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## **Challenges of Project Implementation in Local Government: The Case of Francistown City Council and Kweneng District Council**

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## ABSTRACT

Botswana is faced with many challenges of project implementation. Since independence detailed projects and programmes were initiated, with limited and often less developed state capacity to implement them. This study focuses on challenges of project implementation in Botswana's tier of local government. A qualitative case research method approach was employed to undertake the study. Telephonic interviews were conducted with politicians and employees from Francistown City Council (FCC) and Kweneng District Council (KDC) and data was analysed using thematic analysis. The paper outlines project implementation challenges in Local Authorities (LA). For instance, lack of capacity, lack of commitment by the District Development Committee (DDC), poor stakeholder engagement and lack of financial autonomy by councils. Some of the identified implementation challenges are not peculiar to the two LAs but cuts across local authorities in Botswana. However, low human capacity in local authorities was cited as a major problem in project implementation.

*JEL Classification: H70*

**Key Words:** Project Implementation, Local Government, Local Authority

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globally, citizens are demanding better and more efficient services from national and local governments to maintain or improve the quality of their lives. Local government has been entrusted with a role of improving community lives by providing basic services such as portable water, waste removal and electricity supply (Mthethwa & Jill, 2016). Local government is said to be the first contact point between citizens and government. Mthethwa & Jill (2016) state that local government is a sphere of government located within communities to respond appropriately to local needs, expectations and interest of the communities. Meanwhile, Nel (2001) states that, legislation imposes upon local authorities the obligation to promote the social and economic development of local communities and to participate in implementing national projects.

Botswana is a unitary state with a two-tier system of government, central government and local government. Local government administration in Botswana comes from as far as pre-independence in 1965. Botswana's local government, is a creation of the British colonial rule. The local government systems that are currently in Sub-Saharan Africa are largely adopted from developed countries, generally from the former colonial powers (Fjeldstad, et al, 2014). However local government structure and objectives are diverse and differ from country to country and from one period to the other within a particular country (Lekorwe, 2000). In Botswana local government is usually understood in the context of four major local institutions namely District and Town/City councils (rural and urban settlements respectively), Land Boards, Tribal Administration and the Office of the District Commissioner (ODC). These four institutions of local government play an important role in the planning and development process, specifically in contributing towards the realization of the National Development Plans and Vision 2036.

The Government of Botswana commits a significant proportion of its national budget to local community development. For instance, the 2019/20 budget allocation for the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development is P6.43billion, in 2018/19 it was P6.28 billion. Despite the substantial financial resources committed to local government, project implementation remains one of the major challenges that hinders service delivery (Lemmenyane, 2015). Iimi (2006) adds that despite the country's widely acclaimed impressive economic growth, where Botswana's economy was among the fastest growing in the world, the country is faced with implementation challenges within the public sector.

In an effort to bolster project implementation in the public sector, the Government of Botswana established partnerships with the private sector. The Botswana government recognizes that the private sector has a significant role to play in ensuring that there is delivery of development programmes, especially through contractors who undertake various government projects and activities. During the 2016/17 national budget speech, private contractors were urged to take ownership of projects and demonstrate their social

responsibility in ensuring that projects are delivered on time and they are of good quality. Furthermore, the youth have been encouraged to venture into businesses in order for them to work with the government in the delivery of the budget, rather than stalling project implementation, resulting in cost over-runs (Botswana Budget speech 2016/17).

The paper is organized as follows; Section one is the introduction, section two provides a background on project implementation in local government, section three states the institutional frameworks for project implementation in Botswana followed by section four which describes the methodology used, while section five states the major findings of the study and lastly, section six concludes and recommends on how best local authorities in Botswana can improve on project implementation.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN BOTSWANA**

The Government of Botswana, through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) is responsible for creating an enabling environment for community development, as well as the provision of basic infrastructure and social services. However, developmental projects, particularly the village infrastructure projects are said to overrun the project scope, which affects project costs and the estimated completion time. This challenge has received attention of different stakeholders such as researchers, policy makers, community members and politicians. For instance, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development (MFED) noted that: “During NDP 10, the development budget was under spent by an average of 17.3 percent for the years 2011/2012 through 2013/2014, due to delayed project implementation” (GoB, 2017). The Assistant Minister of Local Government and Rural Development added that “the Ministry has put in place management structures and provided resources in the form of qualified specialists. Notwithstanding these efforts, project management at district level remains poor” (GoB, 2017). The implication is that a number of projects in some districts have failed and ultimately cost government more money as well as the communities they were supposed to benefit (BOPA, 2017). For a long time, Botswana did not have the monitoring and evaluation framework, however, the government in collaboration with the World Bank developed a National Monitoring and Evaluation System. The government will be rolling out the implementation of the National Monitoring and Evaluation system which was approved in 2018 (GoB, 2019). The System is expected to assist government to strengthen the implementation processes of programmes and policies, track achievement of national development goals and facilitate evidence-based decision-making in resource allocations (GoB, 2017). Furthermore, in the financial year 2019/2020 government has taken a decision to set up a project management office to ensure effective implementation of projects (GoB, 2019).

