

DIALOGUE ON POLITICAL PARTIES AND GOVERNANCE IN THE SADC REGION:

LESOTHO, MALAWI, MAURITIUS, SWAZILAND AND ZIMBABWE

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– EISA CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS –

A TWO-DAY WORKSHOP
HELD AT THE SHERATON HOTEL, PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA,
10–11 DECEMBER 2004

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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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PREFACE

The workshop entitled 'Dialogue on Political Parties and Governance in the SADC Region' was organised by IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) and EISA. The two institutions are also partners in the research programme on political parties and governance in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The research programme covers all 13 SADC countries, but in this workshop only five countries were reported on – Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The workshop was organised to allow researchers who have advanced in their research to present their findings, and brought together key political parties (ruling parties and opposition parties) from all five countries.

Judging by the responses and comments from most political party representatives present, the workshop had an impact on two levels. First, it allowed parties with different origins and capacities, levels of development and political cultures to exchange experiences and to share the challenges they face in their respective countries. Put differently, the workshop allowed parties to look at similarities and differences. Second, the interaction between political parties and researchers helped to enhance the credibility of the research and its findings. The workshop confirmed interest by high-level party representatives to have a discussion on the basis of systematic study and constructive dialogue. Indeed, the openness of the political party members and their interaction with the researchers will improve the quality of the final research product.

The workshop has put the two institutions, EISA and IDEA, in a good position to continue their work with political parties in the SADC countries. This workshop also set a good standard for the next workshop with those SADC countries that were not part of this discussion.

1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SADC REGION

In 2004, IDEA and EISA decided to undertake research on political parties to contribute to the strengthening of the democratic process. The democratisation process in Africa to date has been extremely important in re-orienting African political systems away from authoritarian rule and towards multiparty and competitive political governance. But competitive politics can only be sustained where there are well-functioning political parties.

Political parties are crucial actors in the sustainability of democratisation. Despite the good progress on multiparty democratisation made in the SADC region, there has been very little or scattered information and knowledge on the functioning and structure of political parties in the different countries.

The principal objective of the study on, and dialogue with, political parties is to try to understand the functioning of these parties in an effort to identify their strengths and weaknesses. No comprehensive study has been done by African scholars in the area of political parties in the SADC region. This research study has therefore given Southern African researchers and academics an opportunity to reflect on the existence, functioning and challenges that face political parties in their respective countries.

The research is part of a larger research programme for both EISA and IDEA. For EISA it is part of its Democratic Governance in the SADC Region programme, which is being funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Harare, the Royal Danish Embassy in Pretoria, and the Embassy of Finland in Pretoria. For IDEA it is part of a global research and dialogue programme with political parties (other regions include Central and Eastern Europe, South Asia, West Africa, East Africa and Latin America).

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

EISA Executive Director Denis Kadima and IDEA Africa Region Director Dr Abdalla Hamdok opened the workshop. They highlighted the importance of understanding how political parties function in the SADC region, considering the fact that they are key actors for the consolidation of democratic governance. IDEA and EISA had convened the workshop to introduce political parties to the project that both organisations are implementing. The workshop was also intended to create a forum for interaction between researchers and political parties. This process would further expose and help political parties to familiarise themselves with the research and contribute to its content. Through this process IDEA aims to work with political parties to strengthen their overall functioning and improve democratic consolidation.

The workshop participants were informed that EISA and IDEA had a profound interest in the unfolding process of democratic governance in the SADC region, and this explained the importance of looking at political parties.

METHODOLOGY

The workshop was organised so as to allow enough time for discussion and interaction between political parties themselves on the one hand, and between political parties and researchers on the other. It was divided into different sessions, with each session focusing on one particular country.

The information and research was collected by means of three questionnaires developed by IDEA and EISA, the first on the national country context, the second on the external regulation of political parties, and the third on the internal functioning of political parties. Country researchers reported on all the techniques being applied in the research: the methodology used in the study (all researchers said that the bulk of the material for their studies was obtained through face-to-face interviews with key leaders of political parties); the national context; the external environment (which looks into the legislation governing the functioning and existence of political parties); and the internal procedures of political parties (which draws largely on field interviews). Researchers were encouraged to report on all these areas of the research. After each presentation, time was given for political parties to respond to researchers' presentations.

WELCOME AND OPENING ADDRESS

The workshop was opened by IDEA Director of Operations Dr Massimo Tommasoli who delivered the official opening remarks. He welcomed members of the political parties and other distinguished guests. Tommasoli provided an overview of the aim of the workshop by locating the importance of political parties within the current challenges to democracy in the SADC region. He noted four issues that need to be addressed:

- The existence of gaps in political representation. The status of citizenship and lack of constitutional rights are problematical in many countries. These have to do with the lack of constitutionally guaranteed rights and the exclusion of people from political processes. They remain ongoing challenges.
- Citizens and their relation to their governments (or vertical accountability). This has to do with the way citizens relate and how governments are held accountable.
- Challenges presented by power-sharing and the lack of checks and balances that exist in the political system.
- The extent to which governments and political parties are consulting and working with one another across national boundaries.

Tommasoli ended by summing up the aim of the workshop, saying that the point was to identify ways to strengthen the functioning of political parties so that they contribute more to democracy. The effort here is to try to fill the gaps or address certain democratic deficits that relate to different dimensions of political change and political processes.

Denis Kadima then welcomed the participants. He spoke briefly about EISA, saying that the Johannesburg-based organisation has offices in Angola, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). EISA is involved in such areas as elections, local government, research, advocacy and strengthening political parties. Kadima referred also to the fact that EISA was increasingly getting involved in lobbying. He thanked the political parties for their involvement

and for providing sensitive information, and stated that the perspective of the political parties involved was useful. Kadima closed by thanking the donors – the Danish and Finnish embassies and the Swedish government – who were funding EISA's participation in this project.

Dr Abdalla Hamdok explained that International IDEA was an inter-governmental organisation operating in established and emerging democracies. IDEA, Hamdok said, provides comparative knowledge on a range of issues with the broad aim of helping the process of democratic consolidation. Outlining the purpose of the workshop, Hamdok explained that the research on political parties was part of a wider global research project on political party regulation and functioning. He emphasised that the functioning of political parties was crucial for enhancing democracy and he expressed the hope that the subsequent exchange of views would allow for cross-country knowledge to be shared in the region. It was hoped that the workshop would contribute to closing the gaps in comparative knowledge in this area.

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SUMMARY OF PANEL PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Head of IDEA's Political Parties Programme, Roger Hällhag, spoke on the international context of political parties. He started by identifying the aim of the workshop, which he said was to establish comparative knowledge about political parties and under what circumstances parties can fully assume their role in a democracy.

We have seen that there is actually a certain lack of such knowledge internationally. This is not because people do not know about political parties (parties are obviously part of the daily discussion everywhere) but because debate and discussion are too often superficial. There is not always much systematic knowledge of what actually happens in a political party and of the challenges that hinder parties from operating in the way they would like to.

Hällhag said that there was a need to share information and to move away from a situation in which information is monopolised by a few, to one in which information is widely available to party leaders, political activists and citizens alike. Through this, we hope to contribute to an environment that is conducive to the growth and strengthening of political parties and, therefore, also democracy. He said that this was why the information from the workshop should also be shared beyond the parties present. This was the only way we would be able to contribute to the creation of sustainable democracies.

While the internal functioning of political parties was left entirely to the parties themselves, they should nevertheless be aware of what they can learn from the experience of others. International agencies provide information on 'best practice'. They can also help to provide tools, such as information, manuals, training materials and polls.

Additionally, such institutions can help by providing guidelines for issues relating to management, funding, accountability and candidate selection, as well as programmes, policy alternatives and strategies.

Challenges facing political parties

Hällhag then moved to the core of his presentation, which centred on the changing nature of the relationship between political parties and citizens and the effect this has on democracies around the world. Before doing so he briefly pointed to the fact that worldwide, democracy seems to be in a state of crisis. Hällhag linked democracy crisis to the crisis that political parties are experiencing.

Political parties are experiencing falling **membership**, fewer volunteers and activists, as well as a lack of trust among voters. One indication of this crisis in Western Europe was the drastic fall in political party membership, which decreased from 9.8% in 1980 to 5.7% in the late 1990s, with this trend continuing. He also referred to the growing anti-political party sentiments in

Europe and to the increasing reluctance of people to get involved in political processes. Elections in Europe had recorded continually decreasing voter turnout. These were indications that the mass party model was being eroded.

Hällhag then raised issues that are facing political parties across the board and which are contributing to the weakening of democracy. These included political party funding, gender balance, weak party systems and citizen participation in political processes.

He said that **political party funding** was one of the major issues confronting political parties. The conventional approach, in which parties relied on grassroots members, was decreasing due to funding requirements.

In many countries parties rely on public funding. If one could not get money from members, one often decided in favour of public funding, although this was of course creating another kind of dependency. This was the common pattern in the European Union (EU) countries. Mexico was another extreme example of very strong public funding for political parties and of a heated debate about the viability of parties that have enjoyed those resources, and their ability to form a democracy that can act in a forceful way.

Parties also relied on private funding and less and less on membership contributions. However, private funding had its own challenges, such as being equated with the 'open selling of influence ... [which is] usually seen as corruption'. Membership contributions can no longer resolve parties' financial requirements as parties rely less on volunteers and more on paid officials, consultants and even paid grassroots activists.

During the 1990s, major political corruption scandals shook Italy, transforming the party landscape there; and France, Belgium and Germany were also affected, though without the same consequences in terms of restructuring the party landscape.

There were also situations where this selling of influence was more open and recognised, such as in the United States (US), where it was clear that corporate interests were openly investing in political parties. Nobody was hiding the fact. Instead, strong legislation was put in place to make it more transparent and in order that people could judge for themselves whether such funding was reasonable or not.

But an over-dependency on the benefits available to the ruling party could lead to the problem of a former ruling party being ill-equipped to become the opposition. The problem with the massive amounts of money involved in politics is that parties 'are being shaped by the state ... rather than parties shaping the state'.

On **gender equality**, Hällhag argued that political parties around the world were historically biased by the exclusion of women. Although efforts were being made to modernise representation in this regard, women still made up an average of just 15% of parliamentary representation. In some countries, political parties and regional or intergovernmental bodies had adopted voluntary quotas in an attempt to address this. The United Nations (UN) and SADC currently aimed to achieve 30% female representation, with this rising to 50% after 2005.

Rwanda currently has the highest representation of women in parliament, at 48.4%. Next are the Nordic countries, with an average of 39.7% women parliamentarians.

It had been observed that proportional representation (PR) systems tend to advance women's representation, but all electoral systems need to be evaluated because, for example, there are strong differences between countries with PR. The issue of gender representation must continue to draw attention and people must continue to look for democratic ways in which the equal participation of women can be achieved.

In general, Hällhag said there was a problem of **leadership**. Parties themselves admit a lack of renewal of leadership, which has led to a vicious circle whereby parties are small, remain small and do not manage to recruit young people. This was the case even in societies that are really young, as most African societies are, with the youth representing a strong majority of the population. Still, the party leadership does not bring in youth in a dynamic way. There is also a lack of representativeness of women, of ethnic minorities, or even of majorities. In Guatemala, for example, the American Indian majority is hardly represented in that country's political parties.

On the political party system and **citizens' satisfaction** level with democracy, Hällhag referred to surveys that showed some interesting results. Citizens of Africa and East Asia, for example, tended to be more satisfied with 'how democracy works' (65% and 63% respectively) than were their counterparts in Latin America and New Europe (36% and 35% respectively). While the figures for satisfaction with democracy might be viewed as disappointingly low, people made it clear that they preferred a democratic system to an authoritarian one.

The large majority of people in all the regions, according to the survey, said they preferred democracy. Although there are clearly people who are unhappy with democracy, there are hopeful signs for African democracies where, despite poverty and other social problems, people still have high hopes of what democracy could yet deliver.

Trust in political parties

On citizen participation in politics and their trust in political parties, Hällhag said that citizens of African countries showed much higher levels of trust than those living in Latin America, East Asia and New Europe. Aspects that tended to increase trust in political parties included the demonstration of fair and equal treatment of citizens, accountability and good general economic growth. Factors that had a negative impact on trust were incidences of corruption and, rather unnervingly, a more educated population.

If one considered Western Europe as an area with some of the oldest parties in the world, political parties were in a serious crisis due to a drastic fall in membership. In 1980, in 13 West European democracies, 9.8% (or almost one in ten voters) were members of a political party. In less than two decades this figure had fallen by almost half, to 5.7%.

The British Labour Party, for example, had an upsurge in membership when it came to power in the late 1990s, but this had now declined drastically. The German Social Democratic Party and the parties of the governing right in France keep losing membership.

Hällhag said that one could also look at the new democracies in Europe. The largest of these, Poland, which had recently joined the EU, had only 1.5% of its electorate as members of a political party. The survey also showed that identification with political parties was falling in 17 out of 19 European countries.

There were also findings on what influences political trust – on what makes people more or less trusting. The strongest influence on political trust comes when people see that citizens are treated in a fair and equal way by public authorities and public decision-makers. When this happens, citizens feel that they really are citizens and therefore have certain rights and obligations, and are equal before the law. This seems to have a strong influence in increasing political trust. The economic growth in a country and the economic prospects naturally also make people happier. But what is interesting here is that people respond more to the general picture of economic development. They do not so much evaluate their personal economic situations in deciding which party to vote for; it is more that they want to see a general development in society.

In summary, people in new democracies outside of Africa tend to be more cynical than people in African democracies. Additionally, Europeans are increasingly moving away from political parties and political processes. Fewer of those who remain party members are active as members; and membership is also less influential, with the significance of membership having been diluted in quite a number of parties.

The issues of gender and funding remain problematical around the world. Civil society's links with political parties are also weakening as civil society increasingly prefers to present itself as non-partisan in order to try to influence different parties instead of 'betting on one horse'. Whether this is good for democracy or not remains a question. But a clear consequence of all these manifestations is that political parties are weaker organisations today, and experience less ability to develop, adopt and win support for their policies.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

The plenary discussion noted several important points. One issue highlighted by several participants was what the survey statistics concerning the levels of satisfaction with democracy really meant. One participant remarked that although it appeared that people were not really happy with democracy, this did not necessarily mean that they would want a different form of government. Hallhag agreed, but emphasised that the lack of satisfaction with democracy was nevertheless a warning sign. A low level of satisfaction suggested that people might be more willing to accept undemocratic alternatives.

Another participant drew attention to the importance of the way survey questions were actually framed. A differently worded question might produce different responses. It was noted that people expected 'paradise' to come with democracy. They expected democracy to solve economic problems but they were ultimately disappointed because democracy could not deliver fast enough. Poverty was therefore an important factor when considering the levels of satisfaction with democracy.

The effect of international organisations on African democracy was highlighted. Most political party representatives noted that the sovereignty of African countries was at stake.

An aspect that drew much commentary and diverse opinions was the issue of gender quotas. A member of parliament (MP) questioned whether gender quotas were themselves democratic, and this comment was the subject of responses and a later discussion. An MP from Lesotho asked whether women should be encouraged to participate or should be pushed or forced to do so: 'If we force them through a quota system, is this democracy? I'm saying this because if one takes for instance my political party ... I believe that almost 80% of the membership is women.'

He said that while women went to national conferences, it was mostly men who were elected to national executive committees. However, the proponent of gender quotas defended this as democratic and legitimate. Another participant said: 'In most African countries, men and women are starting at different levels ... we need to take steps for women to catch up.' The issue of quotas as a temporary measure was questioned.

The funding of political parties was another subject that received much attention. The general view was that the funding of political parties was a matter that must be addressed forcefully. With globalisation and the elimination of frontiers, multinational companies were spreading and 'flapping their wings all over', and have the potential to influence political parties. There should therefore be proper legislation in this regard.

In relation to falling party memberships, a participant from Malawi mentioned that this was the case in his country, but that this was not the result of people being turned off the political process. Rather, it was the result of parties splitting and members moving away to other parties.

It was noted that freedom of the press, the independence of the judiciary and the independence of electoral commissioners were important facets of democracy. The electoral commissioners in particular played prominent roles in ensuring free and fair elections. In this regard, there were lessons to be learned from countries overseas.

The participants also reacted to the issue of internal party democracy. A participant highlighted the fact that political parties in Africa suffered from a lack of internal democracy. This is a problem when party leaders become elected national leaders since their political backgrounds are undemocratic in nature: 'How would you expect them to suddenly become democrats because they are presidents?' For this reason, strengthening democracy within parties was an important and worthwhile task.

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Dr Khabele Matlosa provided an overview of the regional context within which this workshop was taking place. The history of the region had produced rather unusual conditions under which political parties now operated. Matlosa's presentation focused on the major challenges facing political parties in the SADC region.

Aside from a few states, the SADC region had generally made good progress in terms of democracy and 'democracy is now alive'. The political space for democratic governance had been opened, but whether that same space had been opened at the political party level was questionable. In terms of the role of political parties, the key question was: Why are political parties important for democracy? The answer was that political parties (in a thriving democracy)

were, or should be, the driving seat of democracy itself. Thus, in order for parties to be effective (in the sense that they promote and protect democracy), the parties themselves must employ democratic processes as 'democracy requires democrats'.

Political party development

Matlosa said that it was necessary to understand the historical background in order to understand the way in which political parties operate. Most SADC countries were previously under colonial rule. Independence was preceded by multiparty elections. The fact that there were multiparty elections means that a good foundation for democracy was laid. Five to ten years after independence, however, this had changed, and a new trend had emerged, namely the one-party state. Justifications for the emergence of a one-party state were usually expressed in terms of a national need, such as the need for nation building or economic growth. Proponents argued that these needs were more important than the consolidation of democracy. The emergence of one-party rule affected how political parties behaved.

In the 1990s, conditions changed yet again and democracy became more institutionalised. An opening was created for political parties to establish themselves. Some countries and parties had taken advantage of this, but more could still be done.

Challenges facing political parties in the SADC region

There were four main areas where political parties were facing problems. These were leadership, elections, funding and gender equality.

On **leadership**, Matlosa said that leaders played an important role in providing parties' overall direction and vision, and in mobilising membership and resources. How leaders were selected, rotated and held accountable was crucial. Responsive, transparent leadership needed to be promoted within parties.

The many elections throughout Southern African countries this year had provided much insight into the way in which leadership operated. A new trend seemed to be emerging, in which the leader of the ruling political party stepped down as president, yet retained his leadership of the political party. This had happened in Zambia, Tanzania, Namibia and Mozambique. This raised the question: In the final analysis, whose word will reign supreme? Since this was a new trend, whether the final authority would be the state or the political party was something for which we would have to wait and see. And we would also have to see whether this trend would be repeated in other countries, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Matlosa noted that **elections** within parties were another area that deserved attention. It was valuable to know how the leaders of political parties were elected, as this was a good indication of how democratic the parties themselves were. Additionally, when disputes arose over candidate selection, how were these disagreements dealt with? Could it be that when these predicaments were dealt with in a negative way, an overall effect would be a reduction of party membership?

On **funding**, Matlosa said that most political parties' challenges revolved around resource management. Political parties could not survive on membership fees alone. Such fees could not be considered a resource base and were, for the most part, merely symbolic. Parties therefore

had to find their money elsewhere. The two main sources were public funding and private funding. The public funding option needed to be encouraged. Public funding was necessary not only during election times but also on a continual basis for the development of the parties themselves. Political parties existed not only for elections but for democracy, and they should therefore be developed as institutions.

While there were opportunities for public funding to play a role in contributing to and enhancing democracy, private funding presented a threat to democracy. It was clear that there was no perfect formula for private funding. The available options were:

- *Laissez-faire*. This means no regulation of private funding, and no legal obligation to disclose contribution amounts or the identities of contributors. Parties can receive any amount of money from anyone without having to account for it.
- *Regulation*. There are numerous problems with regulated private funding. For example, who would be responsible for overseeing and making the rules on this? Would it be the same body that is responsible for free and fair elections? If regulated private funding were adopted, then these practical considerations needed to be taken into account. If regulation were the path adopted, then this must be done 'properly'.
- *Total ban*. The third option is to ban private funding altogether.

On **gender equality**, Matlosa suggested that there had been remarkable progress in the SADC region on increasing the number of women in government to make governments more representative (although some countries, such as Mauritius, still fell far short of SADC targets).

SADC commits member states to 30% gender equality by 2005, and after 2005 the percentage rises to 50%. Political parties must be urged to strive towards achieving 30% women's representation by 2005. This quota formed the quantitative dimension of gender, but he cautioned that there was also a qualitative dimension to gender. Although the picture was good in terms of the number of women entering the political arena, it was necessary to determine their level of authority. We needed to ensure that while we catered for quantity, the quality was not forgotten. It was essential for women to be empowered with sufficient authority. The number of women in government must be backed by the power these women have to influence the decision-making process.

A great deal of progress had been made in terms of democracy. One example had been the increased responsiveness of political party leadership; but a great deal had still to be done. The primary challenges were those concerning leadership, intra-party democracy, political party funding and gender equality: 'If we can make progress in these areas, then we will achieve much for the larger democratic project.'

PLENARY DISCUSSION

The discussion opened with a reference to the different electoral standards that had been set by such organisations as EISA, the African Union (AU), SADC and the Electoral Commissions Forum. Of the four problem areas noted above, SADC was additionally looking at the quality of elections.

Most of Matlosa's points drew comment, but two issues in particular elicited the most feedback: the issue of political party funding; and concerns surrounding leadership, specifically the 'new trend' of a president stepping down but retaining the leadership of his party.

Concerning **funding**, it was noted that there were difficulties and loopholes in all parts of the world. A participant said that resources were 'crucial to the sustainability of any democratic system'. He observed that when resources were scarce, people in government find politics a source of livelihood on which a large number of people become dependent.

Another participant questioned whether Africa had a 'democracy fund', and an argument was made in support of public funding. It was suggested that a small fraction of gross national product (GNP) be used to create a democracy fund from which political parties could be funded according to the amount of representation they had. The impact, it was contended, would be to create stability and enhance democracy. The role of the opposition was 'to govern governance' and to agitate. The opposition could not do this if it was starved of resources. 'Democracy needs resources. Democracy is expensive ... it is naive to think that it is cheap.'

If public funding were adopted, there could be incentives for smaller parties to come together and thus reduce the number of parties needing public funding. Additionally, public funding had a socialisation aspect. Because parties are assured of funding, their members would be less likely to cross the floor and would be more passionate and sincere about the issues if they did not have to worry about money. Public funding can solve problems that might not be apparent.

In response to the argument for public funding, a participant said that it was very difficult for private companies to fund political parties publicly due to possible future retributions from, especially, a ruling party. But it was agreed that the issue should certainly be explored. The same respondent further noted that the end result of competition for resources was that fewer parties would have the ability to participate effectively in elections, thus reducing the competition to those parties with well-established resource bases. The fact that the richer political parties had more members was mentioned. Parties with more members tended to get more funding, and more funding was used to increase membership. The continuation of dominant-party rule was also a problem related to funding. While it was possible to remove the allegiances of politicians to those who are funding them, this also created problems as it would remove the funding itself and increase the financial burden on society in general.

For example, it was noted that in Malawi public funding had caused problems. Since every political party was given the incentive of public funding and the parties all received the same amount, Malawi now had a multiplicity of political parties. In relation to this, more money did not necessarily encourage more people to be active in politics.

Of the other comments on funding, many were about the practical application of public funding. The issue of thresholds emerged as a concern. It was obviously not practical to grant every political party large sums of public money – both because this would be financially unviable and also because it would lead to a multitude of political parties. Participants therefore questioned whether public funding could be limited to parties with a specified minimum support base, and, if so, exactly how much support would be required and how this could be measured.

It was also asked whether it would be feasible to limit the number of parties in order to make public funding viable.

Further, still in relation to the issue of funding and access to resources, a participant from Malawi made a noteworthy point. She said that in Africa in general, there was a problem of lack of distinction between resources that belonged to the state and resources that belonged to the ruling political party. The democratic tenet that a ruling party was only a *temporary* guardian of state resources was not fully entrenched in some African countries. This point was revisited in subsequent floor discussions.

Participants also registered their concern about the lack of renewal of **leadership** both within parties and within governments. A South African participant pointed out that one of the reasons for the dominance of a particular party was that many of the ruling parties in the SADC region were also liberation parties whose credentials were 'difficult to question'. Additionally, the fact that political parties were often created and maintained around specific personalities seemed to explain this trend.

In relation to leadership, the issue of **political education** was raised, to include not only leadership but citizens. Political education for the electorate and leaders was a running theme throughout the workshop. Education of the masses was recognised as fundamental to assist them to make informed choices. It was observed that there was lack of appropriate training for leaders. Candidates, once elected, were expected to become political leaders overnight, but they needed some kind of 'orientation'. There was an overall consensus that political leaders also needed to be educated. A general remark was that leaders were often not prepared for the changes resulting from succession, which could create problems. The discussion around the education of politicians formed the basis for a practical solution that was suggested at the conclusion of the workshop.

As far as **gender equality** was concerned, the discussion on quotas was contentious. In revisiting the comment made by a Lesotho representative in the first session, an argument to dismiss the claim that quotas were not democratic was put forward. Participants contended one after the other that since the gender issue was about political exclusion, the relevance of gender quotas to democracy need not even be debated. One participant said that the logic behind gender quotas was that they were an attempt at social inclusivity and added that it was quite simply 'the right thing to do'.

It was hinted that gender quotas were discussed in a condescending manner by male politicians. It was argued that although quotas were an acceptable means to an end, there were other ways to achieve equal representation. One such way was simply to place more women on the ballot. Women were capable and ready for participation, 'they just need to get on candidate lists'. Because the issue of gender representation was approached in a patronising manner, politicians needed to 'think more' when speaking on the subject.

A researcher pointed out the importance of distinguishing between **party systems**, noting that it was especially important to differentiate between a dominant-party system and a one-party system. Many dominant-party systems in Africa were erroneously referred to as one-party systems.

Elaborating on this, the researcher classified party systems as follows:

- *One-party system*: Only one party is allowed to operate.
- *Dominant-party system*: Parties are allowed to operate but the political scene is dominated by one party.
- *Two-party system*: Access to or competition for power is significant only between two parties.
- *Multiparty system*: Many parties compete, with many of them having a chance of winning.

Participants appeared to adhere to this classification for the remainder of the workshop. The one-party issue was pertinent to many countries, although each had a unique experience in this regard. This issue needed to be reflected on since it had a serious bearing on democracy. Adding to this, it was noted that in dominant-party systems the effectiveness of the opposition was crucial for democracy.

There was also discussion on the relationships between political parties. The argument that took centre stage was that all political parties needed each other, and that the pervading culture of adversarial relationships between parties needed to be removed: 'Inter-party mud-slinging has a negative bearing on democracy'.

3

COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The country presentations were the result of fieldwork conducted by country researchers. Clear terms of reference and a structure for their reports were given to the researchers. The studies were to focus particularly on party development in the different countries. The reports were to reflect country context, external regulation of parties and internal functioning of parties. These presentations were report-backs of the research findings, and the researchers were encouraged to cover all the research aspects.



MALAWI

Dr Nandini Patel presented the findings on Malawi. During the collection of data, five political parties in Malawi were examined. These were the United Democratic Front (UDF) (the ruling party), the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), the People's Progressive Movement (PPM) and the Malawi Democratic Party (MDP). A few people from each party were interviewed. Besides political parties, interviews were conducted with people from the country's electoral commission.

COUNTRY CONTEXT: OVERVIEW AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Patel noted that Malawi had a population of 12 million and a per capita GNP of US\$160 a year. The first elections were held in 1961 and from then until 1994 the country was under the one-party rule of the MCP. Following a referendum in 1993, Malawi held its first multiparty elections in 1994.

In 1995, a new constitution was enacted. The constitution brought about a presidential form of government, with each presidential term lasting five years and a president being limited to a maximum of two terms. These limits would prove to be significant in later years when the president tried to extend his term of office (the proposal was ultimately rejected). The new constitution set out a bicameral legislative body, but the upper house (the Senate) was later abolished. The legislature (the National Assembly) was now composed of 193 members who were elected by universal suffrage.

