Voter education and some electoral issues in Botswana:
2004 and 2014 compared

By

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Introduction

The IEC started making preparations for the 2004 election early on, organising evaluation workshops immediately after the 1999 election, commissioning the voter apathy study whose report was published in 2002, holding an electoral reform workshop in which some of the debates were live on Radio Botswana, and organising a historic workshop for the faith sector. The IEC and the various civil society organisations such as Emang Basadi, the Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC) played a leading role in encouraging more people to register.

This paper analyses voter apathy related issues and the voter education activities that preceded the 2004 election and compares them with the nearly absent voter education of 2014. It starts by reviewing the voter education activities of the IEC in 2004, the involvement of the faith sector, women organisations, media, and youth associations. Its conclusion is that while the IEC in a massive voter education campaign in 2004, expertly mobilised most of the other institutions and the population that experience was visibly absent in 2014. This implies that the IEC may have run out of energy, and was allowing Botswana to slide back into its old ways of voter apathy and that reversing it was going to require enormous resources.

IEC and voter education

Voter education was an area that the IEC played the central role in preparation of the 2004 election, but not in preparation of the 2014 election. The voter apathy report of 2002 had noted that the majority of potential voters missed this important stage in the electoral process. It was therefore important that intervention be done timely to help eligible voters to register. It should be acknowledged that registration is a crucial first step, which if missed, automatically excludes potential voters from taking part in the process. In preparation of the 2004 election, the IEC announced that registration of voters would start in November 2003. It should be noted that registration of voters complied with the principles laid down in the EISA/ECF handbook. It occurred in three phases: (1) general registration that was primarily done by the unemployed youth who were hired for the purpose, (2) continuous registration that was done by District Commissioners (and was absent during registration for the 2014 election), and
(3) supplementary registration by the former. The general registration occurred during the whole of November 2003 in 2179 registration centres. There is no doubt that the IEC approached voter apathy very seriously in 2004. During that time, the IEC addressed head-on the problems of voter apathy and the delays in the voting process. It mounted a vigorous multi-facetted voter education campaign during 2003 and 2004 to encourage more people to register for the 2004 elections.

Firstly, the IEC placed adverts in the media, such as public and private newspapers, and the local television (Btv), and also on buses. In the latter case, the fleet of ‘Seabelo’s express’ buses which covers all routes between major cities, towns and villages in the country, carried the IEC 2004 campaign logo and aired an IEC 30-minutes video documentary and adverts. In another instance, local water and power utilities flashed voter education messages in their electronic notice boards. The Department of Water Affairs published electoral messages on its monthly water bills to consumers, while the Botswana Breweries printed general registration adverts on its Chibuku (local brew) cartons during November 2003. These efforts were aimed at encouraging a high voter turnout during the 2004 general elections. In contrast, all the above activities were hardly visible in preparation of the 2014 election registration. Only a few adverts were posted encouraging people to register for the 2014 election.

Secondly, the IEC voter apathy report had identified music/entertainment as one of the surest ways of reaching out to young voters. In this regard, the IEC’s Information and Education Unit played a significant role in the production of a Setswana song, Ditlhopo di tsile, which carried electoral messages meant to encourage people to register and vote. The song turned out to be a hit and it was played numerous times on Radio Botswana, on private radio stations, and at weddings and entertainment centres. In contrast, the IEC has not sponsored any new songs for the 2014 election registration, preferring to rely on the old song as if Botswana has no creativity to produce new songs. In 2014, the IEC failed to provide that crucial leadership to combat voter apathy and to mobilise the population to register and vote.

In 2004, the IEC also sponsored a drama, Tlhopho seabe sa Borena, which was shown at various locations in the country. A similar process of production was followed as in the song. There is no doubt that spreading its voter education messages through music and drama was a key area of achievement for the IEC during 2004. The IEC bought an outdoor broadcasting (or audio-visual) van that it used for voter
education purposes during the year. In contrast, not much happened in this area, further dampening the spirit of the nation.

In 2004, the IEC further attended political party congresses, annual general meetings of various associations and trade unions and attended religious gatherings, and its staff including the Secretary, used these forums for voter education purposes. ‘The IEC collaborated with many organisations such as the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime, National AIDS Coordinating Agency, Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC), Emang Basadi and other NGOs by participating in their seminars, workshops, conferences and fairs where accurate information on the electoral process was provided’ (IEC, 2004: 3). The IEC outreach to stakeholders did not only serve the purpose of voter education, but also turned out to be a useful strategy for it to build stakeholder confidence in the electoral process as a whole. Although the IEC recounted problems at some gatherings, such as time constraints for the IEC to address some meetings, the arrangement for the IEC to attend such meetings is a welcome initiative which must be maintained in the interest of open communication between the IEC and its stakeholders. In contrast, things were disturbingly quite in 2014, IEC interaction with the above sister organisations was from minimal to none existent.

**IEC, The faith Sector and Elections**

The 2002 voter apathy study found that the faith sector either stayed away from political and electoral activities or gave the impression that its members should stay away from them. In response to the report and in preparation for the 2004 election, the IEC organised a workshop for the faith sector that was hailed as a historic event, bringing different faiths together for the first time in the history of the country. Around one hundred faith leaders attended the workshop, exchanged ideas among themselves, and promised the IEC of their future participation in the electoral process. ‘The faith sector in turn organised workshops in their respective denominations and invited IEC personnel as resource persons’ (IEC, 2004: 3) Thus, a mutual relationship emerged between the IEC and the faith sector for purposes of addressing voter apathy in preparation for the 2004 election.

The IEC imported a guest speaker at the national faith sector workshop, Mr Eddie Makue, Director of Justice Ministries in the South African Council of
Churches. In his remarks, the guest speaker closely referred to the voter apathy report, noting that the faith sector reportedly had the largest membership and yet rarely made announcements on voting and that its members rarely discussed political issues. He observed: ‘By virtue of the popularity of the church, religious leaders have frequent opportunities to communicate to a large and receptive audience. The messages delivered during religious services have the potential to make considerable impact on voter attitudes and could influence turnout at elections’. He added that ‘churches are closed communities of congregants bound by strong affective ties, regular social interaction and high levels of respect for their leadership in whom they have unconditional confidence and trust’, and further observed that this placed religious organisations at an advantage to ‘dramatically influence voter dispositions to elections and voting’. In contrast, interaction between the IEC and the faith sector was minimal in preparation for the 2014 election. So much has changed, not only is creativity lost, even repeating some old practices has become problematic!

Television adverts for the 2004 general election showed a pastor encouraging those who have registered to cast their ballot on Election Day. In a series of newspaper articles, Rt. Rev. Moiseraele Dibeela of the Botswana Council of Churches, who had featured in IEC television adverts and other priests, urged voters to cast their ballot and to do so wisely. In ‘Let justice roll like a river’ (Botswana Guardian, 29 October 2004), Pastor Dibeela urged all his country men and women to cast their vote and went on to define what factors they should consider when doing so, including voting for individuals who are better capable rather than voting for the party name, and so on. The signs were clear that the IEC had successfully persuaded priests to play an active part in the electoral process. In contrast, ‘the rivers of justice have stopped flowing’ in 2014, and the faith sector only occasionally prays for a peaceful election, and not much more.

The IEC had also invited exemplary civil society organisations such as the Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC) to attend the national faith sector workshop. The BNYC revealed at the faith sector workshop that it had produced a voter training manual, and trained 22 youth trainers and 106 mobilisers countrywide. However, a plenary discussion that followed showed that the BNYC and the faith sector had not worked together previously. The BNYC complained that the faith sector did not release young believers for its activities. For its part, the faith sector
revealed that it hardly knew about the structure and policies of the BNYC and encouraged more interaction between the two sectors. The faith sector also appealed to the BNYC to invite and allow it to participate in formulating policies and programmes of the youth in order to incorporate spiritual concerns. Thus, IEC intervention in the faith sector sparked more collaborative efforts by other sectors, such as the youth and faith sector. The plenary discussion at the faith workshop also revealed that some umbrella religious organisations such as the Botswana Council of Churches receive funding from the BNYC in order to benefit young believers and those left out were encouraged to participate in its activities in order to enjoy the funding as well. It was also revealed that Radio Botswana (RB 1 and RB 2) has youth programmes funded by the Department of Youth and Culture and by the BNYC that could also benefit youth in the faith sector. But it became evident that youth who were members of the faith sector did not participate in BNYC activities. For instance, members of the Young Women Christian Association expressed concern that the Botswana Council of Churches delayed in passing over information from the BNYC. Other faith groups informed the BNYC that they were not under the Botswana Council of Churches, urging it to reach out to the rest of the faith sector youths in different set ups. In contrast, preparation for the 2014 election has not elicited such mobilisation of the faith sector. Youth in the faith sector has been ignored and the BNYC has done little to mobilise them.

**Gender and elections in Botswana**

Although there is high voter apathy country wide, more women than men registered to vote in 1999, 2004 and in 2009 (IEC, 2002; 2004; 2009). In addition 311,265 females registered for the 2004 election, compared to only 239, 148 males (IEC, 2004: 89). My argument is that because more women register and vote than men, voter education has appropriately followed the part of awakening activism for purposes of contesting political office. Historically, women did not take part in the political affairs of the tribe prior to independence (IEC, 2002; Ntseane, 2005). Rather, political offices were kept exclusively in the hands of the men. Overall, women were regarded as socially inferior to men and were treated as minors (Schapera, 1984; IEC, 2002; Ntseane 2005). With the advent of modern education and democracy, elite women formed associations which made ordinary women more
aware of their rights and obligations as partners in national development. In addition, women organisations such as Botswana Council of Women and Young Women Christian Association were instrumental in the early sixties to address issues facing women and children and to lobby and advocate for women’s issues in general.

Utilising data from the 1999, 2004 and 2009 Botswana elections, it becomes clear that more women registered for the elections than their male counterparts. In the 1999 election, there were 26 6449 registered women voters compared to only 21 4522 registered male voters (IEC, 2002:51). In addition, the 2009 election figures show that 321 534 males and 404 218 females registered to vote in that election. The above figures show interesting trends across districts. Rural districts registered much more women than men. For example, the North West district registered 24 549 women to 19 941 men in the 1999 election, 28 511 women to 22 865 males in the 2004 election, and 37 481 women to 30 889 men in 2009. Similarly, Kgatleng registered 12 808 women to 9 609 men in 1999, 16 069 women compared to 11 995 men in 2004, and 20 933 women to 16 564 men in 2009. The Central District registered 80 269 women compared to only 54 286 men in 1999, 92 543 women compared to 61 201 men in 2004, and 122 778 women to 87 104 men in 2009 (IEC, 2004; 2009).

In contrast, while urban centres used to register more men than women, the trend was reversing. For instance, Francistown had registered 11 685 men to 11 017 women in 1999, changing to 12,510 men compared to 13,662 women in 2004, and 17 094 women to 15 819 men in 2009); Gaborone registered 21 643 men to 16 917 women in 1999, slightly shifted in 2004 to 24 029 men and 22 217 women and to the reverse of 31 813 women to 31 386 men in 2009; Lobatse had 5006 men to 4864 women in 1999, the gender balance shifted to 5,216 men and 5,737 women in 2004, and 6 950 women to 6 452 men in 2009. Gantsi registered 5252 men to 5224 women in 1999; 7 165 men to 7 129 women in 2004, and 8 613 women to 8 675 men in 2009. The figures show that women have been actively registering and voting over the years.

The awakening of women political activism was spearheaded by the successful challenge to the Citizenship Law of 1982-1984 by Unity Dow in 1995 (Molokomme, 1991; Selolwane, 1998; IEC, 2002; Ntseane, 2005). Dow had argued that Section 4 and 5 of the Citizenship Act discriminated against women contrary to the provisions of section 3 of the Botswana Constitution (Dow, 1995; Ntseane, 2005). According to the initial Section 4 and 5 of the Act, ‘a person born in Botswana shall
be a citizen of Botswana by birth and descent if at the time of birth; a) his father was a citizen of Botswana; b) his mother was a citizen of Botswana’. The sections added that ‘a person born outside Botswana shall be a citizen of Botswana by descent if at the time of birth; a) his father was a citizen of Botswana or b) in the case of a person born out of wedlock, his mother was a citizen of Botswana’ (Republic of Botswana, 1984). It was the existence of such a discriminative law that led to various women rights activists grouping themselves together to form Emang Basadi (stand-up women) with the aim to lobby for political reforms and respect for human rights. Invariably, the Citizenship Act became the primary campaign issue. In 1995, the Citizenship Act was successfully challenged and was found to be in violation of the Constitution by both the High Court and the Court of Appeal (Dow, 1995; IEC, 2002; Ntseane, 2005). In contrast, women activism was hardly visible in 2014, except that Unity Dow was standing as a parliamentary candidate.

The entry of Dow into BDP politics geared for the 2014 election has not helped ignite the party’s women’s wing. It should be noted that although four major parties were formed in the early sixties namely, the Botswana People’s Party (BPP) and the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) that have enjoyed the women vote, the Botswana Independence Party (BIP) and the Botswana National Front (BNF) that enjoyed the male vote, it was not until 1977 that a women’s wing was launched by the BNF (Ntseane, 2005). BDP followed a decade later in 1987 and the BCP women’s league came into existence in 1998 when the party was formed. In addition, the election manifestos of BPP, BDP, BIP and BNF reflected that it was only during the preparation of the 1994 general elections that these parties articulated their commitment towards women political empowerment (Ntseane, 2005). Prior to this, women were not accorded any meaningful attention although they registered and voted more than men, as well as playing a critical role in mobilising party support and raising funds.