Botswana’s local governance structure is complex, as it is comprised of a number of structures and processes. The Office of the District Commissioner (ODC), formerly

District Administration (DA) acts as a link between central and local government. The District Commissioner (DC), chairs the District Development Committee (DDC) and coordinates the implementation of all rural development activities at district level. The District Commissioner is assisted by the Council Secretary or Town Clerk in the coordination of the DDC. The DDC is the most significant organization at the district level for coordination of development activities as it sets overall goals, direction and priorities with which all development should conform. The Committee's primary function is to ensure that local needs are represented in the National Development Plans. This is achieved through the development of District Development Plans (DDP). The DDP has to be approved by the District Council before it is transmitted to Central Government (Republic of Botswana, 1997:79).

Local Authorities (LAs), namely councils, are statutorily empowered by the Local Government Act of 2012 to make decisions at a local level and discretion to allocate resources within their area of jurisdiction. However, LAs in the country are not provided in the constitution and have no inherent competence derived from the constitution (Mosha, 2010). LAs provide basic infrastructure and related services for the delivery of primary education (Madala & Phirinyane, 2016). LAs also coordinate physical planning, they maintain and construct internal roads. It is the role of the local authority to establish development plans in consultation with the people, as well as budget for the execution of these plans. LAs in Botswana remain dependent on revenue supports grants from central government. Central government provides 90% and 80% of district and urban councils' recurrent budgets respectively, LAs have statutory powers to collect certain taxes, levies and fees to cover their operating expenses (CLGF, 2015).

According to Mosha (2010) local authorities have legal powers to collect certain taxes, levies and fees in order to defray their operating expenses. However, Mosha (2010) stated that councils are discouraged from trying to raise revenue by embarking on potentially profit making business like provision of rental housing or provision of public transport due to potential problems. Such enterprises involve possible losses of public funds as well as profits. In 2012 government urged councils to venture into Private Public Partnerships (PPP) in their localities to generate revenue as the government was not able to meet all their financial needs. One of the first councils to venture into those partnership is the Southern District Council through the construction of Mongala mall with Time Projects in Kanye which costed P60 million. The partnership is regarded as the most successful PPP to have happened in Botswana (Mmeso, 2015). Meanwhile Raditsebe (2016) reported that the South East District Council, has also established a company, that will see it generates revenue on behalf of the council. Even though the Local Government Act (2012) empowers councils to explore and raise revenue in different ways like the above example, there is need for prudent financial management which requires that guidance and approval on borrowing must be obtained from the ministries responsible for local government and finance. Therefore, the above factors combined continue to limit local authorities fiscal control and autonomy.

Local authorities, as one of the key implementers of village infrastructure projects faces a number of challenges that hinder them from successfully meeting their objectives. For over the years, infrastructure development projects have been sluggish in Francistown since the closure of mines in the vicinity of the city two years ago (Kolongwe, 2018). Whereas at Kweneng District Council (KDC) there are complaints of lack of developments, delayed projects yet there is rapid population growth in the area (Mmeso, 2015). Despite the challenges associated with implementation of infrastructure development, the government of Botswana continues to inject money towards developmental projects. For instance, for the financial year 2017/18 Francistown city got P207,127,130. 00 while Kweneng got P414,633, 080.00. It is against this backdrop that the paper seeks to identify and examine challenges of project implementation in Botswana's tier of local government, using Francistown City Council and Kweneng District Council as a case study.

### **3. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN BOTSWANA**

#### **3.1. MINISTRY OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (MFED)**

The mandate of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MFED) is to coordinate national development planning, mobilize and prudently manage available financial and economic resources. MFED gives instructions about the general administration, supervision and control of general funds created by each local government institution. The Minister of Finance and Economic Development acts as the custodian of public finance. For instance, local authorities are required to open and maintain bank account and may obtain overdraft facilities within the legal and fiscal framework. However, in the case that over draft exceed one third of the revenue of a local authority, authorisation should be taken from the Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mfundisi, und).

#### **3.2. THE MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (MLGRD)**

This ministry has the responsibility to ensure that local institutions perform in an effective an efficient manner. Primarily, this is achieved through policy direction, administrative support services, financial resources, capacity building and supervision. Several departments within the MLGRD are charged with certain developmental responsibilities. These include the Departments of Local Government Finance and Procurement Services, and Local Governance and Development Planning, among others. The Departments of Local Government Finance and Procurement Services has been set up to oversee the financial management processes of the Councils. This was done in a bid to ensure that there was sound financial management and control over the operations of local authorities, and that adequate resources are made available to local authorities to meet their statutory responsibilities and priorities of the government (BOPA, 2017).



The Department of Local Governance and Development's overall purpose is to deliver effective local governance, through coordination of district development planning, development and monitoring of policies, statutes and guidelines. The core functions for Local Governance and Development Planning Department are: Coordinating the district planning process, Ensuring effective local governance, Policy Development and Analysis. Coordination of implementation of local economic development process and community resilience programme. Presently the Department is coordinating the formulation of the National Decentralization Policy.

