

**- Area Economic Planning:** Councils play the crucial role in area economic planning. They play an active part in identifying economic opportunities, promoting local economic development, and fostering sustainable growth within their respective areas.

**- HIV and AIDS Initiatives:** Councils are involved in the coordination of HIV and AIDS initiatives. It is important to involve local-level efforts in addressing this critical public health issue and the role councilors play in raising awareness.

supporting affected individuals, and implementing community-based interventions.

**- Land Allocation Processes:** Councilors have the responsibilities related to land allocation within their communities. They manage and regulate land allocation, ensuring fairness and transparency in this critical aspect of local governance.

**- Control of Natural Resources:** Councils play a critical role in the management and control of natural resources. This is significant in the sustainable resource management, aligning with broader environmental and conservation goals.

**- Pollution Management and Environmental Preservation:** Councilors have the responsibility to manage pollution and preserve the environment. Local governance structures actively contribute to safeguarding the natural environment for the well-being of their communities.

#### Functions of District/Municipal/Urban Council

District/Municipal/Urban Councils do all functions of the Community Council but in addition they do the following:

- Public health inspectors (e.g. food inspection, refuse collection and disposal), physical planning etc. • Promotion of economic development (e.g. attraction of investors).

- Cleaning of streets and public places, parks and gardens,
- Control of building permits;
- Education, recreation and promotion of culture,
- Taking care of urban roads and traffic management; and
- Provision of services.

#### Gender and Local Government

Participation of women in political processes has been a long-standing agenda of Lesotho. The country has adopted electoral models that aim to increase female participation and representation in national parliament and local governments. Increasing gender inclusivity provides a voice for previously underrepresented groups. The demand for equality of men and women in democratic spheres is key to development. This is due to the understanding that equality is a universal value 'framed by an Enlightenment perspective that all human beings have the same rights by virtue of being human. Legitimate democracy is that one that puts women on an equal footing with men.

#### Allocation of Special Seats to Women

The Local Government Elections Act 1998 as amended provides for allocation of special seats for women in the local councils and detailed steps to be followed in order to allocate a quota by which Lesotho aspires to equal opportunities for and participation by women and men in development, education, economic resources, politics and decision making. A quota is the total number of votes that a political party will need to qualify for a special seat. Independent candidates are not considered in allocating special seats.



## Lesotho's Local Governance System



British  
High Commission  
Maseru

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with two spheres of government: central and local governments. Parliament is mandated by the constitution to provide for local government and has done this largely through the Local Government Act 1997 and Local Government Elections Act 1998 as the main governing pieces of legislation. The Cabinet of Lesotho further adopted a national Decentralisation Policy in February 2014. The Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs is tasked with providing policy direction and support for local authorities.

Local government is predominantly two tier; District Councils and Community/Urban Councils. Maseru comprises its own single-tier Maseru City Council, District Council and Community Councils. There are about 64 Community Councils, 11 Urban Councils, 1 Municipality totaling 76 councils. There are also 10 District Councils in Lesotho.

Lesotho's first local elections were held in April 2005; elections are held every five years. The local authorities do have revenue-raising powers, but receive the bulk of their revenues from central government. Their many responsibilities include public health, environmental protection, water supply, education and agricultural support services.

#### Types of Councils in Lesotho

**Municipal councils:** There is one local authority of this type, Maseru Municipal Council, and it is unitary. All its councilors are elected to represent a single-member division for a term of up to five years and the non-executive mayor is indirectly elected by councilors from amongst themselves. The council must have between 11 and 15 elected members and no more than three appointed chiefs.

**District Councils:** there are ten district councils and members are nominated from the community councils within the district. They also include two appointed chiefs nominated from the community councils in the administrative district. The council is headed by an indirectly elected chairperson.

**Community councils:** there are 64 Community Councils and all councilors at this level are elected to represent a single-member division for a term of up to five years. Councilors comprise members elected by the electoral division, chiefs representing traditional leadership, and women occupying reserved seats determined by proportional representation lists submitted by political parties. The council must have between seven (7) and twenty one (21) members and no more than two appointed chiefs. The council is headed by an indirectly elected chairperson.

**Urban Councils:** there are 11 Urban Councils and, like the community councils, are composed of elected members, chiefs and women, according to party political proportional representation. Urban councils are headed by an indirectly elected chairperson.

**Traditional leadership:** Chiefs can be elected to serve on any councils but are limited to two on district and community councils and three on the municipal council. Within chiefs' areas, pitso (public gatherings) are held, in some cases periodically. These open meetings provide opportunities for participation. In terms of proposals made, elected councilors are expected to support such forms of participation.

#### Local Government elections

Local Government elections are the basis of a democratic society today. It is highly important that the individual has a direct say in

the election of a local government. The essential right that the individual retains is the right to directly elect those officials that govern his/her daily life, as well as ensure the accountability for the funds that the individual pays out in taxes, to ensure that basic amenities are provided. Democratic life requires an active role from the population and needs participation from every member of the community. It is no longer the case that those who are governed act only to elect. The idea of participation is very important to the concept of representative democracy as those elected will be monitored from time to time.

#### Committees within Councils

All councils are required to establish a standing committee on Finance and Planning. They have discretion to establish other committees including further standing committees, special committees and joint committees involving more than one council. Discretionary standing committees are also established by the councils for land administration and management, and for social services.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Councilors:** Amongst an extensive list of functions, local authorities are responsible for the control of natural resources and environmental protection, public health and water supply, education, agricultural services and the promotion of economic development. These roles spanned a wide spectrum of community affairs and governance functions, showcasing the diverse tasks that councilors undertake to serve their constituents effectively. The functions are detailed as follows: