



*Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 128*

## **Basotho's Difficulties Accessing Household Services from the Government**

*By Lipholo Makhetha*

January 2014

### **1. Background**

Some essential government services, ranging from piped water to electricity, are the cornerstone of proper living. The ease with which people access services affects their quality of life. Election campaigns usually revolve around promises to give the people easy access to services. People often vote a particular party into government primarily because people hope that the party is more poised than others to provide a set of desired services. This bulletin looks closely at household services, which include piped water and electricity and considers how easily Basotho access services from the government.

The provision of portable piped water affects the health of the people. Lesotho is endowed with water resources, but the question is whether these resources are harnessed to provide the wider population with clean water. In terms of electricity, Lesotho imports most of its electrical energy from South Africa, with a very small proportion produced domestically. The issue here is how easy it is for people to meet their energy needs. The Afrobarometer survey sheds light on how easy or difficult it is for people to access household services by asking Basotho about their experiences obtaining services. In addition, the Afrobarometer asks Basotho about obtaining essential goods, such as water and medical care. The results reveal that Basotho face difficulties accessing essential services and that deprivation in a number of critical areas (e.g. water, food, and medical care) are present for a majority of Basotho. Although there are urban-rural, district, and lived poverty differences that correlate to difficulties accessing services, it is clear that difficulties in access are noted across these differences. This makes the access to basic household services a general concern to a sizable majority of Basotho.

### **2. Afrobarometer Survey**

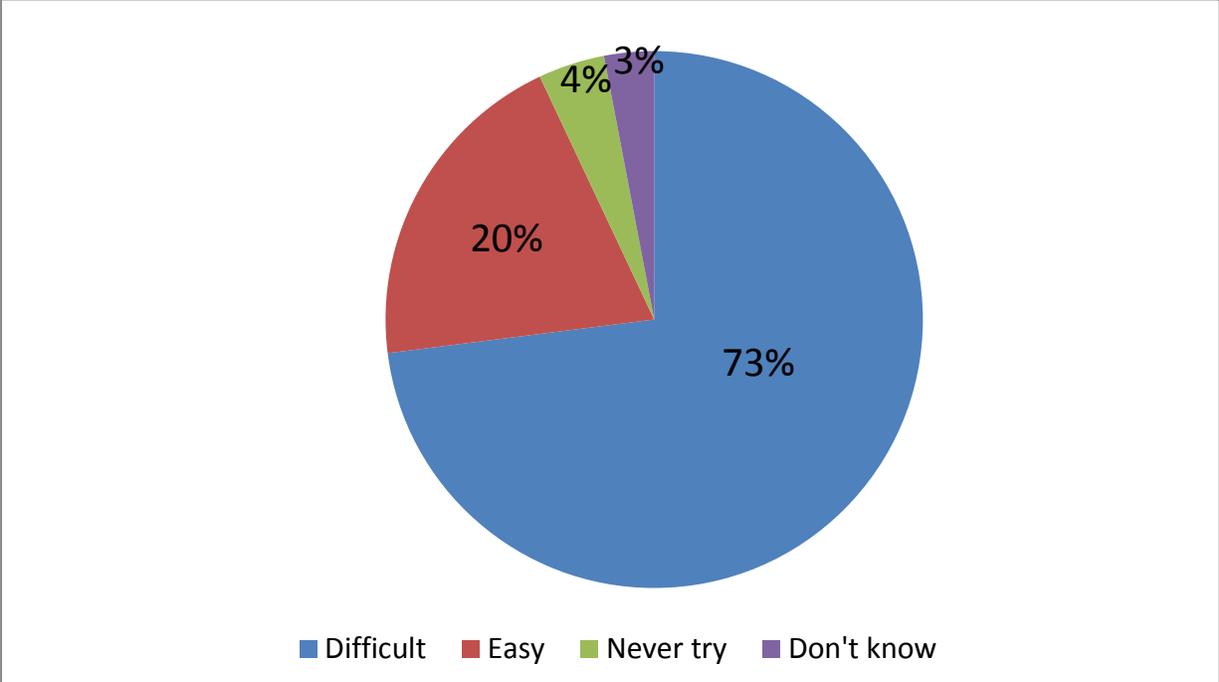
The Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public attitude surveys, covering 35 African countries in Round 5 (2011-2013). It measures public attitudes on democracy and its alternatives, evaluations of the quality of governance and economic performance. In addition, the survey assesses the views of the electorate on critical political issues in the surveyed countries. The Afrobarometer's main goal is to produce scientifically reliable data on public opinion in Africa while strengthening institutional capacities for survey research, and sharing research findings to inform policy and practice. The Afrobarometer also provides comparisons over time, as five rounds of surveys have taken place from 1999 to 2013.

Afrobarometer surveys use a common survey instrument and methodology. The instrument asks a standard set of questions that permits systematic comparison in public attitudes across countries and over time. The methodology was based on a national probability sample of 1,200 adult Basotho selected to represent all adult citizens of voting age, allowing for inferences with a sampling margin of error of +/- 3% at a 95% confidence level. The sample was drawn randomly based on Probability Proportionate to Population Size (PPPS), thus taking account of population distributions, gender as well as rural-urban divides. The sampling process ensured that every adult Lesotho citizen had an equal and known chance of being selected in the sample. Fieldwork in Lesotho was conducted by Advision Lesotho between 26 November and 16 December 2012. Previous Afrobarometer surveys were conducted in Lesotho in 2000 (Round 1), 2003 (Round 2), 2005 (Round 3), and 2008 (Round 4).

### 3. Basotho’s Experience with Obtaining Household Services

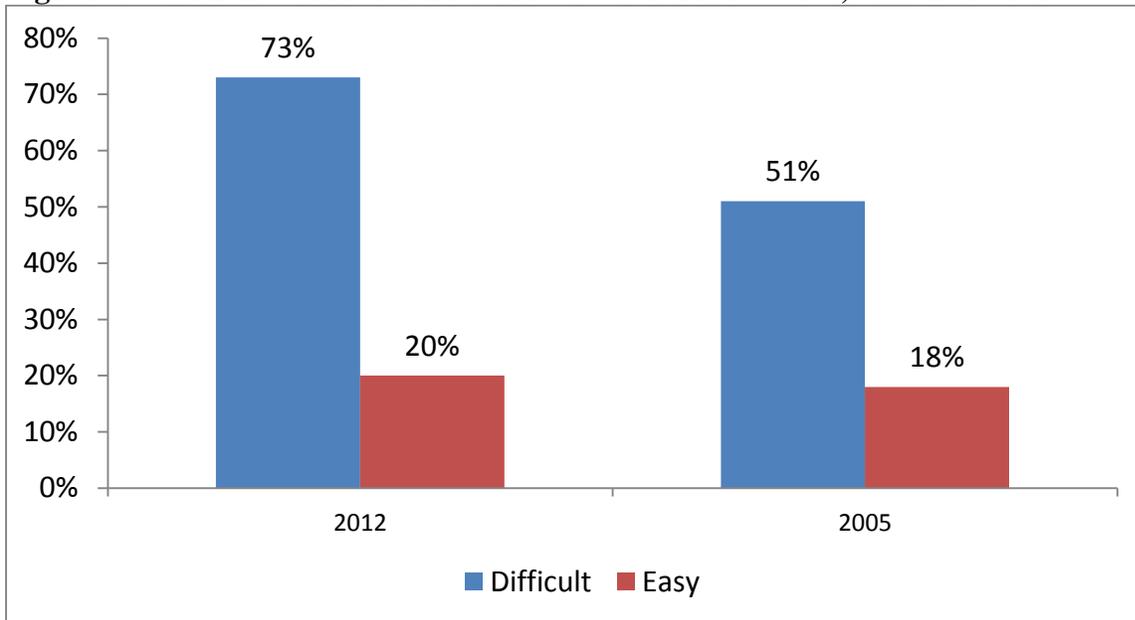
An overwhelming majority of Basotho, 73%, found household services, such as piped water, electricity, or telephone difficult to obtain (Figure 1). This is a higher proportion than the 51% of respondents that found household services difficult to obtain in 2005 (Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Access to Household Services from the Government, 2012**