Below are the departments at a local level under the MLGRD which are responsible for project implementation;

### *3.2.1 Department Of Social & Community Development (S&CD)*

The Department of Social and Community Development is geared towards improving the socio- economic wellbeing of individuals, group's families and communities through provision of safety nets, psychosocial support and capacity building to enhance quality of life. Under this department there are social workers who work with Village Development Committee (VDC) in ensuring that there are community development projects in their areas. During budget allocation for example, when central government gives council money to build houses for destitute, the major role for S&CD is to help identify the targeted beneficiaries.

### *3.2.2 Department Of Finance & Development Planning*

The overall responsibility of the department is to ensure that development and other services are brought to targeted beneficiaries on time and within budget. This is done through district development planning which is a process that ensures that every individual is involved in the development of their village. However, the challenge here is that underspending is more pronounced in the development budget than in the recurrent budget. For the development budget, in some years, underspending was as high as 20 percent. This underspending is indicative of low implementation capacity (GoB, 2017).

### *3.2.3 Department Of Physical Planning & Estate Management*

The Department is responsible for managing and coordinating the functions of physical planning, management of council property including the valuation of private property for rating purposes in conformity with established legislations, regulations, codes and policies and directives governing the business of local authorities. District Councils are mandated to appoint Physical Planning Committees whose functions include the processing of applications for planning permission for the development of land. However, reports are that there is shortage of physical planners and recruiting people with relevant skills into Physical Planning Committee membership is a challenge (BOPA, 2014).

### *3.2.4 Rural Development Council (RDC)*

Rural Development Council falls under The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). RDC was established through a Presidential Directive back in 1972 following the initiative by government to develop guidelines on how to address issues of rural poverty in Botswana. RDC was established to serve as the highest national consultative body mandated to promote and coordinate rural development across various sectors and levels within government, as well as across the various stakeholders within our economy. The Council in other words served as “Government watchdog” on rural development agenda by ensuring that rural-development projects benefitted communities. As a coordinating body, the RDC had no executive mandate for project and programme implementation since those were, and to a large extent still are, responsibilities of line ministries. The mandate of RDC is big but encounters challenges as it is thinly staffed.

## **3.3 OVERSIGHT BODIES**

The local authorities seek to ensure that, their finances are not mismanaged and standards of integrity and accountability are maintained. There is zero tolerance for corruption and mechanisms of control and accountability are strengthened. As a result, audit machinery and bodies like the Local Government Public Accounts Committee (LAPAC), Performance Monitoring Committee (PMC) and The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) are established to play a more efficient role.

### *3.3.1 Local Authorities Public Accounts Committee (LAPAC)*

LAPAC was formed specifically to strengthen fiscal discipline and accountability in Local Authorities. The functions of the committee are to examine the accounts of every council and land board which are required by law to be presented to the minister. The committee examines the Auditor General’s report and audited financial and performance reports one month after they have been presented at Full Council and Land Board. Section 48C of Local government (District Councils, Amendment Act, (1999) states;

“the committee is comprised of nine persons appointed by the Minister, two councillors, two land board members and the secretariat comprising of public officers from the Ministry as the Minister may direct. Members of the committee are expected to possess substantial knowledge and experience in the area of accounting and auditing, local authority financial and performance management systems or in other matters of nature likely to assist the committee in the discharge of its functions. Committee members stay in office for a period not more than three years from their date of appointment”.

A challenge for this committee is that, even though the accounts for the district councils are reviewed yearly, there is accounting backlog in the councils (Kathyola and Job, 2011).

### *3.3.2 Performance Monitoring Committee (PMC)*

A Performance Management Committee has been established within all councils. The committee is comprised of chairpersons of the councils or Sub Council Committees. The Chairperson of this committee, is the chairperson of the Finance Committee in the council while at Sub Council PMC is chaired by Sub Finance and Development Planning Committee. Other committee members are drawn from Audit, Education, Health and Social Services. The committee is elected after every two and half years. Section 22 (1) of Local Government Act (2012) says “A council (a) with Subordinate Authorities may appoint not more than two committees; and (b) without Subordinate Authorities may appoint not more than seven committees”. Section 22 (3) says “In appointing members of the committees referred to in subsection (1), the council or Subordinate Authority shall make appointments based on a cross-sectional representation of all parties represented in the council or Subordinate Authority”. The purpose of the PMC is to ensure that projects are implemented on time and within budget and also monitor performance of contractors. The committee conducts site visits to all council projects and properties. After site visits the PMC develops a report for the Sub Council or Full Council on which recommendations shall be made. The level of education of some councillors who are part of the PMC is said to be a hindrance as it affects the checks and balance to be done effectively as it is the mandate of the political wing.

