⁹ In short, the BDP aimed to continue the current trend of economic growth and development and to tackle socio-economic problems.

PARTY MANIFESTOS

Manifestos of major opposition parties – the BCP, the Pact and NDF – start off by highlighting the shortcomings and failures of the BDP government, and all claim that they could do better than the ruling BDP and that they champion the poor by emphasising the need to tackle poverty, income inequality and unemployment. By identifying these negative outcomes of the BDP government's economic policies, the opposition parties hoped to portray it as a failure in order to woo voters to their side. The BCP used the pledge: 'Botswana can and must be better'; the Pact: 'Together we shall deliver'; while the NDF had no specific pledge. The BCP manifesto had four priorities: education, economy and job creation; HIV / AIDS; eradication of poverty; and change of the electoral system to a mixture of FPTP and PR. The party aimed to provide free and compulsory education, promote economic development, reduce HIV infections and provide care and treatment, and amelioration of poverty. These aims are expected to be realised through such policies as free universal education, foreign investment–local business partnerships for economic growth and sustainable development in agriculture and manufacturing, HIV / AIDS policy, agricultural and rural development, and electoral reform.⁶⁰

The Pact manifesto focused on problems of national unity, governance, economic development, education, HIV / AIDS and the electoral system. The Pact hoped to follow the following policies: cultural; good governance; accountability and transparency; private sector investment and citizen empowerment for sustained economic growth and development centred on agriculture and manufacturing; free compulsory education; HIV / AIDS; and electoral reform to introduce a proportional system.⁶¹ The NDF manifesto concerned itself with HIV / AIDS, education, the economy, governance and electoral politics. These issue areas were expected to be tackled through such policies as free public programmes against HIV / AIDS, free and compulsory education, foreign investor–state agencies' collaboration aided by planning and cooperative movement with a focus on agriculture, accountability, and electoral reform based on a mix of FPTP and PR.

The manifestos have one thing in common: all parties aspire for national unity, greater economic growth and sustainable development for Botswana. This means that all parties are agreed on the national priorities of nation

building and economic progress. All of them identify the same pressing problems, such as HIV/AIDS, poverty and unemployment, as requiring urgent attention. They also agree on the need for both public and private sector partnerships in economic diversification and development, international assistance and public sector reform. However, the parties differ in terms of strategy and emphasis. The BDP leans more on market forces, hence the preference for privatisation and liberalisation, while opposition parties emphasise more the state or public participation, with the NDF stressing the importance of 'cooperative enterprises, corporatised state owned enterprises, price control mechanisms, guided planning', and the BCP's strategy is one that involves 'partnership with workers, communities and business, and cooperatives in service delivery, especially housing'.⁶² However, the Pact is not very different from the BDP with the preference for 'private sector investment'.⁶³

While the BDP manifesto is silent on electoral process, all opposition parties have made it their priority. For example, the Pact manifesto proposed to 'introduce a system of proportional representation' whereby political parties 'will gain seats in the national assembly in proportion to their numerical strength', thereby guaranteeing 'political stability and national consensus' because the system is inclusive.⁶⁴ The BCP and NDF manifestos did not call for a radical change of the electoral system. Instead, they proposed a blend of the FPTP and PR electoral systems.⁶⁵

Moreover, unlike in the 1999 election when the BAM (an electoral alliance of opposition parties) failed to co-opt the BNF (a major opposition party) to contest elections on a common platform, in the 2004 elections the Pact remained coherent with a single presidential candidate and an agreed upon distribution of constituencies for each Pact member – although favourable to the BNF with a total of 41 out of 54⁶⁶ – and fielded the highest number of candidates relative to other opposition parties.

WOMEN AND YOUTH REPRESENTATION

Women remain important to the electoral process as they constitute the majority of voters, supporters and attendees at political rallies of all political parties. There were 230,000 women registered voters compared to 200,000 men in the 2004 elections. The ruling BDP and major opposition parties have

women's and youth wings of their respective parties. The BDP, BNF and BCP have replica structures of their parties at the highest institution of learning, the University of Botswana, namely, GS 26, Mass and UBCD, respectively. Student politics at the university and election campaigns there are largely shaped by these party structures.⁶⁷ However, women and the youth are under-represented in electoral contests. Women and youth candidates were few for all political parties as only a small number are encouraged by parties and CSOs to contest elections. The 2004 elections had fewer women and youth candidates compared to previous elections, with the BDP fielding the highest number, eight women, BCP two, BNF two, MELS one, and none for the remaining parties. There were a measly 16 women out of a total of 178 parliamentary candidates. The BDP has the youngest councillor who just turned 23 in 2004. The few women parliamentary candidates also means that they are under-represented in parliament. The 1999 election returned more women winners as MPs: six under the BDP ticket and two were specially elected to parliament by the president. This brought the total number of directly elected and specially elected women MPs to eight out of 46. The opposition parties are yet to have a woman elected as an MP. More women and youth candidates and winners of elections are found at the lower level, council wards, for all political parties.

The marginalisation of women and youth candidates is strongly rooted in the patriarchal culture of society in Botswana which excludes them from politics and is reinforced by intra-party democratic dispensation – the primary elections. For example, where women contest the same constituency during primary elections, as in the case of the BDP prior to the 2004 elections, one woman loses thereby lessening the number of women candidates. The fact that the media has to date failed to give special coverage to female candidates' campaigns or to interview them, further reinforces their marginalised situation. The head of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Botswana, admitted on national television that his organisation had not yet covered women candidates; instead the focus had been on male candidates of all political parties. In addition, more coverage by the media had been given to the BDP campaigns than those of opposition parties.⁶⁸ The same treatment accorded to women candidates by the media applies to young candidates.

The youth are essential to political parties as they form the bulk of cadres and are instrumental in the distribution of campaign materials. However, youth participation in electoral politics has been low primarily because the young are supposed to submit to their elders in every aspect of social relations in Tswana culture,⁶⁹ general disinterest in politics among the young and unwillingness by the youth to accept responsibilities associated with political participation. The (misplaced) optimism for increased youth participation in electoral politics with the lowering of the voting age to 18 from 21 soon faded. The 1999 elections that allowed 18 year olds to vote showed that the youth did not participate in large numbers, much to the disappointment of opposition parties which believed that they had massive support among this generation. In addition, the absence of issue politics in Botswana also accounts for under-representation of women and youth as electoral candidates and their under-representation in parliament. Issues such as gender inequality, youth concerns, unemployment, human rights or poverty have never been central to Botswana's elections. This partly explains the inability of civil society to actively participate in politics through alignment with or supporting any one party.

THE MEDIA

Unlike previous elections, the media coverage of electoral campaigns was more accommodating of opposition parties during the 2004 elections. The public media in Botswana is owned and controlled by the government, which determines the type and amount of information the media can disseminate to the public countrywide. The minister of Information and Technology has the overall say over the operations of both public and private media. In the past elections, the public media, radio stations, television and the *Daily News* newspaper have been accused of bias towards the BDP at the neglect of opposition parties. Even in between elections, the public media was allowed to cover only the president and chair of the BDP in their official capacity. Since the two carry out both government and party duties, this is to the advantage of the ruling party, but the opposition have strenuously objected to their exclusion from public media coverage.

It is the private media which is seen as covering opposition campaigns and is instrumental in exposing scandals committed by BDP officials; for example, the land commission and recent reports of financial woes of the BDP's

secretary-general. However, there were times when the government influenced the stories covered by the private media through its threats to withdraw advertisements from those which carried harsh stories about the government and the party, and even threatened to sue the private press. Narrow circulation and the use of the English language limit the role of the private press as appropriate sources for opposition parties to transmit their ideas to voters. More recently there have been protestations from opposition parties and calls for the private media to censor their editors and reporters alleged to have commercial links to the ruling government and biased against opposition parties in their media coverage. To avoid and respond to opposition parties' criticisms and accusation of monopoly by the BDP, the government allowed the public media to cover both the ruling and opposition parties. For example, radio discussions took place involving candidates of all political parties to address their respective constituents, Botswana Television news broadcast rallies of both the ruling and opposition parties as well as debates cum presentation of views by representatives of most political parties, and the *Daily News* covered opposition parties' activities. However, the BDP remains the most covered party and male candidates the most publicised.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND ELECTIONS

Elections in Botswana have not been characterised by violence. This is largely attributed to the Tswana culture which does not condone extremes. Holm⁷⁰ argues that the Tswana culture rests on consensus, which is based on non-violence and moderation, community consensus and public discussion. This underlies Botswana's democratic political culture and consolidation of democracy.

Although conflicts are not yet part of elections in Botswana, there have been incidents of confrontations between parties during election campaigns. For example, in the last few days before the 2004 elections the BDP accused certain opposition parties, especially the NDF, of intolerance over the use of a freedom square (*Diswinking*) in Gaborone South Constituency. The BDP reported this matter to the IEC; however, the IEC has no powers to deal with such cases. The BDP also brought the matter to the attention of the SADC observer team. A similar incident occurred in 1999 when members of the BNF clashed with BDP supporters over the use of the same freedom square.⁷¹ Gaborone South is one area where the opposition, particularly the BNF, has a large following. The BNF has won this constituency since 1984 following an election petition, and the ruling BDP has not been able to reclaim the constituency since then. Confrontations (which do not result in loss of life or injury) regarding the use of freedom squares are compounded by the fact that political parties do not require a police permit to hold a political rally once a writ of elections has been issued. Before the writ is issued, political parties are required to apply for a police permit to hold a political rally and the police permits regulate the schedules of political rallies and normally do not allow rallies to go beyond 6 pm. However, once a writ has been issued, rallies can go on into the night. Even then, serious clashes have not been reported as political parties have generally cooperated over the use of freedom squares.

An electoral conflict is mainly dealt with through the court process whenever it arises. The Constitution of Botswana and the Electoral Act provide mechanisms for conflict management and resolution between and after elections, especially the High Court that handles electoral petitions. In terms of section 116 of the Electoral Act:

‘a petition complaining of an undue return or an undue election of a Member for any constituency by reason of want of qualification or by reason of disqualification, corrupt or illegal practice, irregularity, or by reason of any other cause whatsoever, may be presented to the High Court’.⁷²

Since independence, the High Court has dealt with a number of election petitions but re-elections were ordered in a few of them. The Gaborone South and Mochudi parliamentary petitions in 1984 and 1989 respectively are some of the few and most interesting petitions where the election results were set aside. Once the results are declared null and void, a fresh election is held. Furthermore, in terms of section 113 of the Electoral Act no one is allowed to campaign or wear his/her party colours on polling day.

The IEC also provides a mechanism for conflict management through the establishment of party liaison committees (PLCs) at district level, and has conducted a conflict management workshop for political parties. The PLCs are ad hoc structures of the IEC designed to deal with complaints during elections. The PLCs, initiated at the All Party Conference in 2000, are made up of two representatives of a registered political party, principal election officers, district commissioners, council secretaries, city/town clerks and returning officers in respective constituencies as ex-officio members. Primarily, the PLCs are forums for dialogue between the IEC and political parties and they function as mini conflict management committees at district level. There are three main objectives of the PLCs, namely: to promote a cordial relationship between the IEC and political parties and among political parties; to promote transparency in the administration of free and fair elections; and to enhance the integrity of the electoral process, increase voter confidence and participation in elections. The main topics discussed by the PLCs include delimitation of constituencies, demarcation of polling districts and identification of polling stations, preparations for voter registration, the issuing and inspection of voters’ rolls, preparations for general and by-elections, procedures for by-elections and de-briefings at the end of elections. The PLCs also undertake such activities as capacity building for parties, voter education and report outcomes of dispute resolutions to the Liaison Dispute Resolution Committee and the IEC secretary.⁷³ It is too early to make a conclusive assessment of the PLCs as they are still in their infancy.

A conflict management workshop for all political parties was held in April 2003 and it covered the following topics: democracy; elections; electoral role players; understanding conflict; developing personal conflict management skills; strategies for effective conflict management; and rigging and fraud. The purpose of the workshop was to impart conflict management skills to all parties as a means of dealing with, lessening and preventing inter-party conflict.⁷⁴

The All Party Conference provides some mechanism for pre-empting and managing electoral conflicts. Its importance lies in the fact that it discusses issues of concern to political parties in between elections. It could be an effective indirect conflict resolution mechanism if it is used to promote compromise among all parties for mutual benefit. However, the 2004 All Party Conference demonstrated that the structure, although important, has not been used in the most effective way. The July 2004 All Party Conference, which was boycotted by the major opposition parties, was called to recommend names of possible election commissioners. One of the reasons why the main opposition parties refused to participate in the 2004 meeting was that the government had rejected all the proposals put before the 2000 All Party meeting. The proposals included, among others, enhancing the independence of the IEC, reforming the electoral system, funding of political parties, direct elections of the president and counting of ballots at polling stations. Nevertheless, the meeting went ahead with three political parties participating: the ruling BDP and two smaller opposition parties, the MELS and BLP. It was these three parties which elected the current members of the IEC. The basic problem is that the constitution does not provide for a quorum and the number of parties that should take part in All Party meetings.⁷⁵ In this respect, the 2004 All Party Conference did not violate the law.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND ELECTIONS

In a democracy, civil society organisations (CSOs) are the instruments of mobilisation and promotion of voter participation. Civic and voter education is the primary responsibility of CSOs in order to nurture and sustain democratic practices. Similarly, interest groups are there to champion the interests and demands of their members to political leaders. Ouyang⁷⁶ identifies functions of civil society as a supplement to functions performed by political parties in a democracy. These functions include: limiting and checking state power; encouraging political participation; developing democratic values; articulating, aggregating and representing different societal interests; recruiting and training new political leaders; monitoring elections; and disseminating information to citizens.

Given the overlap in the functions of interest groups and political parties, the two normally work together in a democratic system. However, such a working relationship does not obtain in Botswana prior to, during or after elections.

As observed by many authors, Botswana is a democracy with a weak and de-politicised civil society. The level of involvement of civil society groups in politics is therefore generally dismal at best, such that there is a 'lack of full participation by civil society in electoral politics. ... civic organisations in Botswana ... vigorously protect their non-political orientation and hardly take part in the electoral process'.⁷⁷ There is no working relationship between civil society groups and political parties as each shuns the other, preferring mutual exclusion from each other's turf as a means of separating civil matters and politics. For example, trade unions such as the National Amalgamated Local and Central Government and Parastatal Manual Workers' Union (NALCGPMWU) and the Botswana Federation of Secondary Teachers (BOFESETE) refrain from playing a 'visible role in [the] electoral process. The former even went to the extent of dissuading the BCP member of parliament from pushing a motion in parliament that would have advanced their cause for [a] wage increase'.⁷⁸ BOFESETE was at one time reported in the local media as supporting the BCP, a claim which was vehemently denied by the former.