*Question: Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain household services from the government? (% who say difficult or very difficult; % who say easy or very easy)*

**Figure 2: Access to Household Services from the Government, 2005 and 2013**

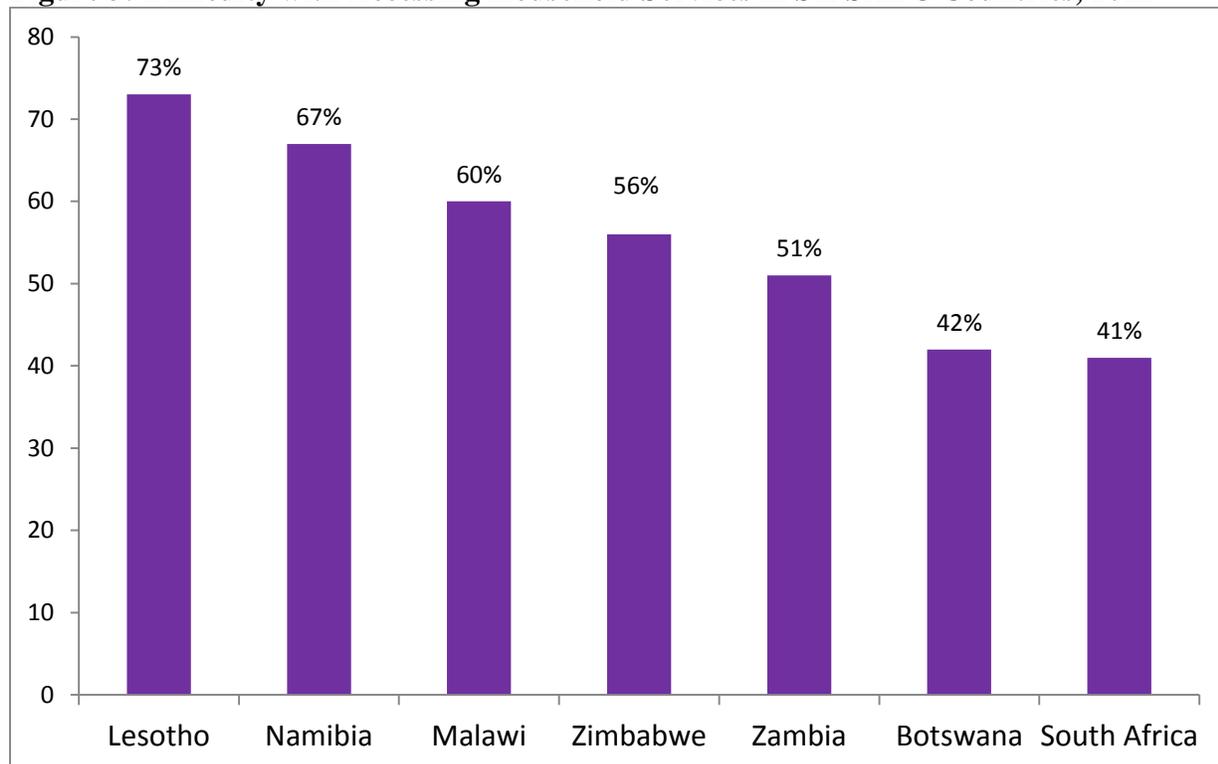


*Question: Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain household services from the government? (% who say difficult or very difficult; % who say easy or very easy)*

#### ***Access to Household Services among Select SADC Member States***

The Afrobarometer data suggests that access to household services, such as piped water, electricity, and telephone is difficult. Lesotho fares poorly in comparison to several SADC countries. For two SADC countries, Botswana and South Africa, a majority of respondents indicated that they have easy access to household services. Significant proportions of Namibians, Malawians, Zimbabweans, and Zambians experience difficulties obtaining household services, but still at lower rates than Basotho. Lesotho is behind the other SADC countries in delivering household services (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Difficulty with Accessing Household Services in Six SADC Countries, 2012**



*Question: Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain household services from the government? (% who say difficult or very difficult)*

#### **4. Access to Household Services across Location, Employment Status, Age, and Experience with Poverty**

To identify potential patterns relating to the difficulties obtaining household services in Lesotho, several characteristics were examined, such as rural/urban, employment status, age, district, and experiences with poverty (Table 1).

The difficulty with which urban and rural residents obtain household services differs significantly, with 56% and 79% of urban and rural populations respectively finding it difficult to obtain household services. This is despite the fact that Lesotho has established a Rural Water Supply Programme and a Rural Electrification Project. The results seem to suggest that government efforts are very limited, and there is need to expand the present projects' scope. Yet, even in urban areas, a majority of respondents found it difficult to obtain services (56%).

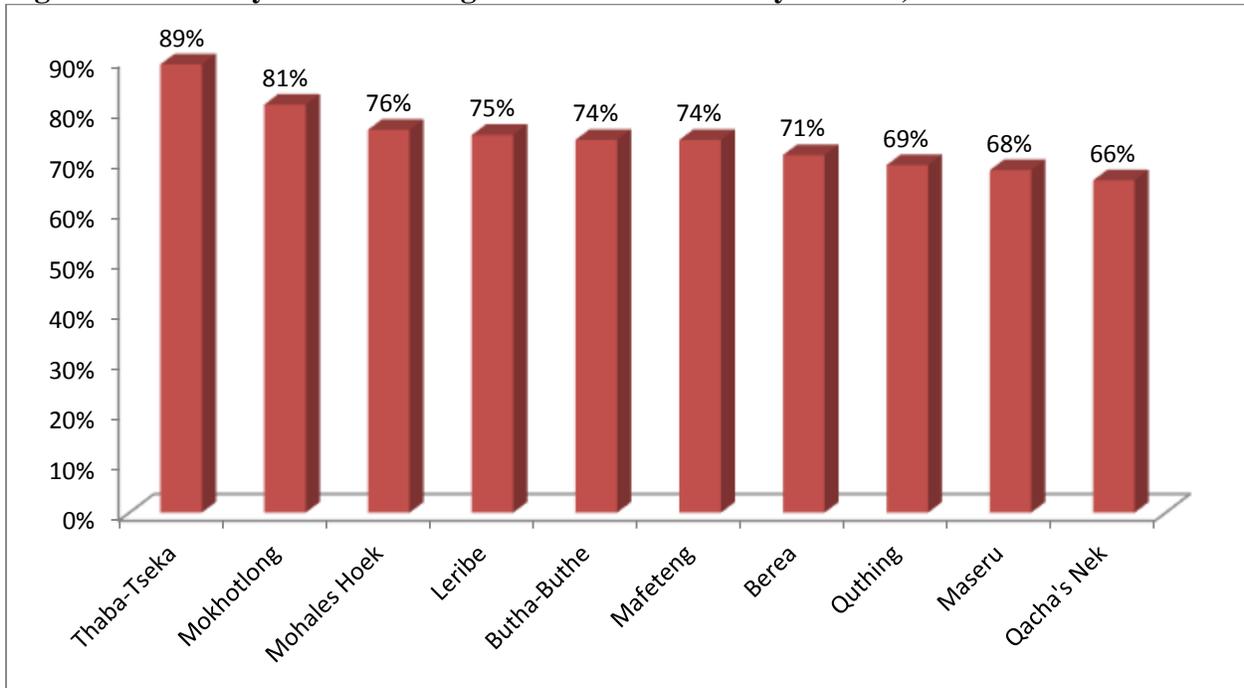
In the case of employment status, all categories experience difficulty accessing household services. Basotho with full-time employment find it less difficult to obtain services (55% find it difficult) than part-time workers (82%) and the unemployed/ not working population (from 69% to 77%). Access difficulties range from 67% to 79% by age and from 66% to 89% by district. Older Basotho found household services harder to obtain than the younger age groups. In terms of district differences, Thaba-Tseka and Mokhotlong experience very high levels of difficulty at 89% and 81% respectively. It is worth noting that these districts are both mountain districts.