### *3.3.3 Office Of The Auditor General*

The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) is tasked with conducting financial audits, performance audits, local government audits and information technology audits. The OAG ensures that money is not being misappropriated and that the money given to the departments/regions is being spent in an efficient and effective manner (Transparency International 2007). The OAG is accountable to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, for whom it is required to present a report to within 12 months of conducting an audit, which is something it has consistently met, with the exception of an occasional delay when conducting local audits (Transparency International 2007). khwatana (2016) adds that although OAG consistently met target, the institution is constrained, there is shortage of staff as a result of failure to attract and retain talent. According to the Transparency International Report (2016) the OAG leadership stated that, at some point they were expected to complete performance audit in 12 months yet they were constrained, at the time they had only four people to perform performance audit. Another concern is that, the OAG cannot directly report instances where it detects fraud within part of the government structure to the police or DCEC, the only powers of reporting it directly has, is to the minister, who heads the concern being audited (Transparency International 2007).

## 4. METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a qualitative case method to undertake the study. Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Crossman, 2018).

There are 16 local councils in Botswana, elected local councils exist in ten districts and six urban (city and town council) however, for the purposes of this paper only two councils were selected due to limited resources, time and for convenience.

This is a multiple case study, which used urban council and a district council. According to Baxter & Jack (2014) if a study contains more than a single case then a multiple case study is required. According to Yin (2003) in multi case studies each case should be selected so that it either predicts similar results or predict contrasting results. The two councils were of interest firstly, Kweneng District Council (KDC) is located in Molepolole, the biggest village in Botswana with an estimated population size of 63 128 (CSO, 2011) and its proximity to the capital city, Gaborone. According to Mmeso (2015) Molepolole is experiencing rapid population growth. Residents in Kweneng district are said to complain about the lack of developments in their area. Secondly, the study used Francistown City Council located in Francistown, the second largest city in Botswana with a population of about 100,079 (CSO,2011). The City of Francistown is an administrative district, separated from North-East District. It is administered by Francistown City Council. Francistown City Council was of interest to the study to see its performance in terms of development projects without it having to benefit from spill over effects of being closer to Gaborone like other councils.

The study interviewed a total of sixteen (16) participants, eight (8) from each of the local authorities. Primary data was collected through the use of semi structured interviews with politicians and council employees within each council. Secondary data was in the form of government documents, books, journal papers and newspaper articles. In order to increase the validity of the study data triangulation was used. Data triangulation involves using different sources of information in order to increase the validity of the study. The application of data triangulation and multiple case studies assisted to get greater understanding of project implementation challenges encountered in the two local authorities.

The research questions were designed based on five stages of a project life cycle. The first part addressed issues related to project initiation; How were projects initiated in local authorities. The second part focused on the planning process; how did they plan their projects, where did they get funds, to name two factors. This was followed by the

implementation/execution process, which explored how projects were implemented and challenges experienced in this phase. Questions on the monitoring and evaluation stage sought to understand if a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework was in place and whether or not it was effective. Finally, the questions sought to establish issues of project closure.

The method of analysis chosen for this study was a qualitative approach of thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method used for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. Thematic analysis is a flexible data analysis plan that qualitative researchers use to generate themes from interview data. Thematic analysis goes through six stages, at first one needs to familiarise themselves with the data through reading and re-reading interview scripts. This is followed by data coding, which is done through isolation of important phrases and sentences about a topic. After the interviews scripts have been coded, a list of codes that have a similar meaning are clustered together. This is followed by labelling the clusters based on the meaning of relationship shared among codes. The labels are then used as themes. Thereafter, themes are reviewed against the data to confirm if they represent the collected data. The last step is to name and define themes, this process involves a comprehensive name that describes the relationship or meaning conveyed in the theme. Thematic Analysis was chosen because it produces an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions.

## **5. CHALLENGES OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN FRANCISTOWN CITY COUNCIL AND KWENENG COUNCIL**

This section presents the findings and discussions of the key project implementation challenges confronting local authorities, particularly in Francistown City Council and Kweneng District Council. The findings are analysed within the five stages of the project lifecycle as stated below;

### **5.1 INITIATION STAGE**

This is the first phase within the project management life cycle, which involves starting up a new project. Within the initiation phase, a problem or opportunity is identified, a solution is defined, a project is formed, and a project team is appointed to build and deliver the solution to the customer.

This stage involves consultations with numerous stakeholders namely the village chief (*kgosi*), Office of the District Commissioner (ODC), councillors, Economic Planners (EP), Physical Planners (PP), Community Development Officer (CDO), Village Development Committee (VDC), and members of the community. Interviews revealed that there are different ways of initiating developmental projects at a district level.

Councillors mentioned that, development projects are gathered from communities during *Kgotla* meetings (traditional meeting forum) and later synthesized into priorities that are outlined in the DDP, then presented at full council before being taken to National Rural Development Council. In addition, respondents stated that, sometimes officials from central government can propose a project and conduct consultations at the *kgotla*. Nonetheless, interviews revealed that, there are instances where a member of parliament, could start a project without proper consultation of the community.