EXTERNAL FEATURES

The status of democracy in Malawi

Patel said that Freedom House classified Malawi as 'partly free', with a rating of between 3 and 4. A look at key democracy indicators revealed why Malawi was only partially democratic. One of the problems in the Malawian democracy, according to Patel, is that the executive controls the budget, and in consequence has a significant degree of control over parliamentary decisions. The lack of the rights of assembly and demonstration are major deficiencies to Malawi's democracy. Freedom House's ratings of Malawi's political rights and civil liberties slipped to a 4 in 2003, largely the result of the third-term debate which 'cost the nation heavily'.

Additionally, the ruling party had too much control over the state media. The ruling party used the state media and the state's resources, especially in election campaigns. This tactic not only unfairly disadvantaged opposition parties, but also raised serious questions about Malawi's democracy.

Nevertheless, there were positive indicators of democracy in the country. In contrast to the above, the judiciary had for the most part proved to be independent. An example of the judiciary's political independence was seen in the outcome of the failed 2003 attempt to amend the constitution to allow the president a third term. Another positive sign was that freedom of association was guaranteed under the constitution.

External regulations

Registration of parties

Malawi has a law that governs the registration of political parties – the Political Parties Registration and Regulations Act of 1993. Registering a political party in Malawi is fairly easy and simple; however, ease of registration also has its problems, including an increase in the number of political parties in a very short period of time. The country now has 31 officially registered parties, yet it is difficult to tell exactly how many of these parties are active. Malawi also has laws that allow for the compulsory deregistration of parties if they commit any unlawful act.

Elections

Although elections are free, they are not entirely fair. On the one hand, parties are free to present candidates and campaign for election. On the other hand, as Patel mentioned above, the ruling party tends to control the state media and to use state resources to further its own objectives.

The Malawi elections are also poorly managed, according to Patel. There are serious questions about electoral administration, as the results of most elections (especially those of 1999 and 2000) were contested. Equally, the low turnout in the 2004 elections has been attributed to poor electoral management. However, there is clearly a link between poor electoral management in general and poor management of the political parties themselves. Internal party problems no doubt have a negative bearing on the electoral process. Parties are weak in areas such as identifying and recruiting members, leadership succession, and overall poor organisation and structure. Such internal problems not only restrict the parties themselves, but carry over a detrimental quality into elections that ultimately has an adverse effect on democracy.

Coalitions in Malawi

Coalitions are formed regularly since political ideology is not an issue which parties overly concern themselves with, and since there are no major ideological divisions. The ruling party, having failed to win a clear majority in the 2004 elections, is currently part of a three-way coalition. The main opposition party is also part of a coalition. In fact, of the nine parties represented in government, eight are part of coalitions or alliances. While the number of parties represented in government used to be around three or four, the increase in coalitions has meant that many more parties can participate. This has resulted in parliament becoming 'more diverse and dynamic'.

Civil society institutions

With regard to civil society institutions, for the most part they are 'fragile and fragmented'. The major exception to this generalisation is the church. The church in Malawi is increasingly playing a more political role. For example, the church was responsible for brokering the opposition coalition in the 2004 election. It is also very common for the church to mediate in political disputes. The church is therefore not only at the forefront of societal institutions, but is also 'almost becoming a political actor', and there are questions about the extent to which the church should be allowed to influence the political arena.

INTERNAL FEATURES

Challenges within parties

Patel argued that many internal problems and difficulties experienced by political parties in

Malawi tended to revolve around the upper leadership of the parties. Parties appeared to be built around personalities rather than distinct and lucid ideologies. This feature had a number of repercussions.

- First, a focus on personality results in the leader being seen as ‘the breadwinner’, and consequently the leader has a large amount of control over the entire party, at the expense of internal party democracy.
- Second, a focus on personality detracts from a focus on policy, and thus the ideological foundation of the party is weak.
- Third, leadership succession quite obviously becomes problematical and leadership crises occur regularly.
- Fourth, the over-emphasis on personality engenders a ‘trait of patrimonialism’. Since the leader is presented as a father, he is treated like a father. A party chief is seen as a village chief, and the people regard an MP as a chief to whom they can, for example, take their personal grievances or ask for money for a coffin or fertiliser, etc.

A general observation made by Patel was that by basing parties on personalities, the role of political leaders and the parties they represent in society is distorted and sometimes misinterpreted by constituents. In addition, Patel contended that the parties lacked effective party mechanisms to deal with internal disputes. This resulted in parties taking their problems to court and exposing their problems in parliament. This burdened the institutional democratic structures (such as the courts and the legislature) unnecessarily, and therefore hampered the democratic process as a whole.

The internal problems in political parties made them weak as institutions and resulted in parties effectively restricting themselves from participating fully and openly. Internal problems could also be seen as partly responsible for low election turnout.

Party origins

We can classify parties in Malawi in four categories, namely:

- parties that were formed before independence, that is, the MCP;
- parties that were formed with the advent of the multiparty system (the UDF, AFORD, MDP and many others);
- parties formed during the multiparty period to challenge the threat to democracy, mainly the third-term bid by the president; and
- break-away parties from the three traditional parties – the UDF, MCP and AFORD.

Party constitutions, conventions and elections

All political parties in Malawi have solid and well laid-out **constitutions**. The party constitutions make the party hierarchy very clear. In all parties the national executive is the highest body, followed by lower bodies in a clear succession. Despite the fact that parties have well-composed and thorough constitutions, in practice these constitutions are not always adhered to. For example, although constitutions call for periodic party conventions, most parties do not organise conventions. The ruling party, the UDF, is especially notorious for not holding conventions and elections. The last time the UDF held an election was in 1993. There are, however, parties that

hold conventions more often. Nevertheless, this is definitely an area for parties to focus their attention. The absence of conventions has led to a failure to select **candidates** for election. The process is chaotic and there is widespread mismanagement of primary elections. In many instances elected people do not represent the party, and the party leadership approves candidates to stand as MPs. The lack of conventions and the mismanagement of elections are clearly a negative in terms of intra-party democracy. This is also an area which requires attention and reform.

Gender quotas

Among the parties consulted, only two have gender quotas. The UDF reserves 25% of its parliamentary seats for women and this is written into the party's constitution. The MCP allocates 33% of its seats to women at all levels of the party structure. While the other three parties do not employ gender quotas, they do nevertheless have other mechanisms aimed at the political participation of women. For example, they have women's leagues or forums, or directives for women's affairs.

Membership

With regard to membership, figures are not available. The three larger parties studied said that since recruitment was done at the branch level, some local branches have membership figures. However, there is no complete record of overall party membership. Part of the reason could be that the parties do not charge membership fees. Parties used to charge fees and fee-paying members used to receive membership cards, but this practice had a coercive element behind it and so parties are hesitant to bring this system back.

Political party funding

Political parties in Malawi have two main sources of funding. First, there are the traditional activities for raising funds from private sources. This is a common activity. Second, Malawi uses a public funding system. Under this system, parties holding at least 10% of parliamentary seats are entitled to public money. There are problems with both these funding sources. All the disadvantages of private funding discussed earlier in the workshop apply to Malawi – as they do throughout the world.

Public funding is also a controversial topic. Since only those parties with 10% or more support get public funding, they tend to retain their support base and thus continue to qualify for public money. The newer parties, however, do not have the numbers and so do not qualify for public funding, which in turn (it is argued) means that they will continue not to qualify. The end result is that newer parties do not have the financial resources to compete against larger, more established parties and so they remain small parties.

Policy development

In Malawi, only the ruling party has a research department, although the other parties say they are in the process of establishing their own research sections. The UDF's research department reports its findings to the party's national executive. The MCP said that it takes issues to its convention as they come up, while AFORD's position is that its manifesto reflects the party's policy focus. In general, most parties in Malawi make use of surveys and opinion polls, which they regularly conduct themselves.

All parties claim that they have disciplinary committees. Although these would be expected to be involved in situations pertaining to accountability on policy matters, this does not happen in practice. These committees tend to deal more with the conduct of officials and have very little to do with issues surrounding party policy. Policy development is therefore certainly an area requiring major improvement. The 'ideological blackout' experienced during the time of one-party rule continues to affect parties negatively today.

As long as parties continue to focus on personalities instead of identifying a broad ideological framework, policy development will lack a guiding structure. This has consequences for policy (and party) continuity and means that parties are perhaps not as strong as they could be.

CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

The challenges facing political parties in Malawi are as follows:

- There is a need for parties to move away from being personality orientated and to develop in the direction of a broad ideological framework. Issues need to take precedence over personalities.
- Parties need to address the patriarchal attitude that they engender.
- There is a need for proper records on things such as membership numbers.
- Parties must adhere to their own party constitutions.
- Decisions made at the top party levels need to be questioned and challenged and not simply accepted. This point is linked to the patriarchal culture in parties.
- Greater democracy within the parties themselves is required.
- Parties must stop wasting time in parliament, which they do when they expose their internal problems in the legislature.
- There is a need for better conflict management strategies to deal with problems that arise within parties. Parties should stop taking their internal disputes to court and instead develop functional and practical conflict resolution mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

Patel said that overall indications were that democracy in Malawi is here to stay. Democracy has become more entrenched and institutionalised and the country continues to move in this direction. However, as in all democracies the citizenry needs to 'sleep with their eyes open' to make sure that Malawi's democratic status is protected. To do this, Malawians need to be aware, well-informed and vigilant.

The onus is not only on the citizenry. The many problems experienced by parties have a critical bearing on democracy. The parties need to become more democratic internally. They need to make some significant culture shifts, such as addressing the patriarchal approach, developing conflict management strategies and identifying and following an ideological framework. These areas deserve attention and reform if democracy in Malawi is to be strengthened.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

Response from Malawi political parties

The topics of coalitions and the relationships between the parties elicited the most reaction. One representative made a correction and pointed out that the MCP does have an established

research directorate. The information provided to the party from this internal organ is used in setting policies and programmes.

In relation to the presenter's statements about political ideology, it was argued that political ideology is 'beyond the masses' and not a central concern of the parties because people tend to focus more on their own basic needs such as food and clothing.

On the issue of gender representation, women continue to be sidelined. Politics is still considered a male business, and only when politics is seen as being safe will women start to come forward and participate. This is, however, still a long way off.

Comments from the floor

The following issues were raised:

Regarding coalitions and relationships between parties, Patel had said in her presentation that Malawi had numerous political parties and that nine parties were represented in the legislature, eight of which were involved in coalitions. The government itself is currently formed from a coalition. There was reaction from the floor as to the nature of these coalitions. Participants questioned whether the alliances were made before or after the elections.

Delving deeper into this question, a participant said that there were frameworks for organising coalitions after elections – that is, formulae on how to share power – and there were frameworks for before elections. Coalitions were very important in countries that are severely divided because they aggregate interests on ethnic, regional, ideological and religious lines. So were there any frameworks in Malawi, and, if so, how do they operate?

It was concluded that there were no such frameworks governing coalitions in Malawi. However, it was pointed out that even though parties may not seem to spend too much time on endorsing or cloaking themselves in a particular ideology, this did not mean that they do not adhere to a particular ideology. Ideology gives a party an identity as well as a policy framework. In response, the researcher agreed with these comments, reiterating that Malawi needs to start a serious debate on ideology.

On the same issue of coalitions, participants (especially party representatives) wanted to know how parties came together to form a coalition and how coalitions were maintained. Were coalitions forged between groups with similar interests or a common bond, such as heritage? These questions were referred back to the researcher's statements about ideology, where she hinted that the parties were not alienated from one another on ideological grounds. This could be a reason why alliances were so common and so easily formed. In trying to obtain a deeper understanding of the relationships between parties, it was asked whether there was interaction among parties at the parliamentary committee level. Did the parties group together on the basis of common interests? It was established that opposition coalitions did not have activities and meetings where they worked together to confront the government. This was noted as a major weakness.

On internal democracy, it was said that parties experience enormous internal problems. Some of the challenges identified were the need for parties to stop exposing their problems in

parliament and to stop over-relying on the courts to solve internal disputes. It would be short-sighted to see the coalitions as smoothly functioning agreements.

On funding, since political parties in Malawi receive funding from the state, workshop participants wanted to know how this funding was regulated and whether political parties were also allowed to receive private funding.

On access to the media, there were several enquiries about access to information. Patel had briefly mentioned that the ruling party tended to use the state media for its own ends and that this disadvantaged opposition parties. In reference to this comment, it was questioned how information was distributed, how civil society participated in terms of distribution of information and what instruments opposition parties used to communicate with their constituents.

Malawi was one of the countries where the president was compelled by the constitution to step down, yet he retained leadership of his party. It was asked how this situation was playing out and what effects this had had on the party and on government.

The form of government was inquired about, and specifically whether the president was directly elected by universal suffrage or by parliament. According to the constitution: 'The President is directly elected by the people for a term of five years and Parliament cannot pass a vote of no confidence in him. There is no provision for that. The President can only be impeached.'

The powers of parliament compared to the powers of the president were also discussed. Patel spoke of occasions when bills had been 'bulldozed' through parliament and when MPs had been called to sit in 'extraordinary sessions'. The problem appeared to lie with the fact that the president had too much financial control over budgets that were earmarked for parliament. One way this had manifested was that six out of the 13 parliamentary committees were not functioning, as their funding has been withheld by the president.

MAURITIUS

The research on Mauritius had been undertaken by Dr Sheila Bunwaree and Dr Roukaya Kasenally, who presented their findings at the workshop. Bunwaree's presentation was on the country context and the external environment, while Kasenally spoke on the internal environment of political parties.

They had consulted five political parties as part of their primary data collection. These were the Mauritius Labour Party (MLP), the *Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien* (MSM), the *Mouvement Militant Mauricien* (MMM), the *Mouvement Republicain* (MR) and the *Parti Mauricien Xavier Duval* (PMXD). The first observation the team made was that the culture of silence that existed in Mauritius posed serious obstacles to the collection of data. Triangulation was thus engaged in, in order to mitigate the effects of this on the gathering of information. Civil society groups were also consulted.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Historical background

Bunwaree explained that Mauritius had a history of colonisation. The French had ruled the island for 100 years, after which the British had taken over. In 1968, Britain granted Mauritius independence. Unlike many SADC countries, there was no war of liberation or independence: instead, independence was voted for. At the time, 44% of the population did not vote for independence. The country had experienced some ethnic tensions that had erupted violently, and a looming concern was whether democratic governance could be sustained in the light of this. But democracy has survived and even flourished in Mauritius.