**Table 1: Difficulty with Accessing Household Services, 2012**

Employment Status	Difficulty	Age Distribution	Difficulty	District	Difficulty
No (not looking)	69%	18 – 25	67%	Thaba-Tseka	89%
No (looking)	77%	25 – 35	71%	Mokhotlong	81%
Yes, part-time	82%	36 – 45	77%	Mohale’s Hoek	76%
Yes, full-time	55%	46 – 55	79%	Leribe	75%
		56 – 65	78%	Mafeteng	74%
		65 and over	75%	Butha-Buthe	74%
				Berea	71%
				Quthing	69%
				Maseru	68%
				Qacha’s Nek	66%

*Question: Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain household services from the government? (% who say difficult or very difficult)*

**Figure 4: Difficulty with Accessing Household Services by District, 2012**

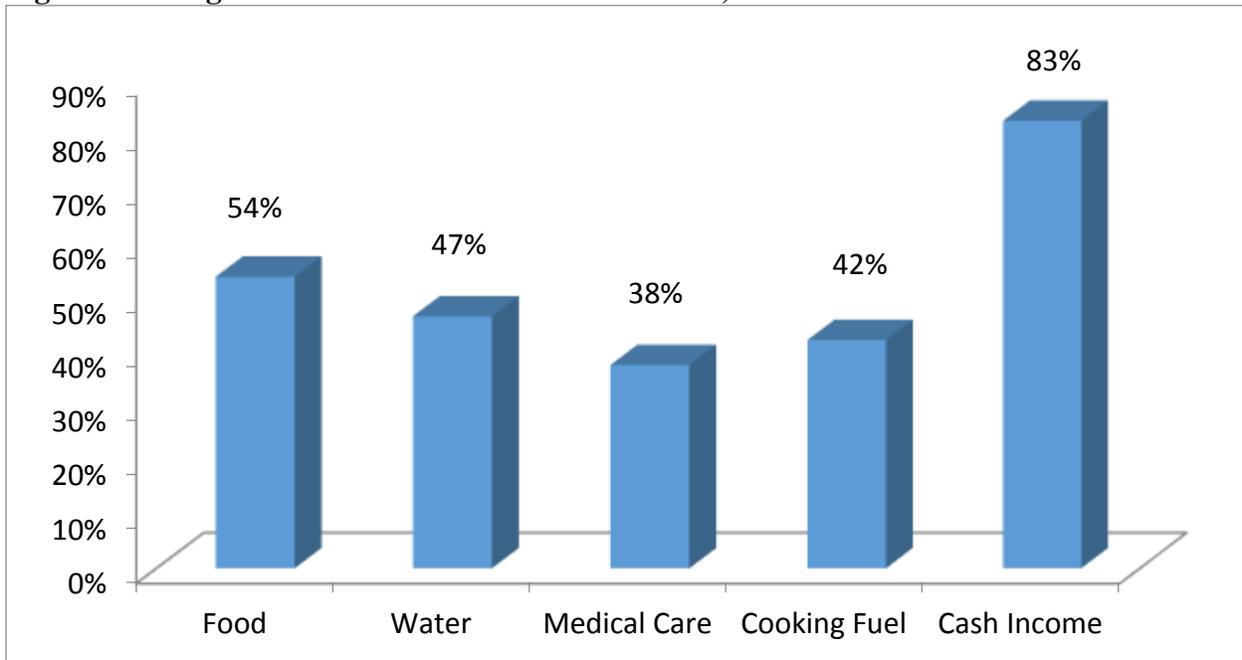


*Question: Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain household services from the government? (% who say difficult or very difficult)*