Discussions with councillors revealed that *Kgotla* meetings are usually attended by elderly people. On the other hand, youth participation in consultative meetings is relatively poor, even though there are differences between FCC and KDC. Some councillors in FCC were of the view that there are some youth who attends *kgotla* meetings probably because FCC is in an urban area where majority of the population is youth. Whereas in KDC it is different as there is poor attendance of *kgotla* meetings. Councillors and officers were of the view that, it is probably because of migration to urban areas in search for jobs and some of those remaining are said to have perceptions that *kgotla* meetings are for the elderly.

The above issues hinder the ability of youth to convey their views and concerns on projects that may directly or indirectly affect them. Interviews discussions highlighted the view that communities are said to complain about the top down approach employed by central government in that, often times the government goes to them with made up ideas. This view is also shared by Mosha (2007), who argues that although there is some consultation with district level organisations, such consultation is just a formality. Councillors from Molepolole and Francistown decried poor consultation especially on decision making issues that affect their communities. For instance, the Report of Survey for the Molepolole Planning Area Development Plan provides critical insights into stakeholders' limited exposure to the preparation of development plans. The report states that, the Molepolole Planning Area Development Plan (MPADP) 1995-2015, was not widely known by key stakeholders such as the Village Development Committee (VDC), Molepolole Subordinate Land Board (MSLB) and the community at large (Chamisa & Kalumba, 2016). Councillors from both councils stated that, government is of the view that it has bottom up planning system whereas in reality government is doing top down planning. Respondents in both councils stated that, bottom up planning should not be a theoretical exercise, and that, developmental projects should not be imposed on people, but rather, members of the community should be involved in the initiation of the projects that are implemented in their areas. They stated that as politicians they owe it to the communities to ensure that there is provision of services in the districts.

Nonetheless, Botswana has always emphasised the importance of participation since independence as it is largely mentioned in government documents such as the National Development Plans (NDP's) which articulates the importance of participation in the

development planning. Also the 2002 Revised National Policy for Rural Development (RNPRD) which seek to enhance participation in development planning and implementation processes (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2002).

## 5.2 PLANNING STAGE

At this stage, a project management plan is developed comprehensively including plans for cost, scope, duration, quality, communication, risk and resources (PMI, 2013).

Economic Planners at councils together with Community Development Officers are responsible for looking at the issues that were brought up during consultations at the initiation stage. After brainstorming, the officers conduct a needs assessment and cost benefit analysis. After the completion of cost benefit analysis, officers budget for the projects with the guidance of MLGRD, then a plan is given to councillors for approval. All projects that councillors come up with, have to fit within the central government's budget. During the National Budget Proposals, the Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development is allocated a budget. Subsequently, the Department of Local Government Finance and Procurement Services ensures that the allocated budget is shared amongst all local authorities and the ministry as well. The budgetary needs of local authorities are informed by the central government. This implies that in a financial year, central government has to prioritize which local authorities' projects to fund, irrespective of what the individual local authority considers a priority.

Councillors reported that both central and local government do not share the same priorities as a result it poses serious challenge in the implementation of projects because often times central government gives money that is not enough to successfully implement projects. Mosha (2007) states that planning by local authorities is frustrating as it is not normally clear what a district will get in the next budget. According to Mosha (2010) a majority of districts showed evidence of implementation plan, a few were slowed down due to shortage of funds, late releases of funds from the centre or start up time taken before projects get started (Mosha, 2010).

Local authorities are highly reliant on central government for funding. For instance, Tlale (2017) reported that, during the 2017/18 budget presentation at a full council meeting in Molepolole, the KDC budget committee chairperson stated that, from the tentative expenditure, headquarters had been allocated P81 923 260, MAA/Lentsweletau sub allocated P130 050 330, Letlhakeng sub-district received P104 055 260 whilst Mogoditshane/Thamaga Sub-district had been given P98 604 230 to use for the coming financial period. Tlale (2017) further stated that some councillors queried the criterion used to allocate the money without looking at needs and location of such sub-districts. Councillors are said to have complained that the budget allocation resulted in some sub-districts not attaining their developmental targets. They said Mogoditshane/Thamaga Sub-district, despite its proximity to the capital city, had seen zero growth

both in development and services due to inadequate funding each financial year. As a result, councillors said often times they fail to implement projects which are considered to be of priority due to lack of funds. Councillors said the district must drive the budget allocation such that the budget must recognize peculiarity of the district in relation to being remote or an urban area rather than being standard across (Tlale, 2017).

Arguments are that, although Botswana's traditional planning and budgeting systems have served the country well since independence, they are no longer in tune with modern times, so much that there is real risk of not being able to deliver on the projected targets (Toka, 2010).

Furthermore, councillors complained that, even though councils are allowed to come up with ways of generating money, the money raised from rates has never been enough. According to Mosha (2010) money from rates is inelastic as sometimes the valuation rolls are incomplete, hence depriving the councils a major source of income. Modikwa (2012) stated that some councillors blamed their fellow members for frustrating service levy collection in an attempt to endear themselves to the electorate, thereby cultivating the notion that, failure to pay service levy is normal. This can be attributed to lack of political will. For instance, in 2014 Francistown City Council was owed P 102,956,572.60 for rates and service charges and only P14, 001, 052.90 was collected (Midweek sun). Even so central government and parastatal organizations are supposed to pay rates to the council, but they hardly pay (UN, 2010).

Even though, local authorities complain of lack of financial resources, government has made calls for local authorities to look for other income generating streams so as to supplement existing subventions that they receive on an annual basis. It's unfortunate that despite being given a go ahead to come up with projects that will generate income local authorities are failing even to collect internal revenue like service levies.

### 5.3 IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

The implementation stage has many tasks which include meetings, project status updates, human resource needs and performance reports. It is an important stage in a project as it helps those involved in a project to know if it will be a failure or success (PMI, 2013). Councillors indicated that at this stage, there are various committees at local level representing different ministries. These committees comprise of people who are usually on the ground to ensure that the mandate of their offices is well carried out. These are also some of the people who are part of the District Development Committee. Whenever there are ongoing projects depending on their office mandate they become part of the project. However, respondents from both councils were of the view that lack of commitment by some DDC members is worrisome as some give priority to only duties related to their ministry.



From the interviews, a lack of capacity was cited as one of the major obstacles to project implementation across local authorities. There is shortage of trained people in local authorities especially technical people like planners, architects, surveyors and engineers (BOPA, 2014). Planners from both councils were of the view that even though scarce skills allowance was introduced in 2008 to enable the government to attract and retain, expertise deemed to be scarce still, government remuneration and working conditions in LAs are not attractive, as a result most of technocrats continue to leave for a better pay mostly to the private sector. Respondents at Francistown stated that majority of workers who left for greener pastures went to the mines in the northern part of Botswana. Respondents stated that the poor working conditions in some areas are not conducive at all and also the fact that they are separated from their families affect their productivity and its costly as they have to commute time and again to check families. In 2014, when addressing a meeting the Assistant minister of MLGRD said there was shortage of planners in local authorities to discharge additional functions and responsibilities as there were no additional posts created due to zero manpower growth (BOPA, 2014). Councillors said capacity constraint impacts negatively on the delivery of the projects, as sometimes technocrats assigned to projects leave projects before they are finished in pursuit for greener pastures and replacing them is not easy.

Councillors raised concerns about government officials who are said to be assigned to projects, yet they lack project management skills. They said such practices are linked to many cases of government project failures. Councillors said short courses on project management are not enough to make one competent to manage community projects. Councillors were of the view that project management should be taken seriously as a profession.

It transpired during consultations that there is a certain “culture” of business that poses a threat to the implementation of projects in Botswana. For example, some contractors, despite failing to deliver projects as per their contractual obligations, continue to be awarded tenders for projects all in the name of being given a second chance (Francistown Council Respondent). Councillors stated that, sometimes they feel the government is too sympathetic with contractors who fail to perform rather than focusing on actual project results. In addition to that, they mentioned that the tendering process allows a contractor to carry on with a project even when they see that the money will not be enough to complete it. Thereafter, they delay the completion of the project as they have to wait for more funds to be disbursed to them by the councils. All these can be blamed on the weak regulatory framework. For example, interviews revealed that, when a contractor has won a tender and fails along the way, the process of retendering starts from the beginning and takes a lot of time and money. When a new contractor is supposed to take over a failed project, their preference would be to start from the initial stages of implementing the project, which is very costly to the council. Some councillors in Francistown council were of the view that tendering should not start from the beginning rather the next best bidder should take over the project as it will save the council money, time and the already limited resources, as well as decrease project delays.

There have been reports about loop holes in the tendering system, in which councillors said the loop holes are an easy channel for corrupt practices like favouritism and nepotism. An example was cited of a private company that continued to receive government work despite a history of carrying out substandard work. Loop holes in the tendering system nurture an environment for poor project implementation. For example, the council set an estimated price to complete the project during tendering, the tender will then be awarded to the bidder whose bid is closest to the lowest allowed value by the council. This value is normally 10% of the estimated value. Respondents said, this has led to a lot of project failures, overspending and completion delays.

Corruption is said to be rampant in most councils where incomplete and sub-standard quality projects are certified as satisfactory by some professional officers and government pays huge sums of money for such projects (GoB, und). According to Gabathuse (2018) the most common form of corruption revolves around procurement, particularly collusion and bribery. For instance, Mmeso (2015) stated that, the Molepolole bus terminal had attracted the corruption burst unit, Directorate of Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) as there were suspicions that, some of the prices were inflated. The Molepolole bus terminal though, small in size from the Palapye Terminal was way too costly initially at P168 million which was brought down to P115 million while the latter was completed at a cost of P81, 102, 57.11 (Mmeso, 2015). The Local Authorities Public Accounts Committee (LAPAC), appointed by MLGRD, examines the accounts of local authorities periodically. LAPAC's role is to promote and maintain a high level of accountability for public funds and resources in councils and land boards as required by the Finance and Audit Act. Some councillors said it is worrisome that accounting officers seem not to take the LAPAC examination serious as sometimes they would go for examination unprepared. LAPAC examination is when accounting officers are called before the committee to answer for local authorities expenditure and general performances of local authorities. As a result, respondents were of the view that LAPAC should be given the power to make accounting officers answerable and also to ensure that they go prepared to give the committee solid information that will be needed at that particular time.

Despite the said implementation challenges, the Government of Botswana continues to implement infrastructure projects in order to improve service delivery to the people. In the financial year 2019/2020 government has taken a decision to set up a Project Management Office to ensure effective implementation of projects (GoB, 2019). This is a good step by the government as the introduction of this office is likely to cut cost which government has been experiencing.

#### 5.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION STAGE

Monitoring is the routine collection and analysis of information to track progress against set plans and check compliance to established standards whereas evaluation is an

assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results (IFRC, 2011).

From the interviews, some of the respondents were of the view that, the absence of a monitoring and evaluation framework in the country could have contributed to poor service delivery. However, the country is in the process of rolling out the implementation of the National Monitoring and Evaluation System which was approved in 2018 (GoB, 2019). It is of importance to note that, even when there was no M&E framework, measures had always been in place, as there are M&E departments within government institutions tasked with monitoring projects. Interviews revealed that, whenever there is a project, clerks of works are assigned to the project to report to a relevant department, after that a report is made to the management committee and taken to Performance Monitoring Committee (PMC). PMCs exist to ensure that projects are implemented on time, within budget and also monitor performance of contractors. However, some councillors from FCC said, the committees' effectiveness can only go to a certain extent, provided there is manpower at the right place and time.

Notwithstanding section 22 (3) of the Local Government Act of 2012 which says, in appointing members of the committees referred to in subsection (1), the council or Subordinate Authority shall make appointments based on a cross-sectional representation of all parties represented in the council or Subordinate Authority. A councillor in K.D.C said;

*“Performance Monitoring committees are supposed to give reports about local projects. Letlhakeng Sub District Council, all of its Sub Committees are chaired by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) Councillors. This means committee reports might not be a true reflection of what is really happening, or at least it is perceived so. The level of education for councillors in this Sub District Council is very low as most of them are Junior Certificate (JC) holders. All of these issues affects the level of checks and balances to be done effectively”.*

On a different note, some councillors from KDC and FCC were of the view that, monitoring of projects is somehow neglected, saying most of the time government relies more on contractors to ensure that their delivery is up to standard. During the interviews it transpired that local contractors engage private consultants to monitor projects. Private consultants in turn owe their loyalty to the contractor who engaged them than the government officials. It also appeared that, there is a lot of influence from the consultant's side who always seem to overpower government officials. Councillors were of the view that, private consultants are more knowledgeable and experienced than clerks of works as a result, consultants tend to belittle the government officials especially when they discover that an official is new and has no idea of the process. Councillors at Kweneng decried late monitoring of projects which they blamed it on shortage of vehicles and manpower. Some councillors were of the view that many of the skilled personnel is at central government while a few are in local authorities.

Councillors stated that, communities often complain of lack of involvement in monitoring of developmental projects, saying they see finished products or they get to know about the progress of a project when it has delayed. According to Carothers & Brechenmacher (2014) the involvement of communities in village projects can help increase accountability.

## 5.5 CLOSURE STAGE

During this stage, teams close a project when they deliver the finished project to the customer, communicating completion to stakeholders and releasing resources to other projects. This vital step in the project lifecycle allows the team to evaluate and document the project and move on the next one, using previous project mistakes and successes to build stronger processes and more successful teams

A project is formally closed during this stage and the handing over of the project happens at this stage. The Office of the District Commissioner (ODC) and the council, work together to ensure that projects are completed and handed over to beneficiaries. However, complaints are that some projects are of substandard quality, not delivered on time and some projects have never been handed over. Such tendencies have been associated with corrupt practices which are said to be found within the tendering system of councils. Some officers at KDC said that *“politicians abuse this stage for political mileage as in most cases they make it sound like it is their money that was used to do village projects therefore communities should return favour and vote them”*.

It is the mandate of the Performance Monitoring Committee to ensure that, projects are implemented and delivered within time and budgets. Notwithstanding that, overall responsibility lies with the Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development which has to ensure that the lives of people are improved and they have services.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1. CONCLUSION

The Government of Botswana has played a central role in improving the lives of Batswana since the advent of independence in 1966. This has entailed a number of projects and initiatives aimed at realizing the values and aspirations of human development. However, findings reveal that there are impediments that limit the effectiveness of local authorities from achieving the set projects and initiatives. In conclusion the findings between Francistown City Council and Kweneng District Councils are summarised in each stage as shown below;

### *6.1.1 Project Initiation Stage*

The District Development committee (DDC) is key to village development projects as the committee provides expertise and advice to communities but lack of commitment by some of its members is worrisome as it means there will be no coordinated effort in ensuring that projects are finished on time and they are to standard. Participation of youth in village development consultative meetings is relatively low, although there are differences between Francistown City Council and Kweneng District Council. The latter tend to have poor youth participation probably because of youth urban migration. Youth in Francistown attend kgotla meetings and this could be attributable to the fact that Francistown is a city and majority of urban population is youth. Nonetheless, generally poor participation of stakeholders implies that their views might not be heard and this can be a setback to village development projects.