The fact that the majority of Tswanas (73%) are not members of CSOs dilutes the importance of these organisations in the electoral process.⁷⁹ The tradition is that there is lack of political discussion among members of associations. Data indicates that 44% of members never discussed politics and only three per cent were involved in regular political discussions.⁸⁰ Similarly, data shows that churches in Botswana separate spiritual and political spheres to the extent that they refrain from making announcements about elections regarding registration, attending political rallies and voting in national elections. A survey indicated that 43% of respondents stated that their churches never make announcements about elections or voting.⁸¹

There are some pressure groups that have been marginally engaged in the electoral process as election observers, but not as active participants as contenders, sponsors of candidates or mobilisers of voters. These include Ditshwanelo, the Botswana Centre for Human Rights and MISA-Botswana. Ditshwanelo aims to protect its neutrality by claiming that it does not 'sell human rights for votes'.⁸² MISA-Botswana encourages its members to be non-partisan observers in the electoral process. The nearest Ditshwanelo became involved in the 2004 electoral politics was when it joined non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the HIV / AIDS sector and opposition parties in calling for a withdrawal of the BDP's HIV / AIDS patient billboards that portray the BDP as a caring party. Ditshwanelo and other NGOs as well as opposition parties opposed the BDP's use of anti-retroviral drugs to gain political advantage over rivals and accused it of 'politicising a national disaster'.⁸³ The BDP remained unperturbed by such accusations, arguing instead that it was the 'political will and bold leadership' of the ruling party that has allowed Botswana to have a rigorous HIV / AIDS awareness campaign and access to anti-retroviral drugs in public hospitals and clinics, and promised to put up more such billboards.⁸⁴

A third group of civic organisations has actively participated in the electoral process, especially in the last two general elections. It is Emang Basadi, a women's group which to date has been the most active in politics and has benefited the most from its lobbying and pressure group efforts; and the Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC). Emang Basadi and the BNYC have been visible in the electoral process by encouraging their members to contest political office, articulating and presenting members' issues and

concerns for possible adoption on agendas of political parties, and urging their members to register and vote.⁸⁵ However, none of its leadership has contested elections. Emang Basadi has to date produced two manifestos in the 1994 and 1999 elections prior to release of manifestos by political parties. Through manifestos Emang Basadi hoped to influence political parties into championing women's issues and concerns. In 2003 it organised empowering workshops for aspiring women candidates of all political parties in primary elections. The BNYC sensitised members and mobilised resources for voter education programmes. Some young people were trained as voter educators and mobilisers of other youth to participate in elections. In addition, in 2003 the BNYC organised five empowerment workshops to educate young politicians from all political parties on how to run for political office.⁸⁶

Interestingly, it is the ruling BDP – considered to be conservative relative to opposition parties – which has positively responded to the lobbying by both Emang Basadi and the BNYC by incorporating more women and young candidates on its party platform. The opposition parties have not been very receptive primarily because they view

'activities of Emang Basadi and BNYC [as] destabilising. By encouraging more women and youths to stand for electoral office, Emang Basadi and BNYC were posing threats to the veteran opposition men who had never won a parliamentary seat and yet had worked hard to sustain pluralism in the political system.'⁸⁷

It is largely due to lobbying by Emang Basadi that women's representation in politics and decision-making positions has improved over time. The 1999 elections brought in the largest number of elected women in parliament. Women made up the six directly elected MPs on the BDP ticket and two specially chosen by the president. The total was eight women, all for the BDP, with none for the opposition parties; an improvement to that of the 1994 elections which produced only three women MPs for the BDP. Moreover, a considerable number of women were appointed to top cabinet and civil service positions as ministers (two), assistant ministers (two), permanent secretaries (three) and as governor of the Bank of Botswana.⁸⁸ For the 2004 elections, the BDP fielded six female candidates, four of whom won elections

(three incumbent MPs and one new) and two of whom lost at the polls. This number increased as a result of nominations of the specially elected MPs and appointments to the new cabinet of the BDP. The opposition had few women candidates: two for the BCP and four for the Pact (all of them BNF), and one each for the NDF and MELS, all of whom did not win.

The BDP government has been a major contributor to the financial needs of the BNYC. For example, during 2003/4, the BNYC received an annual grant of P5,931,640 from the government, part of which went to other youth NGOs.⁸⁹ More importantly, to date it is the BDP which has accommodated a large number of young candidates. For example, in the 1999 elections new and relatively young MPs for the BDP numbered 15, with only three for the BNF.⁹⁰ Young men also formed part of the cabinet after the 1999 elections as ministers. This suggests that there is room for turnover in the BDP as opposed to opposition parties where the old guard clings to the party. However, this does not suggest that Emang Basadi and the BNYC have been able to reduce gender and age imbalances in political contests. The adoption of primary elections by political parties as the means for selecting candidates lessens chances for more women and young candidates to be chosen. Primary elections preclude the use of deliberate gender and age balancing by the party executive in the selection of candidates.

Interest group politics is not yet the norm in Botswana's democracy. This explains why very few civic organisations actively participate in electoral politics. Lobby groups, especially Emang Basadi, have been relatively conspicuously inactive in electoral politics in the run up to the 2004 elections as they were prior to the 1994 and 1999 elections. CSOs have been largely absent from civic education and training workshops for aspiring women and youth candidates, and did not sell their manifestos to political parties in the 2004 elections. This could be attributed to a combination of loss of leadership which has been absorbed into high-ranking positions in the government structure, decline in the flow of donor assistance to NGOs, organisational deficiencies, cynicism within civic organs and general apathy.

The majority of CSOs believe that distancing themselves from politics best serves their interests as they are able to maximise their appeal to all parties (especially legislators) on issues of interest to their membership.

