



PEACE

**POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION
PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES**

By; POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION (PEACE)

UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF VOTING TO AVOID WASTE VOTE.

In any democracy voting forms the foundation of democracy. Without voters voting, democracy cannot be possible. Therefore the importance of voting and of the electors vote cannot be over emphasized. Voters are always informed that, ‘your vote is your power’. With your vote you can vote for good policies or bad one. It has been for these reasons that, the act of voting and votes are important and cannot be wasted.

Political parties in a democracy are like firms in the business of selling packages of policies in order to maximise votes so as to be able to win and enjoy the fruits of government office. On the other hand, voters were political consumers, using their votes as political currency to purchase the public policies on offer at a general election. In actual fact, “voters and donors are more likely to support the top two candidates, and less likely to waste votes or donations on lesser candidates”, who have no realistic chance of winning.

Voters are seen as rational, maximising, free-thinking, and were determined to gain maximum return by voting for a party of their choice that has a high likelihood of winning. With such a high magnitude of political parties in Lesotho, Basotho voters appears to be wasting their vote in every elections by voting political parties that have less likelihood to win elections.

In any democracy, especially in mixed member plurality electoral systems Lesotho is using, a wasted vote is regarded as one that does not add value to an elected candidate or in the context of National elections, fails to assist the party in winning a contested constituency. A wasted vote is regarded, for example, as a vote that fails to count towards a winning candidate or political party, if a person votes for a party that has no realistic chance of winning



PEACE

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

The importance of voting necessitates that, when a voter casts his ballot, he must consider its implications so that it is not a wasted vote. Voting requires careful introspection on the voter to ensure that it is not a wasted vote. This idea of voting requires the voter to consider the effects their vote will have on society.

For a voter to vote for a party that appears less likely to win would be to waste his ballot since the contest is really between major parties. The reason has always been that the election is usually reduced to a contest between the two most popular political parties or candidates.

During the 2022 National elections in Lesotho elections, a relatively large proportion of voters, irrespective of whether they were old or new voters, might have wasted their votes on parties that fail to obtain a constituency, as has been depicted in tables below.

Party	Leader	Vote %	Seats	+/-
RFP	Sam Matekane	38.89	57	New
DC	Mathibeli Mokhothu	24.81	29	-1
ABC	Nkaku Kabi	7.30	8	-40
BAP	Nqosa Mahao	5.65	6	New
AD	Monyane Moleleki	4.02	5	-4
MEC	Selibe Mochoboroane	3.34	4	-2
LCD	Mothetjoa Metsing	2.38	3	-8
SR	Teboho Mojapela	2.07	2	New
BNP	Machesetsa Mofomobe	1.42	1	-4
PFD	Lekhetho Rakuoane	0.90	1	-2
MPS	Remaketse Sehlabaka	0.87	1	New
BCM	Ts'epo Lipholo	0.79	1	New
HOPE	Machabana Lemphane Letsie	0.72	1	New
NIP	Kimetso Mathaba	0.71	1	

A vote for a minority party in any election is characterised as a waste vote since they have no realistic chance of winning National elections. Minority parties while always win



PEACE

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION
PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

more PR seats, as depicted in all past Lesotho elections from 2011, 2017 and 2022. However, that significant share of PR seats cannot translate into constituencies. No matter how many elections a minority party contest, it will always produce a wasted vote since only significant parties can win government.

It can therefore, be argued that in most mature democracies, where the likelihood that a party can win in a given constituency is low, voters are less likely to continue voting for it. Basotho voters are therefore, advised to desist from continuing to vote for parties that have less likelihood of winning because voting for these parties is tantamount to wasting their votes. It can also be argued that, all voters who voted for minority parties during the past elections after 2012, elections have wasted their votes because their preferred political parties had little prospect of winning those elections. Had the voters voted RFP or DC in 2022, the scale of wasted votes during those general elections would not have been huge.

Additionally, more votes have been wasted by voters who continue to vote for political parties with no realistic chance of winning National elections. It can also be argued that too few voters pay close enough attention to immediately recognise that, a vote for a minor party amounts to a wasted vote. There is, therefore, a dire need for extensive voter education.

Civic education is needed to make voters aware that voting for a third party has a high propensity to waste votes. It was better to vote for a party with a high realistic chance of winning National elections than for parties with few prospects of winning.



PEACE

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES