LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN THE MAHALAPYE SUB DISTRICT

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Introduction

This report maps local democracy in the Mahalapye sub-district. It follows a local democracy workshop that was held in the area between the 17 and 18 December 2007. Participants who attended it came from various institutions, including: councillors, youth representatives, sub-chiefs and headmen, VDC chairpersons and secretaries, social workers, residents, NGOs and CBOs, district youth council, national registration officers from Sefhare, sub-land board secretary. Missing from the workshop was the police, IEC, health. The workshop was held in Kudumatse, some forty kilometres away from Mahalapye through one way (known to the local people) and some eighty kilometres through another way. Participants expressed unhappiness that the questionnaire should have been distributed earlier and more elderly people should have been invited.

The workshop was opened by Bernard Bolele, a private attorney reportedly with vast experience in local democracy. He observed that local democracy needed nurturing in order to grow. He also observed that new democracies have fast tracked and vastly improved their democratic systems, putting pressure on Botswana to improve its own. He outlined the objectives of the workshop as mapping local democracy, assessing councillors and other leaders in the sub-district, assessing the delivery of services and suggesting ways of improvement. Mr Bolele further observed that the workshop offered an opportunity to discuss the sub-district’s diverse cultures which were not adequately reflected in the constitution.
Location and Layout

It is one of the largest sub-districts within the Central District. It covers an area (23,688 square meters. It is the fourth largest sub district within the Central district. Mahalapye sub district is bordered by the Kgalagadi district in the south, Kweneng district in the south west and Serowe/Palapye in the north. It shares international borders with South Africa in the east. Mahalapye River passes through the sub-district from the west in an easterly direction and flows into the Limpopo just across the international boundary.

FEATURES
Mahalapye consists of several villages such as Sefhare, Mookane, Chadibe, Macha, Maphashalala, and so on. To begin with, Sefhare has a water spring which never dries. The word Sefhare comes from sefhara (meaning the branching of the Chadibe from the Borotse River. The village was populated by Babirwa and Batshweneng (Bakhurutshe), both of whom were Pedi people. Its wards include: Maifala, Sefhare, Bobirwa wards. Bakhurutshe from South Africa settled at Chadibe and expanded from there. Its leaders, Thwenye and Malau disagreed with their eldest brother Moloi Ramodia. Thwene left Chadibe and settled at Magoote Hill, at a place known as Ikobe (his brother asked him to give up and come back). Tshwene’s group met Mirwa (who led the Babirwa) at this hill and settled at Mphebatho and Keswodilwepilo (Babarwa settled in this ward). Maifala ward was also built that time.

Sefhare ward is populated by people from Shakwe (Bakhurutshe) who had first settled at Makwate and then moved to Sefhare. Sefhare River has extremely large trees and this constitutes a jungle. The tree species include the Mokowe trees with fruits that baboons like. They also include Motha tree/moladi has big shades that allegedly can accommodate more than one thousand people. Sefhare is going to be a sub-district. The process has already started. It will cover Mookane, Maphashalala, Kudumatse, Machaneng, Chadibe, Tumasera-Seleka, and Ngwapa and so on. This covers a population of 51 000.
Another feature is at Borotse in the Khama farm. There are caves at Ngwapa. Missionary Livingstone made a bell from stones. Shakwe has foot prints. Parwe has good scenic view for photography, and for weddings. Pilikwe Village has a hill that is shaped into an enclosure which was turned into a kgotla. Behind the hill is Mohalapitsa village. Pilikwe is known for being the settlement of Tshekedi Khama and his Ramentsana group which exiled itself from Serowe in the 1940s. Bangwato first settled at Lephepe on their way to Shoshong Hills. This is why Tshekedi and his followers went back and settled at Rametsane in the Kweneng district near Lephepe before moving out to settle at Pilikwe.