Several post-independence elections have been successfully held and power has regularly changed hands. This is why Mauritius is often hailed as being a democratic success story; and for the most part this is true. Bunwaree said that despite this, however, a number of areas in the political system indicated serious democratic deficits, especially in the areas of gender equality and the electoral system. She said there was a lack of gender equality in Mauritius as well as an outdated electoral system, which might start posing problems. Additionally, Bunwaree said, globalisation continued to bring new challenges that would ultimately have an effect on democratic governance in Mauritius.

Economics and development

Mauritius is ranked 64th on the Human Development Index and is one of the most developed countries in Africa. The World Bank classifies it as a middle-income country. What was, and to a certain extent continues to be, interesting about Mauritius is that it is rather atypical of the rest of Africa. Unemployment was below 2%, the government deficit was only 2.2% of GDP and average annual growth rates topped 6% for almost four decades while the rest of Africa stagnated. The country's solid ratings in such indicators are, however, slipping. The country is in a 'painful' economic decline and Mauritius is now seeking pragmatic solutions to these enormous challenges.

Bunwaree posed the important question of whether the economic development that Mauritius has seen will be sufficient to sustain its democratic governance in the years to come, especially in these globalising times where we are hearing more about privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation. To illustrate this point, she referred to the challenge that unemployment was posing and might pose in the future and its impact on democratisation.

Bunwaree said that unemployment was on the increase and today is in the double digits. This was a significant shift from the 1980s, when there was virtually no unemployment. Much of the rise in unemployment could be attributed to the loss of cheap labour and the relocation of industries to other parts of the world as a consequence of globalisation. This had particularly affected the sugar and textile industries. The expiration of trade agreements in such commodities was a prime reason why these industries were in decline. The end result was that Mauritius was no longer highly competitive in these industries.

Mauritius had been rather unusual in Africa as it had been able to resist International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank pressures to reform the welfare state. When structural adjustment programmes were taken up, certain features such as free education and free health care remained, despite pressures against these. But maintaining the welfare state is proving to be more and more difficult, partly due to the ageing population. More people are dependent on the welfare state and the worker-to-pensioner ratio is decreasing.

EXTERNAL FEATURES

Electoral system

Mauritius has a block vote electoral system, which it adopted at independence and has retained ever since. The system uses a combination of 'first-three-past-the-post' and 'best loser' systems. Sixty-two MPs are directly elected to a legislature of 70. Twenty constituencies vote for three representatives each; while the island of Rodrigues votes for two. A further eight MPs may be nominated in order to address a lack of community representation, bringing the total to 70. This system is used to ensure representation of all ethno-religious groups in the country.

The problem with this electoral system is that it allows for major discrepancies between the percentage of votes and the percentage of parliamentary seats. Also, in the past there have been situations where a coalition government has held 100% of the parliamentary seats. Although it may be impossible to achieve a completely democratic and representative system, the current system in Mauritius certainly has room for improvement. Thus the electoral system has come under the spotlight in recent years and many have pushed for it to be reformed. A committee under Judge Sachs from South Africa was appointed to examine possible system reforms. Although the committee submitted its final report in 2002, this has not yet come up for debate in parliament. The issue is therefore currently dormant.

External regulations and elections

The overall picture from the outside shows a clear, transparent and accountable system. While Mauritius has an electoral commission, it does not have an Electoral Act. Guidelines for elections are instead built into the country's constitution. For example, the constitution requires that political parties register. The Electoral Supervisory Commission is charged with ensuring the good conduct of elections.

Elections are generally free and fair and the results are recognised as legitimate. Mauritian elections produce high voter turnouts. Election results are never contested, with the exception of one of two smaller by-elections. But an element of concern is the lack of voter and civic education. There are no systematic voter education campaigns.

INTERNAL FUNCTIONING OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Kasenally said that her initial observation was that the political system generally seemed to run smoothly and democratically, although a number of problems were found when one looked at the internal functioning of political parties. She identified problems in the areas of:

- political training;
- internal structure;
- membership records;
- funding;
- lack of gender equality; and
- policy development.

On **political training**, Kasenally said that there was no voter or civic education and that training for aspiring and nominated representatives was also inadequate. When training did take place it occurred on an ad hoc basis. For example, one party mentioned that candidates were given guidance before media appearances. Sometimes representatives attended seminars, consultations and short talks but, once again, this was usually on an ad hoc basis. Despite the fact that none of the parties provided systematic or rigorous political training for their members, all of the parties agreed that some kind of training was important and should happen.

On **internal structure**, parties did provide operating guidelines explaining the internal structures within their parties. From this it was clear that on paper a bottom-up approach was adopted. Also, it seemed that parties tried to decentralise some of their organs. However, the way in which elections in the higher echelons of the parties worked was unclear. It seemed that the selection of people at these levels falls to 'a caucus of people around the leader'. So, despite an approach that appeared very democratic on paper, in reality there was a power concentration around the leader.

Referring to the primary data, Kasenally said she had detected that the parties desired a bottom-up approach and that this was very visible in terms of the creation of regional or local branches that had their own autonomy and functions, as well as elected core groups of people intended to gravitate to the higher levels of their parties. It seemed, however, that when it came to the nitty-gritty, the leader decided. This pattern was repeated in the decentralised party organs. The women's and youth leagues and local party branches were 'given the necessary space to talk about issues, which then started to shape up policy. But policy itself was very much the preserve of a small caucus of people'.

On **membership records**, none of the parties seemed to have membership numbers or, if these exist, no figures were obtainable. However, while membership numbers were elusive, all parties spoke of an increase in their numbers. No recruitment strategies existed. With regard to membership fees, only one party charged a very small fee of around 100 rupees a year. It was

interesting that in some parties elected MPs were required to contribute part of their salaries to their parties.

On **funding**, Kasenally said that a problem with funding was that no party was willing to disclose exactly where its financial resources came from. Parties referred to vague sources such as 'well-wishers'. Additionally, it appeared that the distribution and allocation of finances were in the hands of the leaders of the parties. Responses to many questions about funding were vague. Only a few parties answered the questions asked and even then the answers were imprecise and unclear.

On **gender issues**, Kasenally said that Mauritius fell significantly short of SADC targets for gender representation. In fact, this country has the lowest percentage of women in parliament of all the countries in the SADC region, standing at less than 6%. In terms of strengthening democratic governance, this was an issue that deserved immediate attention, starting at the party level. But parties themselves generally had no formal commitments to increasing female participation. Although the Labour Party had recently added an amendment to its constitution requiring 33% of its elected representatives to be women, it was unclear – given the way in which candidates were elected in the Mauritian system – how the party achieved this target.

On **policy development**, the researchers had found that this was rigorous in the Labour Party, which had some ten working committees with its National Policy Forum (NPF), each developing policy on a specific issue. None of the other parties had an institutionalised policy body at this level of sophistication. The other parties hinted that policy was developed as a result of consultations and discussions with the various organs of the parties. But, as noted earlier, this apparently decentralised, bottom-up approach was somewhat deceptive. In reality, 'policy development remained very much the preserve of a few'.

In contrast to long-term policy development, the development of election manifestos was rather refined in all the parties. Political campaigns were well-oiled and systematic, with follow-ups, feedback and consultation. It was important for all political parties that they should get the message across and ensure that campaigning was organised, thereby maximising voter turnout. But once again the actual drafting of manifestos was the responsibility of small groups of people known as editorial committees.

Linked to policy issues was a discussion about party ideologies and external links. All the political parties consulted described their ideologies as socialist in nature. All the parties said they focused on social justice and all saw their main function as 'uplifting the human condition'. Thus there were no ideological differences between the parties. The parties had external links, with all those questioned being affiliated to the international socialist body. There was a degree of networking and exchanges of ideas and practices with external bodies to which the parties were associated.

Kasenally then summarised the major challenges facing parties in Mauritius as being:

- finding pragmatic solutions to the challenges presented by globalisation;
- adopting a culture of openness and disclosure, especially with regard to funding sources and membership numbers;

- addressing gender equality deficits;
- providing training for leaders;
- implementing systematic voter and civic education programmes; and
- reforming the electoral system.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

Comments from Mauritian politicians

The first respondent began by expressing political parties' readiness to accept suggestions and introduce change. In an effort to ensure that elections were free and fair, he emphasised that any proposed changes would need to be holistic in the sense of addressing issues around funding and the Electoral Commission as a unified strategy.

Another respondent raised the issue of political parties in Mauritius. He said that, as in some other countries, parties in his country were to a large extent ethnically based. He said that this issue needed to be confronted before Mauritius could move on and step up the war on poverty, nepotism, fraud and corruption. There seemed to be little choice when it came to finding solutions for the increasing economic problems of Mauritius. He further raised the following points:

- Ideology was not an issue. It was, rather, the 'bread and butter issues' that were important.
- Democratic values must trickle down to those at lower levels, giving more power to the people at grassroots level.
- The way in which parties were funded was a crucial matter that deserved attention and, ultimately, reform.
- It was recognised that Mauritius had experienced shortcomings and failures; however, the commitment to democracy remained in the evolving global situation.

Economic challenges were considered the major issue confronting democracy in Mauritius. A Mauritian politician highlighted the challenges presented by globalisation and said that certain priority sectors needed to be identified. The textile industry, for example, needed to start dealing with problems related to unemployment and poverty. But he questioned at the same time the unemployment figures presented in the research. He pointed out that unemployment statistics were contentious. One needed to take into account the factors and the methodology used in determining unemployment levels. For example, it was significant how these figures included thousands of foreign workers, as well as the difficulties being experienced in certain sectors. The way in which the unemployment rate was calculated needed to be reviewed. He agreed, however, that in Mauritius attention needed to be paid to the relationship between party funding and democratisation.

Most party representatives agreed with the analysis presented by the two researchers. It was mentioned that in fact the government was currently working to resolve the many democratic shortcomings identified in Bunwaree and Kasenally's presentations. More specifically, there are select committees that are working on political funding, investigating the possibility of electronic voting and exploring electoral reform, and focusing on gender equality challenges and the possibility of introducing a PR element.

A final point, no less important, made by political party representatives from Mauritius concerned the parties' internal structures. Representatives emphasised that their political parties were well structured. For example, a woman politician referring to her party said that it was very well structured and that members of the central committee were elected. Although those in the Politbureau, which was the highest body, were indeed nominated by the party leader, they still had to be elected. This showed that there were democratic processes within parties which might, at first sight, appear to be lacking.

Comments from the floor

Participants expressed a general respect and a high regard for the way in which Mauritius had managed and was managing its democracy.

Once again, the issue of **ideology** was taken up, as it had been in previous discussions. It was contended that a lack of ideological differences between the parties did not signify a lack of ideology. Even if the issues were more 'bread and butter', ideology was still present and still provided a structure for political agendas. This debate surrounding ideology was a repeat of the arguments articulated in the Malawi presentation. The situation was simple – namely, that all the parties had a socialist ideology 'bent on social justice and bread-and-butter issues'; and because the parties adopted a common ideology, it was easy for them to enter into coalitions.

The reasons for the decline in the **economy** were questioned, as were the reasons for the associated growing unemployment. The traditional sectors of Mauritius, such as the sugar industry, were in decline due to globalisation. Four major consequences of globalisation for Mauritius were identified as the:

- dismantling of trade agreements;
- sharp decline in the availability of cheap labour;
- entry of foreign workers into the labour force; and
- emergence of South Africa as a regional economic power player. With the democratisation and opening up of South Africa to international investors, foreign direct investment (FDI) is gravitating to South Africa and away from Mauritius. With less FDI coming into Mauritius, economic growth has been stunted. It is evident that the difficulties imposed by globalisation are complex and that there is no panacea.

These factors had contributed to growing unemployment and a declining economy. A Mauritian representative pointed out that the government was working on economic alternatives for the country. An economic diversification strategy had been adopted. For example, one of the areas in the process of being developed was the information communication technology sector. But Mauritius's only real resource was human capital. Now that the country was moving into knowledge-sector industries, it was apparent that its human capital was inadequately prepared to meet the needs of these industries.

This economic strategy presented new challenges, especially in education. In the past, 40% of scholars failed to pass primary school, meaning that they could not enter secondary school. Although this figure was slowly being reduced, schooling was still far from equitable. The

reality was that Mauritius had a severe lack of qualified citizens to participate in the knowledge economy. Instead foreigners have come in to take the jobs. Thus the new jobs created are taken up by the new entrants into the economy, resulting in 'jobless growth'.

Something not fully addressed in the presentation but which arose during the discussion period was the issue of **coalitions**. Coalitions do bring some stability, but they also cause problems. One of the major difficulties with coalitions is that they minimise the chance for women to get into elected positions in a country where the electoral system undermines gender representation.

On the issue of **policy formulation**, it was observed that political party think-tanks were relatively new in Africa. Only the Labour Party had a formal think-tank or, in any event, the other parties did not mention such bodies. The Labour Party's think-tank is composed of academics, party members and members of civil society groups.

The issue of **voter turnout** was briefly discussed. Mauritius has a high level of voter turnout, which is totally different from what is happening elsewhere in the SADC region. The high voter turnout is something of a paradox, with some scholars associating a high voter turnout with symptoms of a crisis.

Overall, participants recognised that Mauritius did have areas where democratic governance could be reformed, but at the same time many expressed admiration for the significant achievements that the country had made since independence.

LESOTHO

Dr Khabele Matlosa and Caleb Sello conducted the study on Lesotho. Sello presented the findings. Five parties in Lesotho were examined: the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), the Basotho National Party (BNP), the Lesotho People's Congress (LPC), the New Independent Party (NIP) and the Basotho Congress Party (BCP).

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Historical background

Lesotho has a population of 2.2 million and has been independent since 1966. Pre-independence elections were held in 1965 and the first post-independence democratic elections were held in 1970. The country is currently classified as Level 2 on the Freedom House scale, with civil liberties scoring a 3. Freedom House categorises Lesotho as 'partially free'.

Since independence Lesotho has had a troubled political history. Between 1970 and 1993, the country was a one-party state. Many election results have been annulled and the country has experienced military intervention not only by its own military, but by the defence forces of its neighbours (Botswana and South Africa) in 1998, to restore stability and democracy.