Emang Basadi, formed in 1986 was determined to alter this situation. The group launched a Political Education Project (PEP) in November 1993; started a lobbying and advocacy campaign to challenge politicians to introduce political reforms and lobbied for at least 30% female representation in both parliament and local government (Emang Basadi, 1998). Three major accomplishments of the PEP included the production of the 1994 Women’s Manifesto, the running of constituency workshops and the training of prospective women candidates (Emang Basadi, 1998:
The Women’s Manifesto rightly called upon political parties to adopt the following strategies: change the existing structures in order to give women a chance to participate at all levels; establish a quota system to ensure that equity is maintained between male and female candidates; build awareness of women’s political rights; support competent women candidates; His Excellency the President to nominate competent female MPs who are sensitive to women issues as specially elected members of parliament (Ntseane, 2005).

The drafting of the Women’s Manifesto was instrumental in ensuring that women’s issues were taken on board during the 1994 general elections (Selolwane, 1998; Emang Basadi, 1998; Ntseane, 2005). Interestingly, the BDP and BNF 1994 Election Manifestos had a specific section on women and politics. These parties also confirmed that they would address sex-gender discrimination and inequality and work towards repealing all laws that discriminate against women. They also committed themselves to encouraging and supporting women in all spheres particularly the political arena and other policy-making bodies. Moreover, the BNF pledged to reserve 30% of the eligible positions to women and to leave the 70% to be contested by women and men (BNF, 1994:10). Disappointingly, this has not been honoured. On the other hand, President Masire nominated two women to parliament after the 1994 election, bringing the female representation from a maximum of 5% to 9.1%.

According to Ntseane (2005), other historical benchmarks coming from the Women Manifesto of 1994, included: the implementation of the decision of the Court of Appeal in the case of Attorney General vs. Unity Dow by the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act of 1995; the adoption of the National Policy on Women and Development in 1996 by parliament; the ratification by government of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, which had been passed by the UN General Assembly as early as 1979 (United Nations, 1979). Ntseane also notes that in preparing women for the 1999 general elections, Emang Basadi implemented the second phase of the PEP project, drawing a strategic plan that targeted four components, namely: training and empowering prospective women candidates, mobilizing and training women’s wings of political parties, forming a women’s Inter-Party Caucus and developing research and data base on women in decision making (Emang Basadi, 1998:10; Ntseane 2005). Acknowledging the role of Emang Basadi in this regard, MP Joy Phumaphi in her speech delivered at the National Conference for Women and Politics reiterated that it was through the
guidance of the association that as women they managed to develop determination and self confidence as well as lobbying skills and campaign strategies to counteract threats by men and to generate and win support of the general public (Phumaphi, 1997; Ntseane, 2005). In contrast, the vibrancy of the women’s movement seems to have died after the 2004. The Botswana of 2014 has become socially and politically stagnant in terms of gender issues. No new developments are visible in this regard, and political parties have also lost interest in gender issues.

The SADC Gender Unit played a significant role in mobilising women to stand for political office in 2004. It challenged member countries to make radical constitutional reforms in order to accommodate women, to bring more of them into positions of power and decision-making and to remove the conditions that hinder their development (SADC, 2001; Ntseane, 2005). In 1999, the SADC Gender Unit organised a regional conference that drew the attention of key politicians in the region about the need to work towards increasing participation of women in politics. The conference adopted a Regional Programme of Action for Women in Politics and Decision Making (Ntseane, 2005). Amongst other things, the programme identified actions and strategies that were adopted at the national and regional level if the 30 percent target is to be achieved (SADC, 2001, 15). Women politicians from different political parties used the recommendations of that conference to lobby for change in their respective constituencies in 2004. Not anymore, women lobbying has died off in 2014.

Research shows that after the 1995 evaluation of the political education program, Emang Basadi decided to target women wings of political parties as a strategy to enhance the leadership capacity of women. The association rightly realised that women’s wings were better placed to influence the agendas of political parties since they operated from within (Ntseane, 2005). Emang Basadi correctly saw women’s wings of political parties as unique avenues to enable women to infiltrate decision-making structures such as council and parliament (Emang Basadi 1998:18). As a result, phase II of its political education project began with a needs assessment to identify how women wings or leagues could be strengthened. The result of this assessment indicated that women wings required training on gender issues, lobbying and advocacy skills. Emang Basadi introduced training workshops on campaign management, fundraising, assertiveness and confidence building skills (Emang Basadi, 1998: 19; Maundeni, 2004; Ntseane 2005). It also organised a workshop on
‘effective use of women’s wings’. It should be added that the IEC personnel attended these workshops and exchanged views with women activists. In these workshops, women politicians were given direction on how to address women issues within political parties and how to ensure that their members were focused on enhancing the political status of women (Emang Basadi, 1998: 19; Ntseane, 2005). Not anymore, Emang Basadi has stopped mobilising women wings of political parties and male chauvinism might be restored.

It should also be noted that through the assistance of Emang Basadi and other international organisations notably the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) of Uganda and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, women’s wings/leagues developed a clear focus and direction. Women wings/leagues in BCP, BDP and BNF grew, moved away from providing welfare functions to performing the following activities: sensitising women on political issues by giving talks through workshops, conferences and seminars; mobilising women and motivating them to actively participate in party and national politics; promoting and protecting women’s rights; inculcating among women, the spirit of self-confidence and self-reliance by encouraging them to address political rallies and community initiatives; encouraging women to articulate and defend their rights through their involvement in village activities and non-governmental organizations; ensuring that women’s interests were taken on board in every major decision of all party structures in the interest of gender equality through advocacy and active lobbying; mobilising party support through door to door campaigns, choirs and other strategies; participating in fund-raising activities and community projects that promoted the party image; sensitising and concretising their female colleagues about the benefits of becoming involved in party politics; lobbying and advocating for the inclusion of 50% quota in the party and national constitution.

On the other hand, the Botswana Caucus for Women in Politics launched a project called ‘Positioning Women Politicians for 2004 and beyond’. Its main purpose was to prepare women to stand for the 2004 elections in larger numbers. In pursuance of that goal, the Caucus conducted regional seminars and workshops covering topics such as the right to share power with men, changing voting trends, interpersonal skills, campaign logistics, public speaking, presentation skills as well as managing critics (Ntseane, 2005). The Caucus also carried out a research to understand difficulties faced by women in standing for political office (Ntseane, 2005). It further lobbies parliament to amend the national constitution to facilitate
reservation of special seats for women, youth and other special groups; the media to be gender responsive in their reporting; empowers women politicians through training on standing for positions of power; training women to vote for other women (Emang Basadi, 2002; Ntseane, 2005). Not anymore, nobody encourages women to stand for elective positions in large numbers! Emang Basadi itself is on death bed, and the present generation of women have more or less abandoned the movement.

Gender was an important part of the 2004 DRP Opinion Poll survey. One of the central questions was whether the respondents thought women were capable of holding any office in the country. In response more than two thirds (76.8%) of the respondents thought women were capable. But 18.6% said women were not capable and 3.9% did not have an opinion on the matter. Among those who thought women were capable of holding elected office, 54.5% were female and 45.5% male. That is, more women than men thought women were capable of holding elected office. On the same issue, 63.7% of the youth from 18 to 37 years old upheld the view that women were capable. But only 16.2% of the middle aged, between 38 and 47, thought women were capable of holding elected office. This meant that the middle aged were less gender sensitive than the youth. In the age group 48 and above, 18.8% thought women were capable of holding elected office. An insignificant figure of 0.3% of respondents refused to express their opinion on the question. In contrast, among those respondents who thought that women were not capable of holding any office, two-thirds (71.1%) were male and only 28.9 were female. In terms of age groups of those who thought women were incapable of holding elected office, 40.3% was between the ages of 8 and 27, 38.7% were between the ages 28 and 47, and 19% between the ages of 48 and above. It will be interesting to carry out a poll to establish whether perceptions have not changed.

**The youth, elections and voter education**

The IEC’s voter apathy report of 2002 found that the traditional methods of communicating electoral messages through political rallies, kgotla meetings, and Radio Botswana were not reaching young people and a substantial number of other age groups. It also found that an overwhelming majority of young people neither registered nor voted in the 1999 general election and this posed a challenge to youth organisations and to the IEC itself.
Table: Registered to vote in Elections by Age Groups 1999 Poll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Registered to Vote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes - n (%)</td>
<td>No - n (%)</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>146 (25.9)</td>
<td>417 (74.1)</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>685 (46.7)</td>
<td>783 (53.3)</td>
<td>1468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-99</td>
<td>1614 (70.6)</td>
<td>671 (29.4)</td>
<td>2285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2445 (56.6)</td>
<td>1871 (43.4)</td>
<td>4316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DRP opinion poll

However, during the March 2004 Opinion Poll, the DRP asked respondents whether they had registered to vote in the October 2004 election. A significant majority (74.1%) of those aged 18 –20 years had not registered. An analysis of how age and gender was likely to influence one’s willingness to vote was done by the DRP after the March 2004 Opinion Poll, and it was found that there was a significant association \( \chi^2 = 60.79 \) \((p<0.0001)\) between age and willingness to vote, with older respondents more likely to vote than the youth (18-27). Furthermore, more than 80% of respondents whose age is 38 years or higher years were ready to vote. Among the youth, only 69% were ready to vote.