Tauptse Village was originally settled by an Ndebele community from Seleka. The totem of this Ndebele group was Phuti and Bangwato adopted it as their totem after Ngwato married from that community and after he was served from capture by the phuti animal. The senior Ndebele community remained in Seleka and still lives. Two Seleka brothers disagreed and the younger brother Ranokwane Tselapedi left with his people and settled at Tauptse after asking from Khama who sent him to Shoshong as a tax collector. This was to check whether he was real loyal or would run away with the loot. Kgamane (Khama’s brother) objected to this arrangement and Ranokwane Tselapedi was moved to Tauptse to care for the river. A Mokwena family also settled at Tauptse. And a Tswapong (Khurutshe) family settled there as well. Tselapedi was given a wife by Khama called Lekotu (from the Talaote-Shona group). Their son Moenedi (he who gave himself to Khama) was born. Other sons, Sebuso, Monametsana and others were also born. These children married and increased the population of the village. These children had Tswana names and their off-springs also adopted Tswana names. The Ndebele language disappeared and they were fully integrated into the Ngwato society. Even their Ndebele culture has also disappeared.

There is a circular and flat hill known as Bushman and below it is a rock called tapa laa thunya (hill that sparkle) and there were inaudible voices on it. On top of the hill looks like there were houses whose owners were never known. Rituals have been known to be performed at this hill. The councillor of the area is also of Ndebele origin, but the mother
is from Chadibe of Barotse people. Moremi and Sefhare were initially occupied by Bakhurutshe.

In contrast, **Mahalapye** started as a train station and not a village. Physically, it is characterised by a flat rock. Its chieftainship was given to *Baga Sekonyana* who were sent from Serowe to come and administer Mahalapye. The original headman was from Tauptse and was called Moengeli Otukile who looked after Khama’s horses. Boseja ward has a headman originally from Tauptse. The first ward is Konyana, then Xhosa One, Xhosa Two (these were brothers and their followers). Only the elderly Xhosa still speak the language. There is Boseja ward whose councillor comes from Palapye. There is also Herero ward and Borotse ward which was settled by former railway workers.

**Mookane** Village is near Dibete. Dibete was named after rocks in Mookane fields. The rocks are red and shaped like livers. Mookane refers to a water pan. Khama send Tshipana and his brothers to settle at Mookane to police the border with Bakgatla. The area was just cattle posts. Initially there was no boundary between the Bakgatla and Bangwato. They agreed to set up a boundary. Each delegation was expected to leave its dwelling in the morning and to travel until meeting the other and that place was to be the boundary. The Bangwato delegation allegedly travelled the whole night and met the Bakgatla delegation at Artesia but Bakgatla requested that the border be pushed back to Debite.

Mookane has five wards: Tshipana, Mosanta, Moora, Borotse and Letswiri. Each has a headman of arbitration. Mookane used to have master farmers in the whole of Central District. Chieftainship went from Tshipana to his son Mosarwa who gave it to his son Bakwena who gave it to his son Bakwena Tshipana and to Boikhutso Seithhomolo. The village kept on growing and a subordinate tribal authority was appointed with headmen of record under him. Mookane is above Debete, Maphashalala, and Dafdale. Some facilities are obtained from Mahalapye. There are going to be mines (Mmamabula is between Capricorn and Mookane). Mines have taken away cattle posts and crop fields. PPC cement is also going to operate in the area.
**Tumasera-Seleka:** is made of the following villages: Seleka, Rasesa, Malete, and Tujwa. The villages share Malete River. The original settlement of Seleka of Ngwapa was given to the whites as part of the Thuli Block and the residents were moved to Ratholo and later some moved to the current Seleka village. Apart from the name Tumasera-Seleka which led to a court case, the different communities are at ease with each other. Ngwapa is now a farm belonging to the Khama family and houses the ruins of the Seleka people. There is a large Marijuana (*Motokwane*) tree in the farm. Legend has it that smokers could smoke its leaves but these can never be taken away. It was reported that this still happens. There is also a wild Orange tree. The ruins of the Seleka people are still there in the farm.

There are stones in the Ngwapa River and water flows around them. The origin of the water is from the centre of Ngwapa hill, creating a spring which never dries. It was ritual to bath in the Ngwapa water and then it would rain. Every year when rains delayed, Seleka and Moremi people performed rituals to make rains. Sometimes there was heavy wind which prevented people from reaching the source of the water. The river no longer flows into the Limpopo because Khama blocked and used the water for watering purposes. Ngwapa used to water cattle from different communities.

**Mosolotsane** Village was originally populated by Baleti, Bakaa, and Bakalaka. Wards include Mabedi (this was a person’s name), Moloi (a person’s name). There was Kalanke ward for Bakaa and Sefhako ward. Lobo pan is situated in Mosolotsane and attracted wide varieties of animals. This area is now cattle post. But the pan is dry. The soil is salty and attracted animals. There is Taukgolo hill which used to be occupied by lions. The other hill is called Mamphaleng and had *diphala*.

**Shoshong** is popularly known for the fact that missionaries translated the bible into Setswana while living there. It was the place at which missionaries reached the Bangwato and converted them into Christianity. The mission building has been turned into a historical monument. It was from Shoshong that the Bangwato initiated Christian schools all over the area they controlled. Shoshong was the first headquarters of the Bangwato.
before they moved northwest into Boteti region and north east to Palapye and into the Bobirwa region.

**Population trends and socioeconomic development**

The population of the Mahalapye Sub district was estimated at 109,890 people according to the 2001 census. It was not clear how many of these were women and how many were men. There are perceivably more children being born. The perception is that the youth population is very large and calls for targeted services for this population. There are equally many deaths, particularly among men due to road accidents and HIV/AIDS. There are also several passion killings which victimise primarily women.

Home languages in the sub-district include: Seherero, Setswapong Sengwato, SeXhosa, Ikalanga, Sekgalagadi, Sesarwa, Afrikaans and Serotse. However, most of these languages are not officially recognised and this threatens cultural diversity. Two languages have largely disappeared: Serotse and SiNdebele. It is common to have wards named after Barotse and yet they do not speak the Serotse language anymore. In a sense, while people still recall their ethnic identity through the naming of wards, cultural diversity has disappeared to a large extent as Setswana has become predominant. In another sense different wards are still named after the original ethnic group that settled there, serving as a reminder of the once diverse culture of the people. The ethnic relations were reportedly cordial as intermarriages were common and different communities attended the same churches.

The economy of the sub district is characterised by the fact that Afrikanners (white farmers) have allegedly fenced the whole area along the length of the Limpopo River, denying black people, including the Botswana Government, access to the river and preventing locals from fishing, preventing the police and the army from patrolling and other activities. If livestock from black communities crossed the fence they got killed by the farm owners. The farms even have a security implication as even the police and army have difficulties patrolling the border due to the white farms. In contrast, South African
soldiers and police have access to the river. What is worse is that even politicians need to ask for permits to enter farms in order to address electorates.

Human development indicators: Health facilities are not expected to be more than fifteen kilometres away from residents. Food security is adequate and government provide social welfare to the destitute and orphans. The measures could not be confirmed because professionals who could have provided more detailed information were missing. Even though schools are available, there are 15 percent of children who do not attend school. The Sub-district has made some improvements though. Most children have been sent to school, welfare schemes have been introduced by central government to sustain the lives of those residents who live in poverty. However, it was reported that not much improvement has occurred in the quality of life in the sub district.

Maahalapye was originally a train station and this had serious economic implications. It meant that the railway line was a central economic activity and businesses were clustered in its vicinity. It also meant that many travellers passed through the area, providing market for vending goods. In addition, the railway line and the highway provided many economic opportunities to the residents along their way. Farming was the economic base of the sub district’s economy. Both blacks and whites were engaged in it. There were also mafisa (loaning of livestock between households) and molaleitsa (group work organised at household level), initiatives to address inequalities and labour shortages, respectively. However, the railway line, big shops and supermarkets, bars, gardening, chicken farming have gained prominence. Chain stores have been established in Mahalapye and they are driving small shops (such as cooperatives and small general dealers) out of business. Asians and whites are richer than the blacks. The black communities are evenly balanced in terms of socioeconomic status.

Unemployment is high in the sub-district, particularly in the outlying villages. Unemployment is higher among women who also own less land, no farms, no major property, and so on. Culture favoured men. The railway workers were all men. Most policemen are men. Most labourers are also men. This has disadvantaged women in all
aspects of life. Women are relegated to rearing chickens, bees and gardening. Women also do knitting. There is also rampant prostitution in the area. The registered poor in the sub district received government hand outs to relieve them from poverty. Those without education are encouraged to enrol for non-formal education which even reaches them in the cattle posts.

The sub-district is not self sustaining in terms of revenue. There are no major mining outlets in the sub-district. However, this will soon change as the Mmamabula coal mine is anticipated to open, including a railway line to be established to transport the coal outside the country. The Mmamabula coal mine will support the generation of electricity to the Southern Africa region and this would completely change the outlook of the sub district. However, currently, most taxes in the sub district generate very little income and are controlled by central government. Economically, the relations between Mahalapye and outlying villages are unequal: Mahalapye acts as the headquarters and provide services such as banking, telephones and so on. The sub district council which is based at the headquarters provide other services to the outlying villages, such as schools, clinics, roads.

People living below the poverty Datum Line are estimated to be 25 percent of the sub district population. It is particularly women who are poor. Women tend fatherless children and both live in poverty. Young people are also unemployed and very poor. Those earning high wages are very few: 1:4. Most people earn very little such as herd-boys, house maids, drought relief workers and so on. Culture was also blamed for poverty due to the fact that a new widow is confined to the house for a long time. Land law used to insist that land allocation to women should be supported by letter from their male spouses or relatives. However, this has changed and women can now apply for land without approval from male their spouse or relative.

The perception is that there is corruption in the sub-district. Land allocations are perceivably riddled with corruption. There are serious land issues concerning land allocated by chiefs long time ago which have turned into bushes and which the Land
board has no control over. Farmers committees hardly ever meet to make contribution into allocation of grazing and crop fields. Some people sell crop fields and the buyer changes the land use without consulting the Land Board. Planning should be introduced in all villages so that there is proper allocation of land. It was acknowledged that villages have village development plans which the land board help to draw. However, it was also observed that the residents are the ones who are corrupt and accept bribes in order to support wrongful allocations of boreholes. Fortunately, a magistrate court has been established at Palapye and Mahalapye, and this helps to resolve critical issues.

The workshop participants observed that the land belongs to the people and not to the land board. Yet people perceivably behave as if the land is not theirs and this gives the land board too much power. This was considered unfortunate. It was noted that the land board worked on behalf of the people and awarded certificates as proof of allocation. Even allocations made by chiefs are recognised by land board. However, deserted plots are difficult to deal with. People have to come forward to disclose owners whom the land board has difficulties in tracing. On the one hand people ask for residential plots in an area designated for other uses and alleged about corruption when another allocation is made.

Tenders are advertised and opened in the presence of the applicants. Tax clearance and health inspection report are also required. Business license is also required. These requirements are included into the tender documents. Price range is also important. Committees assess tenders, and pass them to management that also passes them technical and finance committees, respectively. However, councillors are allowed to tender. Nonetheless, workshop participants insisted that there is corruption in the various institutions in the sub-district.

Corruption extended to cases handled at kgotla. Some women allegedly offer sexual favours to those handling cases at the kgotla. Some sub-chiefs confirmed this. However, another chief disputed this, observing that he had never been approached on the same. The police officers advised sub chiefs and headmen to accept bribes and arrange with the
police for an arrest. But it was reported that even police officers are prone to corruption. It was also reported that crime was also rampant in the sub-district. Mahalapye Township and Kalamari Village have high crime rates. In addition, the law on stock-theft is outdated and extremely unhelpful. However, it was also reported that livestock owners do not attend to their livestock and this exposes them to theft. So that if a thief claims the livestock to be his, there is no immediate counter claim and this makes the job of policing extremely difficult.

Domestic violence and human rights violation are also rampant in the Mahalapye sub district. Men are burnt with hot water and young women are assaulted by their boy friends and husbands. Young men hardly consult the relevant experts when they have relational problems and end up assaulting their partners. Parents do not work cooperatively with teachers to mould children who end up as human rights abusers and so on. There are too many liquor points which the police have no control over. Cases of domestic violence are also withdrawn in large numbers. In addition, parents also fight in front of children and use abusive language. Furthermore, there are inadequate street lights. This is worse in the outlying villages.