Timeline of the major political events in Lesotho:

- 1965:** Pre-independence elections held
- 1966:** Independence granted
- 1970:** First post-independence elections. Election results annulled
- 1986:** Military coup
- 1992:** Electoral Act with a Code of Conduct passed
- 1993:** Elections held. Opposition (BCP) wins 100% of the seats
- 1994:** Civil society restless. Parliament dissolved
- 1995:** Civil service workers and trade unions strike
- 1997:** Ruling party splits and a majority moves away from the minority and forms new government. Elections held, but results later annulled
- 1998:** Elections held – BCP wins 100% of seats. Opposition regards election as fraudulent and this leads to political stand-off. South African National Defence Force and Botswana Defence Force, under the auspices of SADC, intervene
- 1999:** A SADC body led by South African Minister Sydney Mufamadi institutes the Interim Political Authority (IPO) as the government. The IPO is the result of a compromise between the ruling party and the opposition. The IPO devises a new electoral system, the mixed-member parliament (MMP)
- 2002:** Elections held using new electoral system. LCD becomes ruling party
- 2007:** Next elections scheduled

It is evident that the historical context in which political parties in Lesotho currently operate is of vital importance. Democracy in Lesotho has been unstable and indeed questionable at times.

However, since the MMP electoral system was adopted the country appears to be on a new and far more positive trajectory.

The electoral system

Prior to 2002, Lesotho's parliamentary representatives were elected via a first-past-the-post (FPTP) system. Such a system was inappropriate for the country and more than once it resulted in a party receiving all of the parliamentary seats even though opposition parties had won a large percentage of the vote.

The events of the mid-1990s finally convinced many that the electoral model was flawed and that stability and peace could never be achieved in Lesotho as long as the electoral system excluded large numbers of voters from fair representation. The IPO, in response, devised a compromise. A new system was proposed, one based on a mixture of the PR and FPTP systems. This was the MMP model.

By 2002, the new MMP system was in place. Under this system 80 representatives were elected by the old FPTP system, and a further 40 representatives gained their seats on a PR system based on the nationwide vote cast, making a total number of 120 MPs. This was an expensive decision but, as said previously, 'democracy is expensive'. It was also recognised that democracy was less expensive than conflict. The success of the MMP system was that while it might not be ideal it had at least brought stability, and the new system was tolerated.

EXTERNAL REGULATIONS

There are 19 political parties in Lesotho and all are required to register under the 1966 Societies Act. Political parties and elections are governed by the 1992 Electoral Act, which includes a code of conduct. Parties are free to present their chosen candidates for elections and to campaign as they wish – there are virtually no restrictions in this regard.

Legislation governs the right of parties to have campaign propaganda reported on government-owned media and in any newspaper in Lesotho during election campaigns. The question, however, was whether the legislation protects the rights of parties to campaign in the media, or whether it restricts their rights. Freedom House gives press freedom 4/10, meaning that the media is regarded as 'partly free'.

Until the 1998 elections, elections were administered by the Electoral Office, which was a government organ. By 1998, an Independent Electoral Commission was instituted and this body now oversees all elections. Although election results in the past were often annulled, the most recent elections have proved to be a turning point with the majority of parties recognising the elected leadership as legitimate.

INTERNAL FEATURES

The history of political parties in Lesotho is one of schisms. Many of the parties currently in existence trace their roots back to other parties that are still operational. Thus, parties are intertwined to the extent that even their party constitutions are very similar. For example, all those with a 'Congress' in their names are, for all intents and purposes, one party. The Congress Party, whether you call it BPC, BCP or NPC, is really one Congress.

There are basically two ideologies in Lesotho, with the Congress parties adhering to one ideology and the Nationalists another.

A certain amount of decentralisation has also occurred within parties, with increased grassroots activities shifting more power to local party branches. Decisions are increasingly being made from the branches or from sub-branch levels and not from Maseru by the central committees.

All political parties have their own **constitutions**, which serve as party rules and operational guidelines. In each party, a national executive committee (NEC) is the highest body. It is also the body that draws up the party's campaign manifesto. To serve on the NEC, a candidate must first be eligible (generally over 18 and a committed party member) and s/he must be nominated by his/her branch. Delegates at the party convention vote for the nominees. All elections within parties work on a simple majority basis.

The above procedure is followed by all the parties questioned except one, which has never held a convention, and consequently the members of their NEC are appointed and not democratically elected.

Membership

To be a member of a political party, basic conditions must be met. For example, the person must be over 18 years old and must be loyal to his/her party. All the parties questioned except one have a membership fee, which is one maluti. The more organised parties keep membership registers.

Funding

Party funding is an issue that presents problems. There are very few private funding initiatives. During election years, parties receive some public funding. In general, parties are severely under-resourced, so much so that many do not even account for their spending. The bigger parties have independent auditors.

Gender representation

There are no gender equality quotas (nor are there youth quotas); however, there are modest efforts pushing for appropriate gender (and youth) representation. Parties have women's and youth leagues.

EXTERNAL AFFILIATION

There is very little evolution in terms of the organisational structure of political parties, although relations have been somewhat expanded. Some parties have built relationships with business and some have strengthened their ties with labour. Other parties have links with the church. There are no official external affiliations, but many of the parties have contact with international bodies or parties which they consult on electoral strategies.

COMMON FEATURES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN LESOTHO

- None of the parties have a media outlet.
- Voter education does take place but this is mostly external to the parties, although parties sometimes participate.

- Loose coalitions and alliances between parties are common.
- Party officials are usually volunteers who are not paid for their work.

CHALLENGES

The continuing challenges that Lesotho faces are:

- widespread poverty;
- the dominance of one party;
- HIV / Aids – 30% of the country is infected and this has a huge, direct impact on parliament because it is likely that many MPs are infected;
- party funding remains a challenge;
- parties need to work on capacity building in order to strengthen themselves as institutions and in the process strengthen democracy;
- unemployment;
- democratising governance within the parties;
- voter education;
- the proliferation of parties; and
- the electoral model for local government – the FPTP system is still used in local government elections.

OPPORTUNITIES

Although there are enormous challenges to entrenching democratic governance in Lesotho, there are also a number of opportunities and positive indications:

- The 2002 electoral reform has brought stability and seemingly set the country's political system on a new path of peace and solidity.
- A multiparty parliament means a more diverse and more representative government.
- The government is committed to ongoing parliamentary reforms.
- The Pan African Regional Conventions as well as the Pan African and SADC parliaments will hopefully bring the country more opportunities to consolidate democratic governance.

The future for Lesotho is certainly brighter than it was a decade ago, but the ongoing challenges need to be addressed to ensure a fair, equitable and stable country.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

Comments from Lesotho political party representatives

These representatives commented extensively on the electoral system. It was mentioned that the original recommendation was for a parliament of 130 members, with 80 elected via the FPTP system and 50 through a nationwide vote based on a PR system. The number of PR representatives was eventually reduced to 40. The government, it was contended, was clearly not willing to concede a 65/65 split. It is true that the current model has brought peace and stability, but more groundwork is necessary.

It was also maintained that the opposition, which acquired its seats from the PR vote, 'feels the pinch of being discriminated against in parliament'. MPs who gained their seats from the

constituencies had greater benefits and resources, such as secretaries, while those elected on the PR basis were not granted such allowances. This attitude had even filtered down to grassroots level, where MPs tied to a constituency received greater donations. The MMP system had solved the big problems, but in the process it had created numerous smaller difficulties that at first sight might not be apparent.

Comments from the floor

Participants raised several issues, including questions of ideology, funding and the role of the king in politics in Lesotho.

On **ideology**, an issue that emerged as important for those attending the workshop – the ideological differences between the congress parties and the nationalists – was discussed. The researchers felt that the ideological divide between the two groups was not deep. The congress parties were more Pan-Africanist in orientation. For example, in the past, the BCP had had links with South Africa's Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and not the African National Congress (ANC) (although this had since changed). They were also viewed as more in touch with the 'common people' (as opposed to those associated with chieftaincies). The nationalists, for their part, had strong links with the Roman Catholic Church and chiefs. In short, the differences between the parties were not rooted in divergent ideologies.

On the role of the king, it was argued that this was no longer a contentious issue in Lesotho politics. Unlike the Swazi king, the Basotho king was a constitutional monarch and was seen as a unifying factor within Lesotho – a symbol of unity rather than a political player.

On Lesotho's **economy** and the role of South Africa, it was suggested that Lesotho's economy was so closely connected to South Africa's that it might not be possible for private funding of political parties to remain independent of South Africa. The researchers said that it was difficult to identify how much funding originated from South Africa because these facts were never disclosed and parties' private funding was a grey area. It remained to be seen what, if any, role South Africa would play in this regard in future.

Other issues debated were:

- the electoral systems within parties, which are majoritarian;
- personalities, which play a large role in Lesotho politics; and
- the future of the LCD 'beyond the present leader'. How he would be succeeded remained to be seen. This followed an earlier discussion on succession politics in most SADC countries.

ZIMBABWE

Prof. Lloyd Sachikonye presented his findings on Zimbabwe in the context of five Zimbabwe parties – the ruling Zanu-PF, Zanu Ndonga, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the Democratic Party (DP) and the National Alliance for Good Governance (NAGG). The most active of these were those represented in parliament, namely the MDC, Zanu Ndonga and Zanu-PF.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Historical background

Sachikonye described the liberation struggle that had spanned the period between 1966 and 1979 and, before this, the growth of nationalism from the 1950s onwards. The colonial legacy of white settler rule had also left an imprint on the system that was adopted in the post-independence period.

He said that in the Zimbabwean context, parties had been central players in the nationalist and liberation struggles as well as in post-independence politics and governance. During the first decade of independence, the Lancaster House constitution had set the framework for the political system of the new state.

The independence elections in 1980 had resulted in legitimate majority rule, with Zanu-PF winning 57 seats in a 100-seat parliament. Zanu-PF was the majority party but for two years it had run a government of national unity with PF Zapu. This government of national unity collapsed with the eruption of the conflict in Matabeleland in 1982. It was not until 1987 that the two parties reached a rapprochement that resulted in a unity accord. In the same year, a constitutional amendment created the executive presidency. This, Sachikonye said, was the root of authoritarianism in Zimbabwe. From this time to the mid-1990s, Zanu-PF had been the dominant party with more than 95% of the seats in parliament. But by the late 1990s, the political environment started to undergo a significant change with the emergence of a well-structured civil society movement that included human rights, labour and student organisations. This culminated in the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in 1998 as a pressure group demanding constitutional reforms. Zanu-PF wished to draft a new constitution and subject it to a referendum. Opponents wanted a new constitution to be created through a process of consultation and deliberation. In the end, civil society groups presented their version of a constitution, while Zanu-PF drafted its own constitution and put it to a referendum, which rejected the government-sponsored constitution.

At the end of the 1990s, the situation looked primed for some kind of compromise between Zanu-PF and opposition groups that would result in a transparent and cooperative atmosphere. But this was not to be. Instead, since 2000, the political climate in Zimbabwe has become increasingly authoritarian in nature. The researchers noted that opinions opposed to those of the ruling party have been silenced through repressive legislation. The media are not free and even the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are heavily regulated. The period

of opportunity for entrenching democracy has passed and the country is set on an entirely new political path.

Zimbabwe had a population of 12 million, though 2-3 million people have left the country over the past four or five years – a situation that could be regarded as a serious brain drain. In the past few years, GDP has declined by 30-40%, poverty has deepened and an estimated 80% of the population live below the poverty line. Zimbabwe used to rank with the middle-income countries on the Human Development Index (HDI). The country slid from the slot of 111 in 1990 to 130 in 1998 and then to 147 in 2003 in the global HDI. The unemployment rate is estimated to be about 60-70%, while there has been a significant decline in real per capita GDP.

EXTERNAL REGULATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT

The word 'authoritarianism' denotes a host of repressive features in a political system. Sachikonye noted that Zimbabwe displays many of the characteristics of an authoritarian state, but it is somewhat surprising that there are virtually no restrictions on creating a political party. Parties are not even required to register formally. The only requirement is that candidates for election must be nominated by registered voters. Two major laws govern most of the operations of parties and elections. These are the Electoral Act and the Political Party Finance Act. Under the latter, foreign funding is prohibited (although it still occurs). Interestingly, funding from expatriate Zimbabweans is not illegal. This act also sets out conditions for public funding. To be eligible, a party must have 5% of the vote, which means that at present only two parties qualify for public funding.

There is legislation that restricts the operation of opposition parties. For example, the recent Public Order and Security Act requires opposition parties to obtain legal permission to hold meetings of more than five people. Opposition parties are therefore burdened by bureaucratic and rather undemocratic processes. So while parties may be free to exist, they are not free to conduct their activities as they choose. Furthermore, the Access to Information Act requires newspapers and journalists to be licensed. Newspapers unacceptable to the government have been shut down. It almost goes without saying that the state media are a monopoly of the ruling party. Overall, the context is not conducive to access to information, and therefore to democracy.

Zimbabwe uses an FPTP system and has a unicameral parliament. There have been proposals to reform the FPTP system to include an element of PR. Likewise, some have suggested that Zimbabwe should expand its parliament to a bicameral body. It remains to be seen whether these suggestions will be considered seriously.

INTERNAL FEATURES

Owing to the restricted environment there is a high level of mistrust between political parties. Elections are widely considered to be neither free nor fair. The DP is the only party that has been consistent in boycotting elections – although at the time of the workshop the MDC was also threatening to boycott the 2005 election.

The sense of injustice and an inequitable playing field are apparent when one looks at the high level of electoral disputes. Forty-six results were contested in the 2000 election (30 of these are

still in the courts). The high level of disaffection in the opposition parties is a major weakness in Zimbabwe.

Ideology

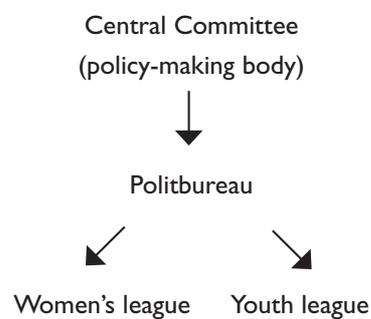
The parties describe themselves as follows:

- Zanu-PF: 'We are a party of nationalism, pan-Africanism, socialism and anti-imperialism.'
- Zanu-Ndonga: 'Our agenda is to promote unity in diversity, nationalism and decentralisation of power.'
- The DP: 'We emphasise democracy and the separation of powers, and we oppose any form of dictatorship.'
- The MDC: 'We are a social democratic party seeking to create a transparent democracy and one of our priorities is equal gender representation.'
- The NAGG: 'We are a nationalist party seeking good governance.'

Party structure

Party structures are more or less similar. Although the names of the bodies within the parties differ from party to party, the basic structure is as follows:

Figure 1: Structure of Political Parties



The central committees are the parties' highest organs. Members are elected by the party congress, which is a general party meeting held every five years. Potential members of a central committee must first be nominated by local party branches. Zanu-PF does not set fixed terms for their leaders. The MDC and NAGG have limited terms, but whether this will be adhered to by the MDC remains to be seen.

Almost all the parties have women's leagues. The women's leagues and youth leagues can be quite influential. Youth leagues play an important role in mobilising youth during election times. The women's leagues have scored some victories; however, it is important to note that the parties themselves do not employ gender quotas at the highest party levels, although Zanu-PF and the MDC have quotas at the Politbureau level. The lack of gender equity within parties is reflected in the legislature, where only 10% of representatives are women.

Policy development

With regard to policy development, there seem to be discrepancies between the responses from the parties and reality. It appears that the leadership has extensive control over policy, and total control over party policy and manifestos. Some parties rely on outside consultants when forming policy. In addition, information from public opinion surveys conducted by Afrobarometer, the Helen Suzman Foundation and the Mass Public Opinion Institute has been used. The MDC and Zanu-PF conduct their own surveys, some of which are not published – ‘for obvious reasons’.

Membership

All parties issue membership cards which are widely used and abused ‘to buy food’, for instance. All parties also charge membership fees. MPs contribute part of their salaries to their parties. Some parties are able to provide membership figures, but sometimes these figures seem unreliable or ‘too good to be true’. Membership numbers increase during election times.

Other points noted:

- There is very little voter education.
- There is a huge wealth gap between the bigger and smaller parties.
- The smaller parties do not deal in huge sums of money and do not submit audited financial reports, but the bigger parties do submit such reports.
- Only Zanu-PF and the MDC publish their own party newspapers.
- The distinction between party and state is blurred, as Zanu-PF uses state resources for its own ends. For example, the national police are used to guard Zanu-PF offices.
- On the whole, the parties covered in Sachikonye’s study state that they do not have extensive links with international organisations and parties. In particular, the smaller parties have very limited ties with external parties. There are international links with other parties, most notably with political parties in South Africa.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

As no representatives from the Zimbabwean political parties were present, comment and questions were immediately taken from other participants. Many topics were raised, with many questions concerning the perception and power of the MDC, the effects of opinion polls and Zanu-PF’s internal and external relations.

On the MDC, one speaker believed that it expressed an ideological paradox. When the MDC was formed it accepted and welcomed support from anyone willing to contribute to its growth. But now that it was a large party it purports to be socially democratic in ideology. It was, however, interesting that it simultaneously generates support from both the left (i.e. labour) and the right (i.e. the Agricultural Association) of the political spectrum.

Another area that was touched upon was political parties’ access to the media. One participant noted that Zanu-PF’s use of the media is critical in undermining the credibility of the main opposition party, the MDC. Zanu-PF has used the media successfully to brand the MDC as an imperialist puppet and this has somewhat taken root. Because Zanu-PF controls the media, the MDC’s policies and proposed solutions received no attention. Indeed, ‘in an atmosphere where

there's fear and insecurity, apathy and mistrust ... it really makes it difficult for balanced reporting of events and issues'.

A participant referred to a survey conducted by Afrobarometer which showed that Zanu-PF and Mugabe were more popular than the MDC or its leader. But some argued that such polls were controversial and needed to be treated with extreme caution. Whether these really reflected the actual situation was, of course, a different matter. Before 2000 and in 2002 the MDC had much higher ratings. Since the dynamics on the ground were abnormal, it would be difficult to accept the results of such surveys. It was argued that it would make sense to allow for the fear factor, leading to insecurity in terms of the responses when the survey was conducted.

Returning to a point from an earlier discussion, the question was posed whether Zimbabwe was a dominant-party system or a one-party system. This distinction broke down in the Zimbabwe case, as it was ambiguous in the sense that Zimbabwe was a dominant-party state from the point of view that the ruling party genuinely had a large membership and opposition parties were allowed to operate; but it could also be argued that Zimbabwe was a one-party state because the environment in which the opposition operates is repressive and heavily restricted. Additionally, there is a fusion between the party and the state:

'[Zanu-PF] is a state party that tries to use the pillars and the machinery of the state – particularly the police, the army and some of the vigilante and militia groups – to curtail the democratic rights of others, including other political parties.'

This discussion was linked to the hotly debated issue in SADC – the transformation of liberation movements into political parties. It was argued that Zanu-PF had experienced difficulties in transforming itself from a liberation movement into a modern-day political party. Making the transition had brought challenges accompanied by insecurities. Zanu-PF wanted to remain the ruling party but lacked confidence that it would remain in power if it brought about too much change. In the late 1990s, Zanu-PF had more confidence and could have instituted reforms; however, the violence and authoritarianism that followed were signs of a party trying to hang on to power, as well as a reaction to the fear about what a transition might bring.

A participant asked how successful the MDC had been in transforming itself from a protest movement into a political party and whether the MDC was capable of providing an alternative government. The MDC had been mutating, but this was a slow process. It was building itself structurally by setting up policy teams and 'coming up with alternatives'. This indicated that such transformation was happening. However, the background against which this was occurring should not be forgotten.

Participants discussed the relationship between South Africa's ANC and Zanu-PF. In the past, the relationship between the two parties was not as 'cordial' as it is now. This was perhaps because the ANC today did not want an unstable situation in Zimbabwe.

Some argued that the ANC was not sure of what the MDC could do if it came to power. The ANC and Zanu-PF did, nevertheless, have some disagreements. In summary, however, it seemed to be a case of 'former liberation movements sticking together'.

SWAZILAND

Dr Joshua Mzizi presented his findings on Swaziland. He explained that since political parties were banned in Swaziland, much of his research had been focused on the country context and external features. Information from parties was provided in confidence as much of it was very sensitive. For obvious reasons, some information could not be obtained.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Historical background

Before independence, political parties were grudgingly 'permitted' to exist. Mzizi explained that Britain refused to grant Swaziland independence if it appeared that power would subsequently shift to the Swazi king. The king felt differently, believing that traditional aristocratic rule was superior to modern forms of government. He felt that the right to rule would be usurped if there were political parties.

In 1963, the king had initiated a plebiscite intended to demonstrate to Britain that he had popular support. The results did seem to show this, but it was important to note the underhand tactics that had been employed in achieving this result. Nevertheless, Britain would not back down from her insistence that political parties be allowed to operate in an independent Swaziland. A constitution was instituted in 1963. It included a Bill of Rights which legitimised political parties and provided for a bicameral parliament. This was intended to provide a structural framework to prepare Swaziland for independence, which Britain envisaged as a democracy.

Mzizi explained that by 1963, seven political parties had been established, each with a different ideology. In response, the king formed his own party in 1964. This was the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM). Within a few years, the king's party had absorbed every significant party except the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC). In 1964, elections were held. The king's party won all the seats in the Westminster-styled parliament. Because it held all the seats, the INM was able to play a major role in the constitutional development of the country. In 1968 Britain granted Swaziland independence. The first post-independence elections were held in 1973. The strongest opposition to the INM, the NNLC, won only three seats in this election, despite capturing about 20% of the vote. The relatively high turnout of the NNLC alarmed the king, who tried in various ways to discredit and remove the opposition. When he failed to do this, he resorted to drastic action – he repealed the constitution in the same year. On repealing it, the king claimed that the INM and the Swazi people had been excluded from the constitutional development process. Some of his other accusations about the constitution were that it:

- had 'failed to provide the machinery for good governance';
- was the cause of unrest and hampered the maintenance of peace and order;
- was 'an impediment to free and progressive development in all spheres of life'; and
- 'had imported highly undesirable political practices that were incompatible with the Swazi way of life'.

In reality, the king repealed the constitution because it allowed political parties, which challenged his absolute rule. The king created a council of ministers (which he appointed) and took control of all branches of the government. Mzizi sums up that the king's actions amounted to a coup. He then created a Constitutional Review Commission whose job was to investigate what the Swazi people wanted in a new constitution.

The report of the Constitutional Review Commission, which was produced clandestinely, cannot be located. Nevertheless, based on this report, the tinkhundla (chiefdom) system was institutionalised by the Establishment of Parliament Order of 1978. In a 1981 proclamation the king entrenched the tinkhundla system and confirmed that political parties would not be permitted to exist. In other words, the tinkhundla system was imposed on the country's citizens without consultation.

King Sobhusa II died in 1982. His son King Mswati III assumed power in 1986 at the age of 18. This change of monarch was viewed favourably at the time. The new king set up bodies to consult with the people, including a body specifically created to consult on a new constitution. A vague oral report resulted from the latter body. The report concluded that the Swazi people wanted the tinkhundla system to remain and did not want political parties. In 1992 a (discredited) second commission's report reiterated this, saying that the Swazi people were 'not yet ready for political parties'. The Constitutional Review Commission's 1996 report:

'... recorded emphatically that political parties must remain banned in Swaziland and recommended that the existing laws regarding this position must be enforced. That was a clear statement again, said to be coming from the Swazi people.'

A Constitution Bill is currently before parliament. It:

'declares Swaziland as a democratic, participatory, tinkhundla based system, which emphasises devolution of state power from central Government to the tinkhundla areas and emphasises individual merit over and against group representation.'

The anti-political party sentiment is apparent.

INTERNAL FEATURES

After the banning of political parties in 1973, more decrees by the king outlawed political parties and criminalised their activities. The NNLC went underground in 1973. Dr Ambrose Zwane, leader of the NNLC, was repeatedly caught and imprisoned without trial. After one such imprisonment, he escaped from Swaziland and fled to Tanzania, whereupon that country's president, Julius Nyerere, had him extradited back to Swaziland where he was 'warned never to agitate for political parties in Swaziland'.

For the decade between 1973 and 1983 the banned political parties were very quiet. When Zwane died in 1987, he was buried in the NNLC party colours. People attended his funeral wearing the party colours. The symbolic display of the colours stirred the party members and led to 'a great revival' of the NNLC. The party 'unbanned itself' and held party elections, electing Orbit Dlamini as its president. Dlamini is now an MP. The NNLC appeals to youth, peasants and workers.

Between 1983 and 1986, the Liqoqo regime was in power. This signifies a time period of political restlessness. The People's United Democratic Movement (Pudemo) and other parties were formed in 1983 as a response to the upheaval. Pudemo was composed mainly of militant university students, who exposed and challenged the atrocities of the government and called for democracy. As in the case of the NNLC, Pudemo also draws support from peasants and workers.

In 1986 the 'Sive Sinyaqaba cultural organisation' was created to counter the alleged anti-monarchy sentiment of the trade union movement, to which many Pudemo members belonged. Sive Sinyaqaba is the only registered cultural organisation in the country. It draws support from the traditionalists.

There are three major objectives of the banned political parties, namely, to:

- liberate Swaziland;
- be a voice for the muzzled; and
- find a balance between liberals and conservatives (an objective of Sive Sinyaqaba).

All the parties have well-written constitutions with clear succession rules (every three or four years a new leader is elected). They do hold meetings and party conventions, but this is of course extremely difficult and sometimes meetings need to be held in South Africa.

Sive Sinyaqaba, the NNLC and Pudemo have registers of members, although in the case of the latter two organisations these registers are closely guarded. In total, these three organisations have a combined membership of 140,000, of which 38% are women. The two parties have recruitment drives, but Sive Sinyaqaba does not, 'as people come to it, instead of it going to the people'.

Additional points made about the internal functioning of the parties:

- There are age requirements for the leaders. In the case of the NNLC, the president must be over 35 years old; for Pudemo, the leader must be over 18 years old.
- Neither the NNLC nor Pudemo took part in the 1998 elections. The NNLC was clear about its boycott of the 2003 elections, while Pudemo's stance was not clear cut and some of its members did contest the elections.
- Both parties have external relations with allies but Sive Sinyaqaba does not. These allies cannot be named.
- In addition to external alliances, there are also internal connections with trade unions, business coalitions and church organisations.

In conclusion, Mzizi shows that Swaziland is clearly far from being a democracy. Since political parties are not legally allowed to exist, the challenges they face are enormous. Yet despite the political conditions in the country, there are active parties with the overriding objective of freeing Swaziland.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

Comments from Swaziland representatives

The representatives from Swaziland spoke at length about the challenges their parties, which are banned, face in Swaziland's unique political situation. These are some of their views:

In Swaziland, two-thirds of the population live in rural areas. People are loyal to the king and this is a major obstacle for parties. The mindset is not right in the rural areas – the idea of political parties is alien to these people. This means that most of the political activity tends to be concentrated in urban areas and tends to be among the middle class. While the rural people are not particularly educated, they are still potentially politically dangerous if the parties were to win their support.

Swaziland is much like Zimbabwe in that land ownership is a key issue affecting politics. This is because the chieftdom system is based on land and it is through land that chiefs obtain their power. Encouraging new and progressive thinking is difficult because chiefs have the power to evict people from their land and may do so if someone openly opposes the king. Rural people have no rights. It is not necessarily that people do not want change, but rather that challenging the status quo is very risky – the people, and even the chiefs themselves, are at the mercy of the king. The risks are great for dissidents and although the rewards are potentially great as well, it is unlikely that they will be achieved.

In Swaziland, participants claimed, the judiciary is not independent. Judges rule in line with the king's wishes and when they do not, the king (and sometimes even parliament) simply does not recognise their authority. Judges have resigned because the king sees himself as above the law. The judiciary has no more than token power, and in Swaziland separation of powers is a myth.

Another argument traced the banning of political parties in Swaziland to the apartheid regime. It was argued that the apartheid regime was partly responsible for parties being banned in the first place. The apartheid leaders saw Swazi parties as socialist and communist in orientation, and their intervention helped influence the king to ban parties.

An issue that drew a great deal of attention was the constitution-making process. It was recognised that the development of the draft bill had been exclusionary: those allowed to participate had to participate as individuals and not as representatives of their organisations.

An NNLC representative said that his party had debated its own participation in the constitution debate. The main question was: Do we allow the king to get away with not including human rights in the constitution, or do we participate politically in an attempt to avoid this scenario? It had eventually been decided that the NNLC should defend the inclusion of human rights, and hence the NNLC did not boycott recent elections.

'The inclusion of political civil rights within the constitution would make it easier to challenge the state even further. If you allow the king to get away with the exclusion of human rights, then you have got no way to move forward.'

Additionally, it was mentioned that the state was using various tactics to delay court cases which challenge the adoption of the draft constitution. In this way, the king hoped that the people would give up on their challenges and simply accept the Constitution Bill.

Another discussion concerned the relationship between culture and politics and how this affected parties in Swaziland. A representative from Sive Sinyaqaba explained his organisation's position:

'What is culture? Culture is a way of life. Is politics not a way of life? It is, so we're a cultural organisation that speaks politics too. Sive Sinyaqaba has never boycotted elections, but at the same time, it does not participate in elections as an organisation. We simply encourage our members to stand for election in their own constituencies. Sive Sinyaqaba members are overwhelmingly successful in elections and as a result have been able to influence the tone in parliament. The relative success of the organisation is that we approach politics from a cultural angle, exploiting the positive aspects of Swazi culture for the advancement of our population.'

Another Sive Sinyaqaba member said:

'When a dog is angry with you, you don't have to challenge it to a biting contest, otherwise it will kill you. When you're in Swaziland, once you set yourself up as a political party, you are not going to see the daylight.'

A Swazi participant wanted to emphasise the oppressive nature of the king and his family and the effect this had on the Swazi people. He argued that the king controlled everything in Swaziland:

'He controls the army, he controls the cabinet, he controls the judiciary, he controls land and he controls the economy. All this has made it totally impossible for parties to function as independent structures.'

The debate on Swazi politics highlighted the question of poverty. What was stated was that poverty was a deliberate expression of the king's power. It was noted that the majority of people in Swaziland are marginalised and plagued by problems ('39% of our people are HIV-positive'), while the king lives a life of luxury and excess.

'We have got a lot of orphans and vulnerable children. The unemployment rate is very, very high. Poverty is rife. On the other hand, the king has 11 wives and perhaps quite a number of palaces and BMW X5s for these wives. And now he's building an airport for himself – when we don't even have one aircraft – an airport that will cost half a billion rand.'

Collectively, the Swazi participants highlighted eight main barriers to political parties in Swaziland:

- The king's proclamation of 1973. This deprives the people of freedom of assembly.
- The culture itself. There is an enormous respect for the king and chiefs. This has made people docile and accepting of the status quo.
- Parties cannot actively and openly recruit members.
- People's apathy. This has led to the situation being accepted as the norm.
- There is no rule of law.
- There is also a lack of funding of opposition parties. It is difficult for local businesses to help fund the opposition as many of them have contracts with government.
- Conditions are extremely repressive and armed force is used to control dissidents.
- Communications are difficult as the media are controlled by the state.

The international community was credited with helping the people in Swaziland; specifically, it was cited as the reason why activists had not been imprisoned ('because the king fears sanctions'); however, there was more that the international community could have done. SADC and the Commonwealth have not done enough to bring about political change. A participant expressed his belief that freedom would, however, eventually prevail in Swaziland.

Comments from other participants

Other participants discussed a number of issues. A topic debated at length was the role of the international community. Participants clearly expressed their frustration at the weak influence the international community has on bringing about democratic change in Swaziland.

It was contended that as Swaziland is a signatory to numerous international and regional conventions, one would expect there to be pressure on Swaziland to conform and to be held accountable for not upholding its commitments. It was argued that SADC and the AU should take a more forceful approach in order to 'loosen the hold that the king has'.

Another speaker said he believed that the international community was pressuring Swaziland to democratise. The Commonwealth had been credited with pushing the constitutional reform issue. The International Commission of Jurists and Commonwealth observers had produced important studies on Swaziland. Swaziland, this speaker said, was not being ignored by international organisations. The real problem was that the Swazi king was generally unswayed by international pressure.

And so, again and again, participants came back to the same question: What can the international community do?

Dr Hamdok believed that when one looked at the region as a whole, Swaziland was a unique case. In comparison with Swaziland, even Zimbabwe was making progress – but Swaziland was actively regressing. Internationally, there was much concern over Zimbabwe and it was strange that Swaziland's absolute monarchy attracted such little attention in the international press. 'It makes you wonder about this cliché of the international community', he said. 'I wonder if it exists.'

The Swazi king approached the issue of democracy on his own terms. He wanted a tailored democracy that operated through the chieftdom system. The king failed to realise that his version of democracy was not democratic at all.

The way in which the constitutional debate had evolved was discussed. The king thought that both houses of parliament would simply 'rubber-stamp' the Constitution Bill without human rights provisions. When this did not happen, the king was shocked. In an attempt to show the world that he was democratic, the king had allowed parliament to debate the Constitution Bill.

The consequences were that the king was drawn into a Catch 22 situation: if parliament were allowed to debate the constitution, then it should be allowed to amend it. Currently, the situation in parliament is tense. This issue was a positive sign for democracy – it demonstrated to the king that his own people could turn against him.

It was noted that in most of the rest of Africa there was support for democracy, but only on paper. One participant noted that:

'What is happening in Swaziland may be typical of the whole continent. We see political activities in the whole continent but parties in power do all sorts of things to cling to power. So why is it illegal in Swaziland to form parties, while on the rest of the continent parties are in name only? Rarely do governments change, so [the Swazi people] might probably think they're missing a lot. They are not.'

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COMPARATIVE LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This session was designed to sum up the major conclusions of the workshop. Dr Khabele Matlosa led the discussion. He used a comparative approach touching on similarities and differences among the countries. Matlosa divided the presentation into two parts: the first part looked at the findings on the external regulatory environment; and second part focused on the findings regarding internal party functioning.

EXTERNAL REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Matlosa said that the external regulations referred to the legislative measures used to govern political parties and elections. Seven issues were identified in all the research presentations:

Registration and deregistration of parties

There was legislation in all countries requiring that parties register their existence. Additionally, parties were required to register with the countries' various electoral commissions. The exception was Swaziland, because political parties are banned in that country. Deregistration was problematical in most countries. There was a lack of legislation requiring parties to deregister in certain circumstances. This was something that needed to be addressed.

Regulations governing internal party functioning

In none of the countries discussed was there any external legislation governing how parties should function or organise their internal affairs. Instead, parties were free to set up their own rules and regulations on their internal functioning. In most countries, the internal structures of the parties were quite similar.

Nomination of candidates

There was no external legislation to which potential candidates had to conform. Again, this aspect was left to the parties themselves. This was true for national as well as other elections.

Election campaigning

In all countries with parties, these were allowed to campaign before elections. The presentations at this workshop made it clear that relationships between parties during campaigns was an issue that needed to be addressed, particularly the relationships between the ruling party and opposition parties, and especially where the opposition had acquired the capacity to be able to defeat the ruling party.

Electoral systems and political contest

The countries discussed all essentially use the FPTP electoral system, with tailored variations in some cases. Mauritius uses the block vote plus a 'best loser' system. Lesotho uses a combination with PR. It was likely that the kind of electoral system used had an impact on how political parties developed. However, no conclusions about this could be made yet as none of the countries examined in this workshop had a PR-only system.

Parliament and party representation

Party representation in parliament and the extent to which parties contributed to parliamentary work differed from country to country. Lesotho provided an interesting example. Some parliamentary members were elected under FPTP, while others gained their seats through PR.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

Following Matlosa's summary, the floor was opened for participants to agree or disagree with what had been said. Most participants seemed to be in agreement with Matlosa's summary, although a few important issues were raised. One was that although Mauritius required parties to register, the legislation governing this was the country's constitution itself, with no separate act dealing exclusively with political parties. Also, Zimbabwe did not require parties to register.

A participant registered his concern about external regulations which tended to treat parties as if they were corporate bodies. This could have a bearing on the democratic process and was something that people should be aware of.

It was also argued that the funding of political parties should be governed by external regulations, especially as there was wide agreement that this should be so. This point was eventually agreed, but as this also had a major effect on internal functioning, funding should be a separate section in itself and should include internal functioning.

In a similar argument, it was contended that the issue of coalitions was one that could not be clearly classified either under external regulations or under internal functioning, as it straddled the two. It was therefore necessary to point out the absence of external regulations in this area, but it was also suggested that this was an area that was difficult to regulate since parties entered into coalitions for various and changing reasons.

INTERNAL FUNCTIONING

Matlosa referred to the 13 major areas discussed under the internal functioning of political parties during the workshop.

Founding of parties

From the countries discussed, it emerged that there were three categories of parties:

- pre-independence parties;
- post-independence parties; and
- 1990s' transition parties.

Input from the floor identified a fourth category, namely, parties formed as a response to some kind of crisis. The chairman agreed, but pointed out that he had classified parties on the basis of the time periods in which they had been formed and not on the basis of their character or the reasons for their formation.

Structure

Parties across the five countries had similar structures, with a clear hierarchy between the various party organs. The parties operated at grassroots/community levels, had local branches and district branches, all the way up to the national level.

Policy development

Policy development had emerged as a challenge for all parties. In general, parties did not have sophisticated policy-making bodies. The way in which they constructed their programmes, manifestos and publicity material was weak, and this area needed to be developed. In contrast to this, all the parties seemed to have solid, well-written party constitutions.

Leader selection and succession

This was an area where parties were weak, and they needed to pay attention to this. The lack of clear guidelines on leadership selection and succession had led to internal faction-fighting and party splits. In some cases, such internal problems were taken to court. Linked to this was the issue of the president of a country stepping down but retaining leadership of a ruling party. This seriously affected how the parties were governed and also how the state was governed.

Primary elections and nomination of candidates

Parties varied in how they selected their candidates. In some cases, there were democratic processes where candidates were nominated and then voted for. In other cases, the leadership imposed its will and candidates were selected without any kind of grassroots participation.

Civic and voter education

This was a challenge for all parties. Very few parties participated in voter education and when they did, it seemed to be only at election times. In between elections there was no ongoing civic or voter education. This was a problem because parties do not exist only for elections; their role in governance was ongoing, and civic and voter education should therefore also be ongoing.

International relations

This referred to the relationships parties had with political parties in other countries as well as with international organisations and foundations. Most parties considered at this workshop did not have such strong relationships. While this was not problematical in itself, developing international relations was important to parties as they could strengthen themselves through sharing ideas and having access to greater capacity. International relations could also help parties to develop their fundraising strategies. The exception to the above was the existence of the SADC regional forum of former liberation movements. The ruling parties from South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe participated in this forum.

National alliances and coalitions

In some countries, namely Malawi and Mauritius, coalitions were common. In the others, discussions on coalitions either did not exist or were very weak. It could therefore be concluded that there were regional variations with regards to coalitions. Parties needed to explore this and it could help them if they could find ways to exploit coalitions or to build mutually beneficial coalitions.

Relations with civil society

This was another grey area. While strong relations between political parties and civil society were the norm in Europe, in Southern Africa such relationships were weak. Parties faced the challenge of building bridges with civil society organisations (CSOs).

Relations between parties and the election management body

It appears that in most SADC countries there were formal relations between political parties and the relevant electoral commissions. In some instances, there were committees, including party liaison committees, in which the parties participated and discussed various aspects of the electoral process. These committees were generally led by electoral management bodies.

Gender equality

The issue of gender equality presented a huge challenge to most political parties in the countries examined. Women formed the majority of members in political parties, yet the higher up one went in party hierarchies, the less women featured. This needed to be addressed. The current SADC targets were repeated: 30% of representatives to be women now and 50% after 2005. However, these quotas were not being achieved in governments nor in parties. It was also noted that merely achieving a more equitable representation of women in government was not enough. Women also needed more authority.

Party funding

Issues relating to party funding varied from country to country. In some cases, parties received money only during election and campaigning times. In other cases they received funding on a continuous basis. Parties needed to negotiate with their governments to secure funding on a regular, continuous basis.

Membership and recruitment

It was established that while membership of political parties in Europe had drastically declined, this was not the case in the five countries discussed. Interest in and membership of political parties was still high. Nevertheless, parties did need to ensure that their membership numbers were sustained or increased and that these numbers were recorded. This was particularly difficult in Southern Africa, given the socio-economic problems of poverty and unemployment.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

The floor was again invited to contribute, comment and make suggestions.

A point made was that in SADC it was a relatively new phenomenon for former presidents to remain in their countries after leaving office. This speaker suggested that such people should remain politically involved, but not as their parties' leaders. Instead, former presidents could be useful in 'addressing issues of conflict through mediation or peer pressure'. This could be a suitable role, for example, for Zimbabwe's President Mugabe. The speaker further suggested that the way former heads of state could play meaningful roles in their own countries and beyond was a subject worthy of serious consideration. 'We need to look more positively at the roles our former heads of state can play', he said. Arising from this point, a further suggestion was that a body could be formed on which retired presidents, MPs and ministers could serve effectively – in political and civic education for example.

Continuing on this point, another speaker proposed that former heads of state should continue to receive salaries similar to those they had received as presidents. This was already the case in Botswana, where the former president received 80% of his previous salary. This allowed the

former leader to maintain his status as well as his financial position. If such a rule became general, leaders might be readier to relinquish their power when they have served their prescribed terms of office.

It was also noted that although country constitutions prescribed the maximum number of terms a president could serve, party constitutions did not follow suit. On this point, the rationale for limiting presidents to two terms was discussed. Presidential systems were compared with parliamentary systems, in which prime ministers anywhere in the world could go on winning elections indefinitely. However, the checks and balances built into a democratic parliamentary system included the unlikelihood of a prime minister being able to survive for, say, 15 years without a challenge from within his/her party or without losing an election.

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SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The major findings of the workshop could be summarised under two headings: one identifying areas where political parties were doing well; and the other identifying areas in which they are weak and which need much work. These could be either internal or external.