### *6.1.2. Project Planning Stage*

Proper planning is of paramount importance to the success of a projects. The significance of this stage is that management should be concerned with mobilizing financial and human resources for the success of a project. However local authorities in Botswana are challenged as they do not have financial autonomy, LAs budgetary needs are informed by the central government. This means central government that has to prioritize which of local authority's projects are to be funded, this is irrespective of what a local authority would have set as a priority in a financial year.

### *6.1.3 Project Implementation Stage*

The project takes shape during the implementation phase. This phase involves the construction of the actual project result. However, findings reveal that there is weak human capacity at both FCC and KDC even though it cuts across most LAs in Botswana. Findings from the study reveal that qualified people who possess the right competencies often leave their jobs for greener pastures as they complain of unattractive pay in local authorities. Furthermore, the working conditions in the in local authorities are said to be unbearable, employees are separated from their families during staff transfers, staff welfare is poor compared to those at central government where there are opportunities of progression and training. However, government has shown commitment to address shortage of human capacity by introducing the scarces skill allowance to attract some cadres in the public sector even though the challenge still persists. Furthermore, in 2018, the government, through the Ministry of Presidential Affairs, Governance and Public Administration, released a savingram inviting civil servants wishing to join their spouses to launch formal transfer applications however, this is still at infancy stage the fruits are yet to be seen.

Corruption seems to be an eye sore in this stage as there are complaints of nepotism and favouritism which are shown by same companies winning tenders repeatedly despite

their incompetence and sub-standard delivery. The loop holes within the local authority tendering system makes it easy for some contractors and officers to be corrupt.

#### *6.1.4 Project Monitoring And Evaluation Stage*

Weak human capacity hinders effective decision making and the daily operations of oversight institutions like PMC, LAPAC and government department such as Physical Planning and Estate Management. There are concerns that some politicians who are members of PMC have no formal education as a result it hampers the committee's effectiveness. Key institutions like RDC were established to play a vital role in ensuring that rural development projects benefit the community. However, RDC has no executive mandate for project and programme implementation as to some extent, those are the responsibilities of line ministries.

#### *6.1.5 Project Closure Stage*

The study revealed that politicians tend to abuse office when handing over projects to the community as in most cases they make it sound like it is their personal money that was used to construct projects in the village therefore communities have to return favour by voting for them during elections. Politicians use this stage as political mileage to attract votes and at the same time rob some beneficiaries their human dignity as they become public display especially in cases where there is a needy person.

## **6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Local government chiefly requires that local communities should be given good service delivery to improve their lives. Service delivery is key to local authorities. Having mentioned that, local authorities cannot afford to perform poorly on implementation of projects as this could ultimately affect public confidence and trust on them.

Having discussed project implementation challenges in local authorities using a case study of Francistown City Council and Kweneng District Council, it is now opportune to summarize some suggestions on how project implementation can be improved in local authorities;

Implementation and management of developmental projects are key to the lives of societies within a district. Developmental projects are not just for government officials and contractors. Therefore, there is need to have community buy in as this will promote ownership and accountability. Having all stakeholders on board it is important especially for members of the community who knows what their needs are. Structures such as DDC are key to village development projects therefore, members of the DDC should be encouraged to attend meetings to provide professional advice when needed.

There is need to enhance autonomy of local authorities as it is likely to improve service delivery and promote accountability. Councils ought to be empowered so that they can achieve their mandate of service delivery. However, this does not mean central government should stop funding local authorities. It is of paramount importance that central government creates an enabling environment for self-sustenance. Local authorities need to be taught ways that can help them generate money. There is need to benchmark with countries that have the same government system like Botswana to see what other countries are doing and if it can be applicable to Botswana. Once local authorities are financially stable they will be at liberty to plan and execute projects looking at the demands of their people at a given time.

Government ought to review the conditions of service and review salaries of employees in the local authorities to make them attractive hence reduce capacity constraints in local authorities. Furthermore, the performance of local authorities depends more on the human capacity therefore as a retaining strategy government should consider long term training for some professions which are in demand. Government efforts of inviting civil servants wishing to join their spouses to launch formal transfer applications ought to be implemented in a manner that does not show very strong bias towards those in the institution of marriage and leaving out the unmarried. Legal framework should be improved to address gaps in the tendering system as well as bind contractors to finish their job on time. There should be a written clause in a contract that will instruct those who breach contract to pay the other party.

Oversight institutions such as PMC which have political leaders as some of their members should ensure that their members are democratic and competent. Members should be well informed in order for them to articulate and probe issues of concern while representing the nation at large. There is need to strengthen capacity of oversight institutions such as LAPAC, PMC to encourage prudent financial management in local authorities.

The development of a country and wellbeing of individuals are of paramount importance to the government, however while in the process of developments government should ensure that the human dignity of people is restored and not compromised in any way. Lastly partnership between government and private sector is very important as it can help in ensuring that projects are delivered on time.

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