Environmental hazards are caused by trenches and holes dug during road construction. In addition, the rubbish dump is not properly looked after and this endangers the environment. Pit latrines are also proving to be public hazards through smell pollution and cockroaches and flies. It is also common to use chemicals for spraying which health and environmental officials do not approve because such spraying pollute the environment. In addition men urinate everywhere and pollute the environment. However, young men place the blame either on lack of public toilets or on the poor maintenance of the few that are present. The council admitted that there are not enough public toilets and that resources were not enough to provide such facilities. There is also littering in the sub-district. Dumping sites are hardly used. There are also infestations of bats and mosquitoes in the sub-district. The Land board made a request to be given more powers to arrest all these situations. There is also indiscriminate cutting of trees without replacement.
Many large streams pass through the Mahalapye sub-district such as Shoshong River, Mahalapye River, Sefhare River and Kalamari River which easily cause floods. The whole of Mahalapye Sub-district is prone to flooding. Villages were built near hills and rivers as defence mechanisms from Ndebele invaders. The flood situation is worsened by the wrong construction of roads which blocked the natural flow of water and streams. Flower Town (a ward in Mahalapye) was flooding at the time of the local democracy workshop in 2008 and the council secretary had to abandon the workshop to attend to the emergency situation.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Elections are held every five years. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) conducts all general and bye-elections. It depends on district officials to manage the elections in the sub-district. National legislative and administrative framework provides adequate laws for conducting free and fair elections. Elections are free and fair in the sense that political parties have representatives at polling stations and local and international elections observers monitor the elections. Ballot papers are counted openly in the view of party representatives and elections are declared at the polling stations. There are no major complaints about the results, an indication that the electoral system is transparent.

The Electoral law guides the conduct of elections in the sub district and in the country. This standard way of running elections ensure simplicity and predictability. Nobody is prevented from standing for elections and this shows that the country is a free democracy. There is no law controlling political parties and this also shows the freedom reigning in the country. However, the workshop participants felt that the electoral law needs to be amended (to require a membership of 1000 people as qualification for registration) to prevent parties that are not serious from registering. Only citizens are allowed to vote. These must have some residence in the sub district.
Three political parties were present in the district: Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), Botswana National Front (BNF-now UDC)) and Botswana Congress Party (BCP). All these political parties focus on development, but the BDP appears to be more capable of delivering on it. The approaches and agendas of the political parties were similar, and include the writing of manifestos, the holding rallies in a similar fashion. As a result, the electorates vote primarily for the BDP as it appears to be the better organised party with a long history of ruling the country. The three parties fielded candidates and competed for electoral positions. They conducted primary elections to select candidates for general elections. BDP was the largest party in the council with 37 councillors, followed in the far distance by BNF with 2 councillors. BCP had no representative in the council after the 2004 elections. The party that won simple majority gained the chairmanship of the sub-district council. Politicians sought office by popularising their party manifestos. Candidates focused on unemployment, health, education, economic diversification, service delivery and poverty.

There were no ethnic or religious parties in the sub-district. Parties recruit membership from all communities. All parties are free to go into all settlements to campaign and recruit members. There has been no political violence in the sub district.

Women have not done very well in electoral politics. The perceived main reason is that the electoral system disadvantages women. However, it seems that the primary elections are the ones that disadvantage women as many fail to go through at that level. Only few women are councillors. However, the sub district has a woman member of parliament and this shows that it is gender conscious. In addition, all political parties in the sub district have women’s wings which do not seem to have a lot of influence. There is also no public financing of political parties and this could be working against women. Woman confirmed that it was extremely difficult for them to win elected positions. No matter how hardworking a woman is, she still faces difficulties of getting elected. The electoral system allegedly favours men and marginalise women and other groups.
Generally, wards were demarcated fairly in terms of population size. While Tumasera-Seleka had a registered voting population of around 1492 in 2004, Mahalape South had 1235 registered voters, Xhosa ward had 1149 registered voters, Chadibe had 1,025 and Sefhare had 1,016. Thus more wards were clustered around the 1000 population mark. However, there were small wards as well. One of the smallest wards was Otse in the Shoshong area with 469 registered voters and Letamo ward with 592 registered voters. Thus, the largest ward was three times the size of the smallest ward. However this was not perceived negatively. The issue of concern regarded the fact that Sefhare ward was demarcated and its portion given to Moshopa and this made people unhappy. The issue about the demarcation of wards often touches on cultural sensitivities and threaten local democracy.

The judiciary has not handled electoral disputes in the sub district. This implies that there have been no serious appeals warranting the intervention of the high court. In contrast, there were no coalitions between parties in the sub district. The BDP alone ran the sub-district. The party system allows political leaders to influence operations of the local authority. On the one hand, parties are allowed to organise caucuses in order to influence policy. Party members who defy the caucus get disciplined, including expulsion. Council chairman is elected by councillors. Those within the BDP indicate their interest to stand as candidates and are endorsed by the party caucus. The party headquarters has no influence in who becomes the chairman. The chairman is guided by council regulations and policies and cannot choose to do his own thing. There is accountability in the sense that councillors who miss three consecutive council meetings can be disqualified from holding the position of councillor anymore. In contrast, councillors ask questions, pass motions and conduct debates which bring accountability in the staff of the council.