PARTY STRENGTHS

Constitutions

Party constitutions were well-written and clear in all the countries under study. But the constitutions were silent on the number of terms in office the presidents of the parties could serve, especially seeing that party presidents could be major financiers of their parties.

Party structure

The structures of the parties examined were sophisticated and clear. The internal structures were also clear in terms of the allocation of powers and responsibilities. But the effectiveness of these structures on party performance was not established. An important observation, however, was that in most cases decisions were still very much top-down and, with few exceptions, there was very little input from local branches. One of the causes identified was that party presidents were again seen as their parties' breadwinners, and thus tended to control their parties. The issue of patrimonialism continued to undermine party structures.

PARTY WEAKNESSES

Democracy in parties

Parties varied widely in terms of the level of their internal democracy. It was observed that most countries, but not Swaziland, had made good progress in terms of democracy. Even though the democratic process of a country at national level might be well entrenched, this did not necessarily mean that democracy within political parties was also entrenched.

An excellent example of this was Mauritius. As a country, Mauritius was a model democracy in the SADC region, but it was revealed that party decisions and the selection of candidates were often made by a few powerful individuals.

Policy development

As highlighted in the closing discussion, policy development within parties was weak and required attention. Parties lacked in-house, institutionalised organs to conduct research and to formulate policy. Arising out of this was the issue of a lack of ideology as a guiding framework. An identifiable ideology informed party policy and provided continuity of policies. Without an identifiable ideology, party policy was prone to inconsistency, or to revolve around the ideas and policies of a single individual. This was problematical because it supported the politics of personalities – in which parties and policies were formed around particular individuals.

Succession of leadership

The workshop identified the new trend of a leader being forced by a country's constitution to

step down, but still retaining leadership of the ruling party. The effects of this on democracy remained to be seen, although the workshop participants seemed to be in agreement that this trend was more than likely to be negative for democracy. Suggestions about how this trend could be discouraged were made. One was that former presidents should receive salaries comparable to those they had received in office. Another suggestion was that the region should set up a body on which former presidents and MPs could serve in mediating conflicts and passing on their knowledge to others.

Voter and civic education

This was another issue that emerged as a challenge for parties in the region. Parties rarely got involved or conducted their own education campaigns in this respect. This had an impact on democracy. Since a basis of democracy was the political participation of all citizens, it was likely that citizens were being excluded from democratic processes simply because they had not been educated about their rights. The responsibility of political education needed not to fall exclusively on the shoulders of electoral commissions, but should also be shared among the key political actors, such as parties. In this way, parties could strengthen themselves and the democracy of the countries in which they operated.

Education for politicians

Just as civic education was lacking for the citizens, there was also no education at all for elected leaders. This was a critical issue that needed to be addressed. As suggested earlier, a body for former MPs and presidents could be instituted and through this body, training for politicians could occur.

Gender

The lack of gender equality was another pertinent issue. Almost all the parties indicated that they did not have sufficient measures to achieve equitable gender representation (there were, however, a few exceptions). The continued exclusion of women from the political process was unacceptable and represented a major democratic deficit. Parties generally fell far short of SADC targets, resulting in these countries also falling short of these targets. Gender equality therefore also needed to be considered at the party level. Additionally, women in government needed the same amount of authority as their male counterparts. The issue of gender parity should not only be about quantity but about quality.

Funding

There were many dimensions to funding of political parties which had emerged as problematical. The major one was the remarkable financial differences that existed between parties, especially within the same country. In effect, parties were not competing on a level playing field in terms of access to public funding.

On the issue of private funding it was noted that the regulation of party funding from the private sector could take one of three forms:

- unregulated;
- regulated; or
- banned altogether.

It was recognised that private funding often amounted to the buying and selling of influence. This was a challenge for democracies the world over. One solution would be to allow all parties to be publicly funded and to ban private funding.

But it was observed that allowing parties to access public funding without exception would solve some problems while creating new ones. One problem was that it would put an enormous economic burden on the state if the state were to take sole responsibility for funding parties. Even if parties could only be funded if they achieved a certain percentage of the vote, there would still be difficulties. In the case of Zimbabwe, for instance, parties with more than 5% of the vote were granted public funding, but only two parties would have a realistic chance of qualifying for such funding, and these were in any case the two biggest and richest parties. Smaller parties were thus further excluded from finance. Additionally, public funding led to a proliferation of parties, as is the case in Malawi. In summary, it seemed that there were no appropriate solutions to the funding issue, but this does not mean that we should not stop looking for ways to allow parties to compete fairly and democratically.

Other issues

Some other issues relating to the way parties behave and perform, especially during elections, were identified as requiring a good deal of work. These were:

- *Electoral commissions:* The countries examined had electoral commissions, although the independence of these commissions was not established. This led to favouritism mostly towards the ruling party, to the detriment of the opposition.
- *Legislation:* Except for Mauritius, the countries reviewed had separate legislation requiring parties to register. There was also legislation relating to the conduct of elections. This was clear but there was no legislation requiring parties to deregister.
- *Electoral systems:* In any country the electoral system used should be the one that best represents the population. While Malawi and Zimbabwe's electoral systems do not seem to draw much criticism, the systems in place in Mauritius, Swaziland and Lesotho were far from ideal. In Swaziland, half the MPs were appointed. In Mauritius, the block vote plus best loser system created problems, which were, however, currently being addressed. In Lesotho, the current mixed member system was the result of a compromise which arose in an extremely tense situation. Although the MMP system was a great improvement on the pure FPTP that had existed previously, it was still far from ideal and continued to cause conflict in parliament.

If the above issues could be addressed and the problems solved, a contribution would be made to the entrenchment of democracy in the region.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

The workshop was formally closed by Dr Abdalla Hamdok of IDEA and Mr Denis Kadima of EISA. They both thanked the researchers and the members of the political parties who had travelled to South Africa to participate in the discussion. They expressed satisfaction both on the organisation and on the result of the workshop.

They said that both organisations were anxious to bring researchers, political party activists and leaders together in one venue. The fear was that the objectivity of the research that is being conducted, using rigorous research instruments and tested globally, risked being watered down by bringing in politicians whose main concern would perhaps be to push their own party interests, and who would be very defensive about criticism of their deficiencies.

This exercise pointed to one thing, which was that Africa was finally on the right track. Indeed, it was encouraging to see ruling and opposition parties not only on the same platform but sitting next to one another.

A critical observation, however, was that while it was very good to have an exercise such as this at a sub-regional level, issues at such a level tended to be addressed in an abstract manner. This was because the recommendations and issues which had been made were practical only in a national setting.

IDEA and EISA would therefore find ways of taking this debate to the national level in all the countries concerned. It was possible that such a move could be relevant in policy development and legislation.

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

**DIALOGUE ON POLITICAL PARTIES AND GOVERNANCE
IN THE SADC REGION****DATE: 10-11 DECEMBER 2004****VENUE: SHERATON HOTEL, PRETORIA***Friday, 10 December 2004***CHAIRPERSON: Dr Massimo Tommasoli, Director Operations, IDEA****Session 1: Introduction and programme overviews**

08h30 **Welcome and Introductory Remarks**
Mr Denis Kadima, Executive Director, Eisa
Dr Abdalla Hamdok, Africa Director, IDEA

09h00 **Overview and global context**
International perspectives on democracy assistance
Research findings on trust in democracy and parties
Mr Roger Hallhag, Head of Policy and Operations for
Political Parties, IDEA

10h30 COFFEE BREAK

Session 2: Regional context: Overview of the key issues identified and challenges to political parties in the region**CHAIRPERSON: EISA**

11h00 **Fundamental issues of political freedom, Eisa**
External regulation, Eisa
Internal functioning, Eisa

12h00 **Discussion**

13h00: LUNCH

Session 3: Country presentations**CHAIRPERSON: Dr Abdalla Hamdok, IDEA**

14h00 **Lesotho**
Questions and discussion

15h00 **Malawi**
Questions and discussion

- 16h00 COFFEE BREAK
- 16h15 **Mauritius**
Questions and discussion
- 17h15 **Closure**
- 18h00: **Reception/Sheraton Hotel**

Saturday, 11 December 2004

Session 4: Country presentation

CHAIRPERSON: Dr Khabele Matlosa, EISA

- 09h00 **Zimbabwe**
Questions and discussion
- 10h00 **Swaziland**
Questions and discussion
- 11h00 COFFEE BREAK
- 11h30 **General discussion on project findings**
- 12h30 **Final discussion and summary of country presentations
by the Chair**
- 13h00 LUNCH

Session 5: Panel of political party representatives

CHAIRPERSON TBA

- 14h00 **Building stronger democracies in the SADC region**
Panel discussion
- 16h00 COFFEE BREAK
- 16h30 **Closing remarks**
Dr Abdalla Hamdok, Africa Director, IDEA
Mr Dennis Kadima, Executive Director, Eisa

WORKSHOP ON POLITICAL PARTIES AND GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Pretoria , South Africa

10-11 December 2004

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ABOUT THE WORKSHOP ORGANISERS



IDEA

Founded in 1995, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance is an international organisation based in Stockholm. It seeks to promote and develop sustainable democracy worldwide. IDEA's current areas of activity include:

- electoral systems and management;
- political participation, including women in politics;
- political parties, management and financing;
- post-conflict democracy building and dialogue; and
- democracy indicators and assessment.

IDEA has an African Office based in South Africa:

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ABOUT EISA



EISA is a not-for-profit and non-partisan non-governmental organisation which was established in 1996. Its core business is to provide technical assistance for capacity building of relevant government departments, electoral management bodies, political parties and civil society organisations operating in the democracy and governance field throughout the SADC region and beyond. Inspired by the various positive developments towards democratic governance in Africa as a whole and the SADC region in particular since the early 1990s, EISA aims to advance democratic values, practices and enhance the credibility of electoral processes. The ultimate goal is to assist countries in Africa and the SADC region to nurture and consolidate democratic governance. SADC countries have received enormous technical assistance and advice from EISA in building solid institutional foundations for democracy. This includes electoral system reforms; election monitoring and observation; constructive conflict management; strengthening of parliament and other democratic institutions; strengthening of political parties; capacity building for civil society organisations; deepening democratic local governance; and enhancing the institutional capacity of the election management bodies. EISA is currently the secretariat of the Electoral Commissions Forum (ECF) composed of electoral commissions in the SADC region and established in 1998. EISA is also the secretariat of the SADC Election Support Network (ESN) comprising election-related civil society organisations established in 1997.

VISION

Realisation of effective and sustainable democratic governance in Southern Africa and beyond.

MISSION

To strengthen electoral processes, democratic governance, human rights and democratic values through research, capacity building, advocacy and other strategically targeted interventions.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Key values and principles of governance that EISA believes in include:

- Regular free and fair elections
- Promoting democratic values
- Respect for fundamental human rights
- Due process of law / rule of law
- Constructive management of conflict
- Political tolerance
- Inclusive multiparty democracy
- Popular participation
- Transparency
- Gender equality
- Accountability
- Promoting electoral norms and standards

OBJECTIVES

- To nurture and consolidate democratic governance
- To build institutional capacity of regional and local actors through research, education, training, information and technical advice
- To ensure representation and participation of minorities in the governance process
- To strive for gender equality in the governance process
- To strengthen civil society organisations in the interest of sustainable democratic practice, and
- To build collaborative partnerships with relevant stakeholders in the governance process.

CORE ACTIVITIES

- Research
- Conferences, seminars and workshops
- Publishing
- Conducting elections and ballots
- Technical advice
- Capacity building
- Election observation
- Election evaluation
- Networking
- Voter / civic education
- Conflict management
- Educator and learner resource packs

PROGRAMMES

EISA's core business revolves around three main programmes namely: Conflict Management, Democracy and Electoral Education; Electoral and Political Processes; and Balloting and Electoral Services.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL EDUCATION

This programme comprises various projects including voter education, democracy and human rights education; electoral observation; electoral staff training; electoral conflict management; capacity building; course design and citizen participation.

ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

This programme addresses areas such as technical assistance for electoral commissions, civil society organisations and political parties; coordination of election observation and monitoring missions; working towards the establishment of electoral norms and standards for the SADC region and providing technical support to both the SADC-ECF and the SADC-ESN.

BALLOTING AND ELECTORAL SERVICES

The programme enhances the credibility and legitimacy of organisational elections by providing independent and impartial electoral administration, management and consultancy services. The key activities include managing elections for political parties, trade unions, pension funds, medical aid societies, etc.

EISA'S SPECIAL PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- Rule of Law, which examines issues related to justice and human rights;
- Local Government, which aims to promote community participation in governance; and
- Political Parties, which aims to promote party development at strategic, organisational and structural levels through youth empowerment, leadership development and development of party coalitions.

EISA'S SUPPORT SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Research
- Publications
- Library
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

EISA PRODUCTS

- Books
- CD-ROMS
- Conference proceedings
- Election handbooks
- Occasional papers
- Election observer reports
- Research reports
- Country profiles
- Election updates
- Newsletters
- Voter education manuals
- Journal of African Elections
- Election database

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**Patrons**

EISA's patrons are His Excellency Sir Ketumile Masire, former President of Botswana and the instrumental broker of the peace negotiations that ushered in peace and reconciliation in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2002 and Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, a key negotiator during the political transition to democratic governance and majority rule in South Africa in 1994 and a businessman of standing in the new South Africa.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EISA has an International Board of Directors comprising the following:

MR. LESHELE THOAHLANE Former Executive Director of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the current chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission in Lesotho (Chairperson of the Board)

PROF. JORGEN ELKLIT Head of Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark

MR. STEVE GODFREY Commonwealth Advisor in South Africa, London

MR DENIS KADIMA Executive Director of EISA

PROF. PETER KATJAVIVI Former Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia and the current Ambassador of Namibia to the European Union (EU) in Brussels

JUSTICE L. MAKAME Judge of the Appeal Court in Tanzania and Chairperson of the Tanzanian National Election Commission

JUSTICE ANASTASIA MSOSA Judge of the Supreme Court of Appeal in Malawi 1992-1997, Judge of the High Court of Malawi 1993-1998, and Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Malawi in 1994

MS. DREN NUPEN Former Executive Director of EISA

DR. GLORIA SOMOLEKAE A senior lecturer at the University of Botswana and currently a senior policy analyst of the Kellogg Foundation

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