Encouragingly, more young people favoured a democratic government than any other (DRP Opinion Poll, 1999; 2004). Even then, according to the 1999 Opinion Poll, only 46.7% of those aged between 21 and 30 years old, had registered.
Table 5: Intention to Vote by Age Groups 1999 Poll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Intending to vote</th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes - n (%)</td>
<td>No - n (%)</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>239 (42.4)</td>
<td>252 (44.7)</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>913 (62.1)</td>
<td>402 (27.3)</td>
<td>1470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-99</td>
<td>1836 (80.4)</td>
<td>274 (12.0)</td>
<td>2284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2988 (69.2)</td>
<td>928 (21.5)</td>
<td>4318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DRP Opinion Poll, 1999

Ntsabane thinks that the explanation for youth voter apathy may be found in African societies’ traditional political culture that does not consider public affairs a domain for women and youth. Traditionally, political power was based on age and was centred on a person’s social standing (Ntsabane, 2005). He approvingly quotes Somolekae (1989) who noted that the youth were traditionally and presently believed not to be mature enough and were and are still excluded from the political process. Ntsabane holds that this culture is still strong and influences who gets elected into political and civic office. This lack of a democratic ethic tends to permeate all major social institutions and is a survivor from pre-colonial through colonial into post-colonial society. Youthful women have been considered as minors whether in the family, polity, economy, religion and education (Ntsabane, 2005; Ntseane 2005). Whenever the youth attempted to have an impact on policy-making, there was often mistrust due primarily to differences in political values and behaviour. Elderly males often made key decisions on their behalf. The pre-independence and post-independence periods of transition did not provide sufficient socialisation to break this lack of a democratic ethic amongst these marginalised groups in society.

Ntsabane also holds the view that a political culture in general and a democratic culture in particular, as is true of all norms, values, beliefs and attitudes held by a society, are a product of a complex process of socialisation. He assumes that the human infant is born a political tabular Rasa and acquires the necessary
political values, beliefs and attitudes through political socialisation. He further assumes that somewhere between the years of early childhood and late adolescence the youth are expected to learn the skills and values which prepare them for adulthood. Key in the process, are social institutions such as the family, school system, media and political parties which he analyses.

He considers the family as the most fundamental of all the agencies of socialisation and referred to it as the “nursery of our humanness”. He intimates that if we owe so much of our humanness to the family surely it must play an important role in the process of political socialisation. Ntsabane poses the question whether the family in Botswana preaches and practices democracy that might be broadly referred to as a democratic ethic. That is, whether the Botswana family provides opportunities for learning and living values and attitudes that are democratic (Ntsabane, 2005). His analysis indicates that the family in the traditional Tswana society was not one of the most democratic institutions. He established that youth and women, as is true in other institutions in society, were regarded as not capable enough to make major decisions. They could thus never learn and live democratically nor could they develop the right sets of values and attitudes that can be referred to as a democratic ethic. Ntsabane further demonstrated that the values and practices of the Tswana family seem to have been carried on into the new post-independence political culture. He argues that the modern Tswana family is hampered in two other ways: First, it competes with other agencies of socialisation such as the school which, “monopolises the time and instruction of youth during the impressionable years of late childhood and early adolescence” (Ntsabane, 2005). The youth tend to spend most of their early years in formal institutions such as schools and have increasingly become products of such agencies than of the family. Second, parents, as key agents of socialisation in the family, are also new to the post-colonial political culture. They are therefore educated in the past and have to teach the youth in the present.

Ntsabane’s other point is that the education system, which is widely accessible and where young people spend their most impressionable years, is also an important agency of political socialisation. He notes however, that students are commonly subjected to all kinds of authoritarianism as they are regarded as too young and too immature to live democratically (Ntsabane, 2005). He quotes from Ramatsui saying: “Pupils because of their relative immaturity, can be given only a limited voice in any important decisions affecting the school community” (Ramatsui, 1989:pp.90). This is
a typical Tswana view of the youth. Ntsabane shares similar views with Phorano (1989), who decries the present education system in Botswana seeing it as authoritarian and lacking in the development of a democratic culture. It is an authoritarianism that is enforced through a rigid command system which places the headmaster and teacher at the top of the hierarchy who is expected to enforce discipline, and places the student on the receiving end of the system who is expected not to ask questions. Ntsabane further notes that the classroom culture is also one of teacher dominance where s/he is seen as a custodian of the truth and fountain of unquestionable knowledge. He argues that critical thinking is discouraged in the classroom and at all levels of the educational system. He also notes that it is only at the level of tertiary education that there is an element of representative governance in student affairs though the heads of institutions still reign supreme on all matters pertaining to the school. Students in these tertiary institutions are still viewed by authorities with suspicion and mistrust when they challenge decisions. In my view, this limits democratic governance. The question is. Can other institutions such as the BNYC, help to change this undemocratic culture that the families and schools are entrenching?