However, the sub-district is large and service provision is slow. The sub-district is a portion of the extremely large central district where all important decisions are made. Public involvement is assessing elected officials is absent. However, elections are held every five years and this places councillors in contrast, there were villages without headmen of record and these have many unresolved cases. Firstly, there were no local
police officers in such villages. Some settlements have no headmen of record and no court clerk and not even local police (these have been phased out). Many settlements have no telephones and even cell phones have no network in such areas. This situation hinders the handling of crime. This means that criminals and other wrong doers cannot be apprehended. Secondly, there are no visiting headmen of record as there is no allowance to cover such visits. The result is that disputes go unresolved for long periods of time. It was observed that crimes were very common in such areas. An example was given of livestock thieves in Mosokwane who re-branded other people’s cows. This was reported to the Mahalapye police who returned the concerned cows under the pretext that there was no evidence of criminality and that there was nobody to look after the cows if they took long in police hands. Thus, while there were trained professionals to deal with community conflicts, their services do not extend to all the residents, particularly those without headmen of record. In contrast residents wished that livestock theft should not be handled by lawyers as they disadvantage the livestock owners.

People with disabilities were helped in an inappropriate way. The IEC has bought brail books which are deposited with libraries to assist the blind to educate themselves. There is no arrangement for the IEC to transport people with disabilities and the elderly. Residents complained about the current voting which required them to mark ballot papers. They wanted voting through discs to be re-introduced. They also wanted separate voting for people with disabilities, pregnant and sick. In contrast, the IEC was acknowledged to run elections. Thorough preparations are done before every election, including logistics. However, it was felt that IEC was not independent because it is funded by government. There is no education which specifically deals with the handling of elections. However, officers are trained through workshops on electoral laws, on election administration and they observe elections in other countries to benchmark. This has helped to widen the scope of election officers.

IEC conducts training on how to conduct elections. Its officers hold kgotla meetings for purposes of passing information. They also visited churches and youth groups to teach them about the importance of voting. However, some churches were difficult to deal
with. Primary schools were also visited to teach them about elections. Secondary and tertiary institutions were also visited. However, residents (including officials who conducted elections) felt that election officers are not adequately trained. They also felt that polling officers are trained in a short workshop and this is not enough.

Turnout: those who actually voted were less than those who had registered for the 2004 general elections. It is not clear why this happens. More women than men voted. Men have a tendency of absenting themselves on the day of election and this contribute to poor turnout. Some churches celebrate mass on Saturday and this conflict with elections. Some other churches such as the Watch Tower (Jehova’s witness) in Serowe even prevent their sick members from going to hospital, and prevents them from participating in politics and elections. Thus, while some people see elections as adding value to their lives, others do not. Some residents participate actively in the campaigns, sing and participate in motorcades. However, people perceivably do not vote on issues but on relations.

Social conflicts are handled by trained professionals such as the District Officer, chiefs, magistrate courts, and police officers. Participants felt there was fairness in handling conflicts. There are professionals trained to handle conflicts and to prevent violence or disturbances from erupting. Training of police officers is comprehensive to deal with conflicts. Chiefs do attend workshops to help them handle conflicts. However this is not enough.

There were 29 courts of headmen of records in the sub district at the time of the local democracy workshop. But funds were allegedly not enough to send them to workshops for purposes of sharpening their skills. Only two chiefs from the sub district are sent to workshops when an opportunity arises. This is too inadequate. The Central District is expected to send only ten chiefs per workshop. One chief confirmed that he attended a workshop for one week learning about handling civil and criminal cases. The training is complicated and the time frame is too short to grasp all the issues. There should be observation of actual handling of such cases. In addition choosing who goes for training
is done by five senior chiefs and sometimes new entrants are sent for training while others who have been there receive no such training. Headmen of arbitration are two kinds: salary and allowance. But all new headmen of arbitration enter the allowance category.

In contrast, police in the Mahalapye sub district went for training for one year on conflict resolution. The police work closely with DC and social workers and chiefs. If they cannot resolve conflicts they pass issues to the above mentioned for help. The police also have a lot of experience which becomes useful in handling social conflicts. The police promoted transparency in the handling of conflicts. Some chiefs also refer social conflicts to the police for resolution. On the other hand, there were situations in which the police arrested criminals who got freed by the District Commissioner. Even chiefs confirmed that they send people to prison but the District Commissioner reduced the sentence and freed them. This frustrates the chiefs and police officers. Some wrongdoers ended up murdering their victims because of such situations. In addition prisons are overcrowded and this compels the District Commissioner to send criminals for extramural activities and not to prison.

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Openness
Crime prevention meetings, National Identification meetings, Land boards meetings, SHHA (Self Help Housing Agency) and agriculture meetings are open to the public. Mechanisms of inviting the public to meetings included students, notice boards, councillors and radio. These are expected to reach women and youth as well. Organisations that exist in the sub district and are invited to public meetings include, village district youth council, men sector against HIV/AIDS. Programmes for minorities: Old pension, home based care, Orphans. Local documents that are accessible to the public include: legislative books, Tribal Land act and policy documents. The rules for transparency of local budget are also accessible to the public. However budget sessions are not open to public
Public purchases rely on the tendering system. For instance land board issues tenders for purchasing of vehicles. Sometimes quotations are used for short periods while tenders are still being processed or if the value of the project is small. It all depends on the amount of the project or if there was no application for tendering. Public information: newsletters are used for vacancies and information. Tenders are advertised in newspapers. Auction sales are also relied upon to dispose of public goods. These are done more often. But they reach some areas like Kodebeleng very late and this creates an atmosphere of unfair competition. There is poor transport to such areas hence the delays. In contrast, radio briefings not often conducted and this starve residents of information. There are areas which radio is impossible to hear.

Public presentations: have been held by the health sector educating people about condom use. IEC also conducted public presentations on voting. Thus, public presentations are done more often by some authorities. In contrast, scheduled programs in the media include football and Makgabaneng. These are used more often and cover the sub district as well. Computer based applications were still in the planning process. Only Shoshong and Mahalapye had internet services. At Shoshong it is at the post office.

Public consultations are generally done: eg., on road constructions and the Mmamabula power station, which were discussed with residents. Citizen concerns include complaints about unfair tenders, high water charges and so on. Public decision making are also used by VDC and land board on dumpsites. Public workshops are also used.

NGOs and CBOs include: Emang Basadi, Thusang Basadi, Red Cross, Kgetsi ya Tsie at Sefhare and Palapye. Kgetsi ya Tsie manufactures jam. In contrast, CBOs include Trust at Ramokgoname, Dibete and Kalamari. Dingaka Association, Ministers Fraternal are counted among CBOs. However, it came out that local authorities did not understand the role of these organisations. NGOs are reportedly effective in a few areas, but most of the villages hardly feel the impact of NGOs. Only Tefelopele Testing Centre has widespread impact, encouraging all people to test for HIV/AIDS.
BHC is based in Mahalapye and only helps a few people. BPC has helped too few people and most people remain without electricity. Post Offices are not equally effective: their security is suspect. BTC has connected a few telephones and majority of people remain without telephones in the sub district.

Kgotla meetings are attended by only few people. Only Drought Relief meetings are attended in large numbers. They even attend without being invited for Drought Relief. It was alleged that meetings waste people’s time. Sometimes institutions do not ask councillors to ask people to attend. However, it was acknowledged that if meetings are announced properly, people attend. Officers from elsewhere do not communicate with councillors and VDC and this result in poor attendance. Meetings start late and those who come early are disadvantaged and never turn up again. Those who differ with presentations at the kgotla receive hostile reception and never turn up again. Young people spend most of the time at bars and do not attend kgotla meetings. There are factions within villages and boycott each other by not attending meetings. However, meetings called by senior politicians are well attended.

There is no forum for all community leaders to meet. Therefore there is no shared vision. The district development committee (DDC) does not cover chiefs and religious leaders. However, religious leaders attend kgotla meetings and bless meetings. In contrast, local media is not very effective. Government media make significant efforts to cover news but suffer staff shortage and inadequate resources. Private media was reportedly not effective in the area. They only cover conflicts and scandals. The local democracy workshop was not covered by the media. Even heads of government and local officials were invited for the workshop but failed to turn up. However, the police, IEC and health claimed they were not invited. Letters were not delivered to all the institutions in the sub-district. Weather was blamed for this. Letters were given to the District Commissioner and those letters did not reach the intended target, and as a result many institutions were not properly invited. Those distributed by the council were all invited. However, the DC and council share the same building.
Public-private partnership: Botswana Railways allows its employees to engage in politics and serve as councillors. There is no conflict with public engagement. Private media also plays a significant role in public issues. In contrast, Friedrich Ebert Foundation and BOCONGO and the Botswana Council of Churches (BCC) have played significant roles in local issues and development. SADC observes elections and our parliamentarians participate in observing elections in other countries. Private Banks have facilities in Mahalapye and serve the outlying villages.

On another issue, no issue called for referendum in the area. But there have been national referendums to resolve national issues on the voting of 18 years old, and on the retirement of judges. Referendum questions are easy to understand. Referendums have resolved rather than worsen the situation.

Shortage of water is a serious problem in the sub district. It partly compelled the residents to hold their local democracy workshop in some remote school in the outskirts of Mahalapye. The facility has boarding facilities in order to accommodate the participants, Shortage of water calls for the sub district to be connected to the North Carrier water way. In addition, many streets within Mahalapye do not have street lights. For instance, the long street which goes towards Madiba Senior Secondary School had no lights and this impedes human movement, exposes students and residents to dangers of the night.

**Conclusion**

This report has considered a number of factors that have a direct bearing on local democracy in the Mahalapye sub district. It has considered the physical features such as numerous hills and streams that cause flooding, prevent socialisation of communities during the rainy season, and provide scenic views for photography. The paper also noted the different ethnic groups that embodied diverse cultures, but that now have integrated into the Tswana mainstream. It further noted the population trend and the changing economy that was dominated by white farms along the Botswana – South Africa border and the widespread cattle farming which was now going to be supplemented by coal
mining and the generation of electricity to supply the Southern Africa region. However, the paper also noted the security challenges posed by the white farms, the high levels of stock theft and domestic violence.

The report also discussed representative democracy, noting that the national legal framework guided the conduct of elections in the sub district which was soon to become a full fledged district. Free and open elections were dominated by three political parties: BDP, BNF and BCP, whose policies and structures were considered relatively similar. It was also noted that women featured less even though there was a woman member of parliament in the area. The paper further noted that wards were fairly demarcated, with only a few complaints.

The report further observed that several meetings were open to the public and that efforts were made to invite it to such meetings. However, it also noted that meetings were poorly attended as residents were selective with meetings, prioritising drought relief meetings which promised employment and money. The report further observed that there were a variety of NGOs and CBOs that assisted in different ways, but that there was no common vision.
RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Historical sites should not be fenced and denied access to the community.
2. Poor people should be assisted to get out of poverty, including helping them to form companies (but government does not support these companies).
3. People should be educated to understand that meetings of land board and council are open to the public.
4. Residents should be encouraged to form NGOs and trusts.
5. Legal documents should be sold in Mahalapye.
6. There should be an all party conference at sub-regional level.
7. There should be a requirement of one thousand supporters for a party to be registered.
8. The secrecy of the ballot for people with disabilities should be protected.
9. Voting by discs should be returned.
10. Demarcation of ward boundaries should also consider the size of the area and the difficulty of the terrain and cultural differences (Numbers are built by combined to arrive at the required number, but this violate cultures and sensitivities).
11. Villages should contact information department to expedite delivery.
12. Radio frequency should be improved for all areas.
13. The public should be educated on the use of Emails.
14. Nteletsa two should be mounted so that all areas have telephone network.
15. Leaders should consult other leaders in the area on issues under their jurisdiction.
16. Floor crossing should attract a bye election (Shoshong independent crossed to BNF).
17. Local authorities and NGOs should make an effort to reach out to each other.
18. NGOs should reach out to outlying villages and settlements.
19. Post Offices should increase manpower and security.
20. Public media personnel and resources should be increased to cover the whole areas.
21. Media should also teach about elections and voting.
22. Churches that refuse to participate in elections should be encouraged to change their ways.
23. IEC should conduct its voter education all the time.