In the absence of a strong role by civil society in civic education, the government took up this function for the 2004 elections. The government, through the IEC, played an important voter education role with the release of a CD encouraging voters to vote, holding *kgotla* meetings and workshops for civic leaders (especially religious leaders) to convince them not to discard their apolitical stance, and extending the registration of voters. All these measures were in part to fight against public apathy towards elections. The IEC also organised a leaders' training workshop for all political parties.

Interest group politics is not the yet norm. This explains why no or very few organisations actively participate in electoral politics. CSOs were largely absent from civic education, training workshops for women and youth candidates, and the sale of manifestos (issues) to political parties in the 2004 elections. The near absence of CSOs could be attributed to a combination of loss of leadership and donor assistance, organisational deficiency and apathy.

ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

Electoral outcomes are largely shaped by the electoral system and the way elections are administered. The ninth multiparty elections were contested by five parties (the BCP, BDP, MELS, NDF and the Pact) on 30 October 2004 and produced a truly overwhelming winner. The BDP won 44 seats and the remaining 13 for the opposition went to the BNF (12) and the BCP (1). Similarly, the BDP won handsomely at council level. The rest of the opposition did not win any seats at either parliamentary or council level (see Table 1).

The win by the BDP is predictable at every election; however, predictions underestimated winning margins for the BDP for the 2004 elections. The *Midweek Sun*⁹¹ had predicted that the BDP would win 36 seats with the Pact and BCP winning 18 and three seats respectively. The *Monitor*⁹² had also predicted that the BDP would win at least 38 seats. Earlier in May/June 2004, the DRP of the University of Botswana had conducted a survey which suggested that the BDP would win the 2004 elections with 'a landslide'. The BDP was to win 17 of the 18 constituencies in which the survey was conducted, with the BNF winning only one constituency.⁹³ The 'landslide' is closer to the actual outcome of elections: 44 seats is incredible given the conflicts which beset the party as a result of Bulelwa Ditswe and the general dissatisfaction with the government's performance regarding unemployment and poverty.

In actual fact, the BDP won handsomely in areas such as Francistown which are largely affected by Bulelwa Ditswe. The biggest loss for the BDP was the three cabinet ministers who failed to win the elections: one female and two male. Similarly, the BDP failed to win in areas where there were labour problems prior to the elections, such as in Jwaneng where there was a miners' strike. The miners' strike worked to the advantage of the BNF which won the seat and 12 of the 16 council wards in Ngwaketse West, where one of the ministers lost his seat.

The BNF was confirmed once again as the country's major opposition party and the BCP as a one parliamentary seat party – the same number it won in the 1999 elections. However, the opposition BNF failed to capture even the

Table 1: Elections outcomes in Botswana, 1965- 2004

Party	1965	1969	1974	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004
BDP	28	24	27	29	29	31	27	33	44
BNF	-	3	2	2	4	3	13	6	12
BPP	3	3	2	1	1	0	0	-	0
BIP	0	1	1	0	0	0	-	-	-
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
BCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
MELS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
NDF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
TOTAL SEATS	31	31	32	32	34	34	40	40	57
% OF SEATS									
BDP	90	77	84.4	91	85	91	67.5	82.5	77
BNF	-	10	6.3	6	12	9	32.5	15	21
BPP	10	10	6.3	3	3	0	0	-	-
BIP	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	-	-
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
BCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.5	2
MELS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
NDF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Adapted and recalculated from D Mpabanga, Declining voter participation in Botswana: Trends and patterns, 2000, p 49; Botswana Guardian, 5 November 2004; IEC, Elections 2004, <<http://www.iec.gov.bw/>>.

13 seats it won in the 1999 elections, while the increase in the total number of contested seats further diluted the win of 12 out of 57 seats. The biggest lesson for the opposition is that lack of unity resulting in the existence of many opposition parties strengthened and guaranteed a win for the ruling party. It is therefore imperative for all opposition parties to band together as one through an electoral alliance to boost electoral support. The experience of the Pact, which did not embrace all opposition parties, testifies to this and strengthens the need to present an effective and credible challenge to the BDP. For example, combined votes for the opposition in 23 constituencies were more than that for the BDP, which if translated into real votes would have given the opposition more seats in parliament. The opposition could have won in 12 more constituencies if they had not split the vote. However, electoral alliance and electoral reform alone are no panacea and would not guarantee a win for the opposition as they suffer from credibility problems in the eyes of voters.

More importantly, the opposition parties were humbled by the fact that none of the three presidential hopefuls for the BCP, the Pact or the NDF was able to win in the constituency each was contesting – all three lost to the BDP. Their loss also raised questions about their leadership credentials in the eyes of the people. The fact that the presidential hopefuls suffered electoral defeat meant that the leader of the opposition in parliament would not be the president of the opposition party, but was delegated to one of the winning MPs. A Magama, a BNF MP, is the Leader of the Opposition in the House. Only K Koma, then leader of the BNF, won his constituency and held the leadership of the opposition in parliament after the 1984 elections until 1998. He continued to be the leader of the opposition in parliament after he won a seat in the 1999 elections until 2002. In contrast, F Mogae was declared the winner (for his second term of office) by the Chief Justice when the BDP had secured 32 of the 57 seats.

The opposition usually does well at local government level winning more seats in the councils, especially urban ones. The 2004 elections saw the BNF scoop most of the council seats, including in areas which experienced labour unrest and in Khama's stronghold, Serowe, where the opposition won a council seat for the first time in Botswana's electoral history. The BNF won all the council seats in Gaborone South. This gives the impression that the

opposition is making inroads. However, there were certain areas where the BDP was predominant, such as in Tonota South where it won all the 10 council seats with substantive margins.⁹⁴

It is important to note that the predominant win of the BDP points to the fact that people's votes are not largely shaped by past performance of a party (which the opposition portrayed in a negative light to woo voters), but by a combination of party loyalty and identification, delimitation of constituencies, ideological orientation, and source of support, whether regional, urban or rural, men or women. Results of the 2004 elections indicate that the BDP enjoys wide support primarily due to its inclusiveness of men and women, old and young, and countrywide constituency support. The control and winning of the central district, which is the traditional stronghold of the BDP and has the most constituencies, is critical to the BDP's electoral dominance.

While the FPTP electoral system ensures a stable government and representation for each constituency and ward, it has its own disadvantages. The winner-takes-all system guarantees a stable government by the BDP as it has done in past elections, with majority in parliament. With control of parliament, the BDP can pass with ease any bill without much challenge from opposition parties whose combined strength in parliament is slightly less than a quarter.

The predominance of the BDP is largely due to the electoral system which favours the winner and excludes the losers, mostly opposition parties, and punishes women candidates the hardest because they do not fair well at the polls. This means that the electoral system is not fair to losers as they receive nothing or fewer seats for votes received.

For example, the BDP received 53% of votes and earned 77% representation in parliament, the BNF won 23% of the vote and was allocated 21% of the parliamentary seats, while the BCP received 18% of the vote and was allocated only one per cent of the seats in parliament.⁹⁵ However, an opposition party if sufficiently strong and effective in challenging the ruling party can win elections under the FPTP electoral system, as examples within the SADC region illustrate (for instance Zambia).

Women did not perform well in the 2004 elections. Four of the six BDP women candidates emerged victorious. The four represent a decline compared to the six in the 1999 elections. The opposition, which presented four women candidates for the Pact (all for BNF), two for the BCP and one for MELS, had no female winner. Women performed miserably as well in the council elections as only 74 of the council seats were won by women from all political parties out of a total of 490;⁹⁶ a reflection of voters' preference for males. These results indicate two things: that Botswana is regressing in terms of promotion of gender equality; and that efforts of women's lobby groups are not bearing much fruit, which does not augur well for democracy, and is lagging far behind the 30% SADC requirement of women in political and decision-making positions by 2005.⁹⁷ The four out of 57 MPs represent only nine per cent of the total. The results suggest that like their women counterparts in Africa, Botswana's women are constrained by two important factors: patriarchal culture and lack of resources. Male domination of political power, including party structures, underlies the subordination of women in politics. This is compounded by the fact that women need a man's support to enter politics, and lack of resources to finance elections.⁹⁸ Fatton⁹⁹ sums up the general women's situation succinctly: 'Women's access to state resources and hence class power hinges upon her male linkages' and that 'women ... lack the political and material autonomy that transforms individuals into full citizens'.

The fewer numbers of female compared to male candidates in Botswana who are allowed to contest elections narrows their chance of success at the polls. To increase numbers of women candidates and their representation in parliament, parties could avoid women competing against each other during primary elections mainly because it goes against the essence of sisterhood as the basis of women's solidarity, or offer them safe constituencies. Until all parties in Botswana deliberately create more room for women candidates, electoral reform would not help their chances of winning or widening female representatives in parliament. Women contestants, from both the ruling and opposition parties, admitted that few women engage in political competition because women have been socialised into believing that politics is for emotionally strong and tough people (men), and they lack financial resources. Venson, a winner on the BDP ticket, is quoted as saying that 'politics ... can tax one emotionally ... is very trying', and that 'women running for political

office largely depend on their spouses to finance campaigns'.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the FPTP electoral system punishes women severely as they constitute the most losers, often polling second or third to the winning candidates. This suggests that FPTP is not fair to female contenders. Data indicates that countries with the highest number of female parliamentarians, such as South Africa and Mozambique, utilise a PR electoral system.¹⁰¹

The election results also revealed that most parties had registered a decline in the popular vote, with the major opposition party recording a significant drop. For example, the BDP's support declined from 192,598 votes in the 1999 elections to 192,020 in the 2004 elections, a drop of 578 votes. The BNF vote fell from 87,457 in the 1999 elections to 84,987 in the 2004 elections, a huge difference of 24,470. It is only the BCP which increased its votes from 40,096 in 1999 to 63,911 in the 2004 elections, an increase of 23,815.¹⁰²

Voter apathy continued to plague Botswana's elections, which might suggest that the enormous efforts by the IEC at voter education and supplementary registration of voters did not pay dividends. Of the estimated 920,000 eligible voters, 552,849 registered to vote; however, only 421,272 cast their vote for 56 constituencies, as one constituency was unopposed.¹⁰³ At least the number of registered voters – 552,849 – surpassed that of 1999 which stood at 459,662.¹⁰⁴ In this respect, the IEC efforts at voter education and extended registration had a positive impact.