The BNYC official attending the faith sector workshop that was mentioned above talked about their youth empowerment programmes whose aims were to:

1. Increase the number of young people voting in the 2004 general elections.
2. Sensitise young people on the link between their vote and the improvement of their conditions and raise awareness of their role in maintaining a democratic culture.
3. Strengthen the leadership and representation capacity of young people to play a more meaningful role in the development process.
4. Strengthen existing partnerships and establish new ones with organisations and institutions working in the area of youth political empowerment at national and international levels.

Thus, the BNYC has an explicit recognition that the exclusion of the youth exists and there was a matched willingness and intent by the BNYC and the IEC to reverse the previous voting trends. In contrast, the BNYC is not equally active to mobilise young people to participate in the 2014 election.
The Media and Elections

The IEC voter apathy report revealed that the majority of the eligible voters do not attend political rallies, or kgotla meetings addressed by councilors and members of parliament. Turnout at political rallies are disappointingly low. Yet political rallies constituted the central forum through which political parties passed information to the electorate. On the other hand, voters accused political parties of using abusive language, of resorting to the use of English instead of Setswana, and to politics of mudslinging. They also accused politicians of deserting them once elected into office.

The media played an important role in disseminating political information. People read and listened to particular sections of the media more than others. On a daily basis, 50% of the respondents/voters listened to radio; 32.1% watched television and 22.6% read newspapers (DRP, 2004). So, political news and electoral information that was disseminated daily through radio, television and newspapers were more likely to reach half or more of the electorates. But there are those who got news a few times a week: 25.3% through radio; 17% through television and 26.3% through newspapers. A few others got news a few times a month and once a month from radio, television and newspapers, a good number never got news from these outlets. Apparently, 12.6% indicated that they never got news from radio, 37.6% never got news from television and 29.6% never got news from newspapers (DRP, 2004). This suggested two things. First, those who either, listened to radio, watched television or read newspapers were easily reached through these outlets and the IEC and candidates should have used these outlets more to reach them.

In addition, a slightly smaller percentage (28.8%) cited political parties/freedom square; 18.4% cited friends, and 13.2% cited family members as sources of their political and electoral information. Among the newspapers, 46.9% got their political news from the Daily News, 33.2% from Mmegi wa Dikgang, 22% from the Botswana Guardian, 16.8% from The Voice and 16.7% from Mmegi Minitor. These print media were the primary sources of political information for an overwhelming majority of the respondents. Therefore, political parties, candidates and the IEC should have utilised these newspapers. Other newspapers were also important as well: 13.1% got political news from the Gazette, 7.4% from the Midweek Sun,
Respondents/voters thought certain newspapers reported political events and news better than others. In this regard, the Daily News and Mmegi wa Dikgang were leading, at 29.1% and 28% respectively. The Guardian followed at 16.8% and Mmegi Monitor at 10.4%. Effectively, these four constituted what the respondents regarded as the best providers of political information in 2004. But the other papers were also important at providing political information: the gazette was cited by 6.8%, the Midweek Sun by 4.4%, Mokgosi by 4.9%, The Voice by 7.8%, the Mirror by 1.6%, and the Sunday tribune by 0.7% in 2004. In short, the electorate had its preferences in terms of selecting political-news providers and political parties and candidates had to be aware of that and should have aligned their campaigns accordingly.

Radio Botswana and Botswana Television organised debates and invited the IEC, editors/journalists from the private media and researchers to debate electoral issues in 2004. But when the political campaign started around July of 2004, civil society and political leaders held the view that the state/public media, particularly the Daily News and Radio Botswana were not playing an active part in the electoral process (Davids and Maundeni, 2004). The general feeling then was that the Minister of Telecommunications, Science and Technology restricted the public media from covering political news, particularly major opposition activities. Fortunately, from August 2004, Radio Botswana introduced a programme of debates, featuring parliamentary candidates from all the parties in a particular constituency, and started from the 18th August until the 15th October, every evening between the times 2010 hours and 2200 hours. These debates were publicised through page 16 of the Daily News issue of that time, giving the date, constituency and venue for the parliamentary debates.

On the other hand, the media, particularly private newspapers and Radio Botswana suffered serious inconveniences due to the secrecy shrouding the election date. For instance, the private media speculated that the 2004 general election date would be on the 16th October, and other players (such as political parties, candidates and the general public) believed their stories. There was no doubt that the uncertainty about the election date portrayed the media as unreliable and this was negative in terms of promoting voter education. The media should take this issue with the
President for purposes of fixing the election date in the Constitution or for purposes of allowing the IEC to fix the election date.

On another issue of election coverage, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA-Botswana) commissioned a study ‘Elections Media Monitoring study’ which covered the period September – November 2004. The study found that the public media covered more election campaign stories (over 60%) than the private media (40%); that the public media played its role very well in balanced and fair coverage of all contesting political parties; and that all the contesting political parties were given almost equal chance of coverage in the public media.

The MISA study also found that the print media showed signs of bias towards the ruling party. The reason for bias towards the BDP is not attributed to its control of or favouritism by the public media but rather to the following: generally, it was attributed to the fact that the private media survives through profit making, and tended to cover issues that were profitable. The study also found that the ruling party received the largest share of media coverage from both the public and private media because of the following.

a) It had a larger share of candidates contesting in the elections thereby giving it a higher probability of receiving more coverage;
b) It was facing a challenge and criticism from all opposition parties, the public and private media and this increased its coverage; and
c) The ruling party was working hard in defending itself and its constituencies from being taken by the opposition.

The MISA study further found a considerable gender gap in media coverage in both the public and private media. Males dominated news coverage and females were only news makers relating to issues of controversy or under the shade of their male counterparts or partners. The gender discrepancy is also explained by the fact that there were very few female candidates contesting the elections and some political parties did not have any female candidates.

On the other hand, the IDASA study of 2004 conducted by Davids and Maundeni established that the media, civil society, politicians and the IEC were convinced in 2004 that the media in Botswana did not have expertise on election
reporting. This was partly because the IEC press briefings were not regular enough to enable the media to publish correct and updated information. But it was also because the private media did not have expertise on technical issues and did not cover them as well as they should (Davids and Maundeni, 2004). It was observable during that time that the private media had the heart but not the depth to analyse electoral issues. Even the media watch dog – MISA – admitted that media reportage was not the best (Davids and Maundeni, 2004) and asked the nation to be patient as the University of Botswana has recently introduced a degree in media studies and had not produced any graduates yet. Newspaper owners were encouraged to also take the blame as they did not recruit the right calibre and remunerated very poorly.

However, the media played a significant role during the verification of ballot boxes/papers, counting and announcement of results. These processes were all done at each constituency headquarters and the media played a crucial role in the speedy broadcasting of the results. Verification of ballot boxes/papers in the constituencies had to be completed before any counting could occur and if one box did not tally (as it happened in a few cases) counting and announcing the results were significantly delayed. The processes were monitored by party agents, election monitors, journalists and the electorates. Once verification was completed, counting followed and party agents were required to indicate their acceptance of the results by signing before the results were announced. In all cases, each returning officer publicly announced the results and the present journalists (particularly from Radio Botswana and Botswana Television) faxed/phone-in the information to their headquarters that immediately broadcasted the results on air and had teams of experts from the DRP to analyse the results as they came in. This continuous live announcement and analysis of results on air was a significant development in election reporting in Botswana. In many instances, the results were broadcast on air before even the IEC got them from the busy returning officers.

**Voter education by other agencies**

In addition to the IEC’s own efforts and to NGO’s supplementary efforts to encourage a high voter turnout during the 2004 elections, other stakeholders played a meaningful role. For instance, the Permanent Secretary to the Office of the President issued a press release encouraging all civil servants to minimize travelling abroad during the election date and urging them to cast their ballots. Local government associations,
such as the Botswana Unified Local Government Service Association (BULGASA), also issued press releases that warned the nation about the dangers of voter apathy and also encouraged registered people, especially the local government staff across the country, to vote (Botswana Guardian Northern Extra, 29 October 2004: 2). Supplementing these efforts was the Btv reporters who interviewed employers whose businesses were open on Election Day, inquiring about arrangements for their employees to vote. Such interventions by the different stakeholders added to the voice of the IEC and encouraged more people to cast their ballots. It is in the interest of the IEC to strengthen the efforts of these stakeholders and to establish more working relationships with them for better turnout at future elections. The IEC should continue fostering and maintaining active collaboration with stakeholders who can assist with voter information dissemination.

**Conclusion**

Voter education in Botswana in 2004 was a joint activity between many partners. It was spearheaded by the IEC and supplemented by religious organisations, women associations, the media, youth organisations and public service associations. In 2004, the nation united behind the IEC in tackling voter apathy and the results were encouraging. In contrast, voter education has hugely slowed down, nobody seems to be leading, and voter apathy is mostly likely to entrench itself again in the 2014 election. Joint efforts are hardly visible, there is no leading institution spearheading voter education, and the civil society movement is almost dead. There is neither a woman’s manifesto nor a youth manifesto, and socioeconomic and political development is hardly visible. In 2014, the nation is like a ship at sea, without a captain, and moving in no particular direction and without a vision. The danger is that this vacuum could be filled by traditionalists whose vision is the past, a revivalism of old cultures such as initiation schools!

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