Independent candidates did not fair well at the polls as none of the two independent candidates secured a victory. Only one independent candidate at the council level managed to win. This was more an exception than the norm, and shows that voters prefer candidates standing on party tickets than independents. Independent candidates are not common to Botswana's electoral history.

The president nominated the vice president and four specially elected members of parliament, which were readily endorsed by the BDP parliamentary caucus and the BDP-dominated parliament. The first special parliamentary session was convened ahead of schedule for this purpose. Ian Khama was readily endorsed by parliament in spite of initial fears that one faction of the BDP might protest his appointment:¹⁰⁵ Khama received 44

votes with 13 abstentions and one spoiled vote.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, the four specially elected members were also easily supported by parliament: three women (including a cabinet minister who failed to win the elections and another loser on the BDP) and one young man (the executive secretary at the BDP party headquarters) were nominated. As usual, and understandably, the president refrained from including nominations suggested by opposition parties for special election, reserving all four for his party, the BDP. This has boosted the number of BDP parliamentarians to 48, thus ensuring passage of government bills.

The main beneficiaries of special elections are women and to some extent young men. The total of elected and specially elected women MPs stands at seven – still a far cry from the expectations of gender equality or SADC requirements on gender balance. Also appointed was Patrick Balopi as the new parliamentary speaker. A female MP was chosen as deputy speaker of the National Assembly – the first female to hold this position in Botswana's history. The chief whip of the ruling party is also a female, B. Tshireletso (chair of the BDP's Women's Wing) – again the first in Botswana's political history.

Women also benefited from President Mogae's cabinet appointments. Of the 20 appointments, four ministerial and one assistant ministerial position went to females. The 2004 elections brought more women into cabinet than any previous election. A few young men were included in the cabinet as well as five former soldiers (three from the previous cabinet and two new ones). The appointment of the soldiers has raised concern in Botswana. Two views can be discerned regarding this: the first sees their appointment as undermining Botswana's democracy given their military orientation and adherence to esprit de corps. Similarly, the appointment of the five, taking up a quarter of the 20 cabinet and assistant ministerial posts, is seen as a means of fortifying Vice President Khama's position and to smooth his passage to the presidency of the country once the current president steps down.

A contrary view sees their appointment as a reflection of the inclusiveness of Botswana's democracy. More importantly, since the former soldiers have been elected as MPs by the electorate, the president has acted according to

the wishes of the people by including them in his cabinet. Even more significant is their performance, which should be the determining factor in judging the former soldiers appointed to cabinet. For example, the minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, a former soldier, has proved to be an effective diplomat in handling Botswana's foreign relations, both within SADC and the world at large. In line with the desire to purge 'deadwood', the president brought more new people into cabinet, excluding those who had not performed satisfactorily, and retaining a few who excelled in the previous cabinet, including the vice president and the ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Finance and Development Planning.

The minister of Local Government nominated 101 members as councillors countrywide, the majority of whom are BDP members, and only three from the opposition: two for the BNF and one for the BCP. The appointed councillors include those who lost in the parliamentary elections for all parties. The BNF, BCP and women's groups expressed dissatisfaction with appointees. The BNF had hoped for more nominations of their members in areas where the party won more council seats.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, the BDP used the nominations to reward its own members, to boost the party's representation in councils where the opposition won more seats, and to position the party in preparation for the next general elections. For example, in Gaborone where the BNF won majority council seats, the BNF got one and the BDP four nominated councillors. Similarly, in Lobatse, Jwaneng and Kanye where the BNF secured a majority, the BNF did not get any of their members nominated as all appointees are BDP members. The opposition had threatened to stage a public protest against nominations to councils and not to cooperate with such councillors.¹⁰⁸ Women's groups also expected more women appointees to councils to offset the losses at parliamentary level and to boost the number of women in political posts, which did not materialise.

The outcome of elections is also largely determined by how they are administered. Elections in Botswana in general are peaceful, free and fair insofar as they conform to the country's electoral laws. The 2004 elections were no exception. Undoubtedly, Botswana's elections were conducted in a cordial atmosphere, with people sitting on benches in some constituencies

as they waited to vote, and with no cases of intimidation or violence. However, two hitches seem to have occurred during the 2004 elections, which were not characteristic of past elections. There were long queues and delays in the counting of votes and in the announcement of results. A local newspaper quoted one voter saying that he spent six hours and twenty minutes on the queue before he was able to vote.¹⁰⁹ In another instance one interviewee reported having spent one-and-a-half-hours, while another had spent four hours on the queue before voting.¹¹⁰

The long queues were due to slowness in the voting process, primarily because presiding or polling officers had to explain to voters the procedure involved, first in the case of parliamentary elections, then for council elections. Section 55(b) authorises election officers to assist a voter by 'informing him of the procedure he should follow after entering the polling booth'.¹¹¹ The secretary of the IEC reiterated that the slowness in the electoral process was not due to IEC incapacity, but to the provisions in the Electoral Act.¹¹² Unfortunately, long queues tend to discourage people (especially youths with little patience) from voting, as well as contributing to voter apathy as people are likely to leave the queue and generally do not return to vote later. Similarly, there were those who had to leave the long queues to return to work, and may not have come back to vote as voting day was not declared a public holiday.¹¹³

The announcement of results ended on Monday, two days after voting – a delay not experienced in the past. The main reason for delayed results was that votes were counted manually and at designated points, as provided for in the Electoral Act, CAP. 02:09. It is also possible that the increase in the number of constituencies (to 57 from 44 in the 1999 elections) added to the burden of counting and tabulating results.

The only novel thing was the simultaneous broadcast of results and commentary on elections on national television. There were a few alleged irregularities, which past elections have also suffered from. For example, the BDP is claiming irregularity in the Gaborone Central constituency where its candidate lost by a very narrow margin of 91 votes, and where it has been alleged that 101 votes could not be accounted for. Similarly, the BDP is alleging irregularities in vote counting in the Maun West constituency council elections, where its candidate lost to the Pact (BAM).¹¹⁴

Asked to comment on the alleged complaints of irregularities, the IEC secretary responded that the BDP had not lodged a complaint relating to irregularities in Gaborone Central, and could not acknowledge that 101 votes were uncounted for as all ballot boxes were deposited at the High Court of Botswana after counting, in line with the Electoral Act. However, he added that his organisation would address the complaint should the BDP lodge it with his office.¹¹⁵ Subsequently, it was reported that the BDP had withdrawn the electoral petition challenging the Gaborone Central results after the losing candidate was appointed a specially elected MP and a cabinet minister.¹¹⁶ The slowness in the voting process and announcement of results, as well as the contesting of some results, might reflect negatively on the capacity of the electoral administration to administer elections expeditiously, timely, effectively and efficiently.

Asked to comment on the administration of the 2004 elections, the IEC indicated that only minor problems were experienced, such as too many transfers by voters before issuance of the elections writ which delayed the finalisation of the voters' rolls, and the long queues on voting day. In addition, the IEC admitted that a few isolated cases of irregularities were reported after polling day regarding interpretation of the Electoral Act by some political parties, and a 'procedural case' relating to counting and announcement of results. It is suggested that some political parties disagree with sections of the electoral law resulting in misunderstandings with returning and polling officers. However, the IEC experienced no problems regarding manning of polling stations. The IEC strongly believes that the elections were free and fair – an observation supported by different observer mission statements.¹¹⁷ Expressing a contrary opinion, opposition political parties at the workshop designed to evaluate the IEC's performance during the 2004 elections reiterated that the IEC was not independent and that the elections were not fair.¹¹⁸

CONCLUSION

Botswana's 2004 elections once again returned the BDP to power, which signified the confidence of voters in the ruling party. The elections were indeed free from intimidation and violence, allowing the electorate and parties to participate. However, the elections were partly unfair, which hampers the consolidation of democracy in terms of enhancing it. The partial unfairness of the elections was due to a combination of factors: lack of levelled party competition; unequal access by political parties to the public media; absence of public funding of political parties; the use of the FPTP electoral system; and voter apathy.

The ruling party enjoyed tremendous advantages in terms of organisational and resource capacity, surpassing that of all the opposition parties, had predominant access to the public media for political campaigns, and retained majority seats in parliament as a result of the electoral system. The opposition parties remain weak, fragmented and unable to challenge the predominance of the BDP effectively.

Similarly, decline in the number of female representatives in parliament, a politically inactive civil society and few young people as MPs and cabinet officials also suggest a democracy that is not consolidating but losing some of its lustre. A mere increase in numbers of constituencies is inadequate for improving the quality of democracy. What is required is innovation in terms of electoral reform which is inclusive, public funding to augment party organisation and performance (especially to prop up weak opposition parties), and deliberate efforts at increasing representation of the underprivileged, including women and youth. It should be admitted, however, that acceptance and reliance on peaceful means of resolving political conflict in Botswana – a reflection of the Tswana culture – indicates that consolidation of democracy has been achieved on this dimension. What is required is further enhancement of democracy to achieve a more consolidated system of governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While acknowledging that some consolidation of democracy is taking place in Botswana, there are a number of handicaps standing in the way of consolidating the process further. Some major recommendations are therefore as follows:

- Botswana's democracy could be enhanced by first, carrying out research into the current electoral system to gauge whether or not it needs to be reformed and the nature of the required reform.
- Public funding is required to augment party organisation and performance, especially to level competition between the ruling and opposition parties.
- Deliberate efforts should be made to increase political representation of underprivileged groups, including women and the young.
- Access to the media should be available to all political parties to ensure fair competition.
- Opposition parties need to reorient and reorganise themselves into strong and effective parties so that they play the role of checks and balances and position themselves as an alternative government.
- Civic education should continue to be intensified to enlighten voters on their role and reduce levels of apathy. In this respect, collaborative and intensive efforts by the IEC, CSOs and political parties are of utmost importance.
- Efforts should be directed at eliminating questions besieging the IEC regarding its independence and impartiality, especially in the eyes of the opposition.
- Electoral amendment might be necessary to include specification of the date for elections – again for the sake of making the system fairer to all parties.
- CSOs need to be encouraged to participate actively in politics as their participation is critical to the mobilisation of voters, and as alternative structures of interest articulation and aggregation.
- There is need for issue-based politics which could attract voter and CSO interest, thereby also curbing apathy.

NOTES

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- Promoting electoral norms and standards

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- To strengthen civil society organisations in the interest of sustainable democratic practice, and
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