**Access to Household Services and Lived Poverty**

The difficulty in accessing household services was also examined by looking at an individual’s experience with poverty and deprivation, such as going without food, water, medical care, cooking fuel, and cash income. Figure 5 illustrates the percentage of Basotho who report going without different basic goods “several times”, “many times”, or “always” in the past year.

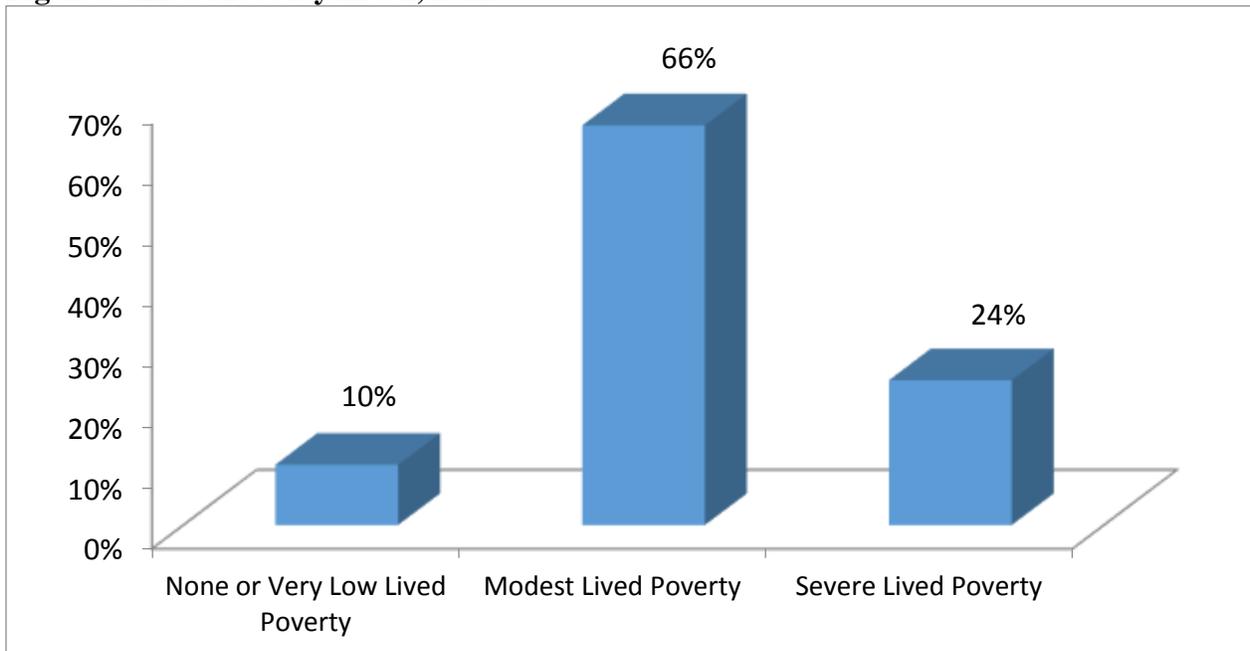
**Figure 5: Going Without Essential Household Goods, 2012**



*Question: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family [e.g. Gone without enough food to eat]? (% of respondents reporting “several times”, “many times”, or “always”)*

The Lived Poverty Index provides a general measure of deprivation facing Basotho. It is clear that 90% of Basotho experience moderate or severe poverty (Figure 6). Strikingly, close to a quarter of Lesotho’s population (24%) experience severe poverty.

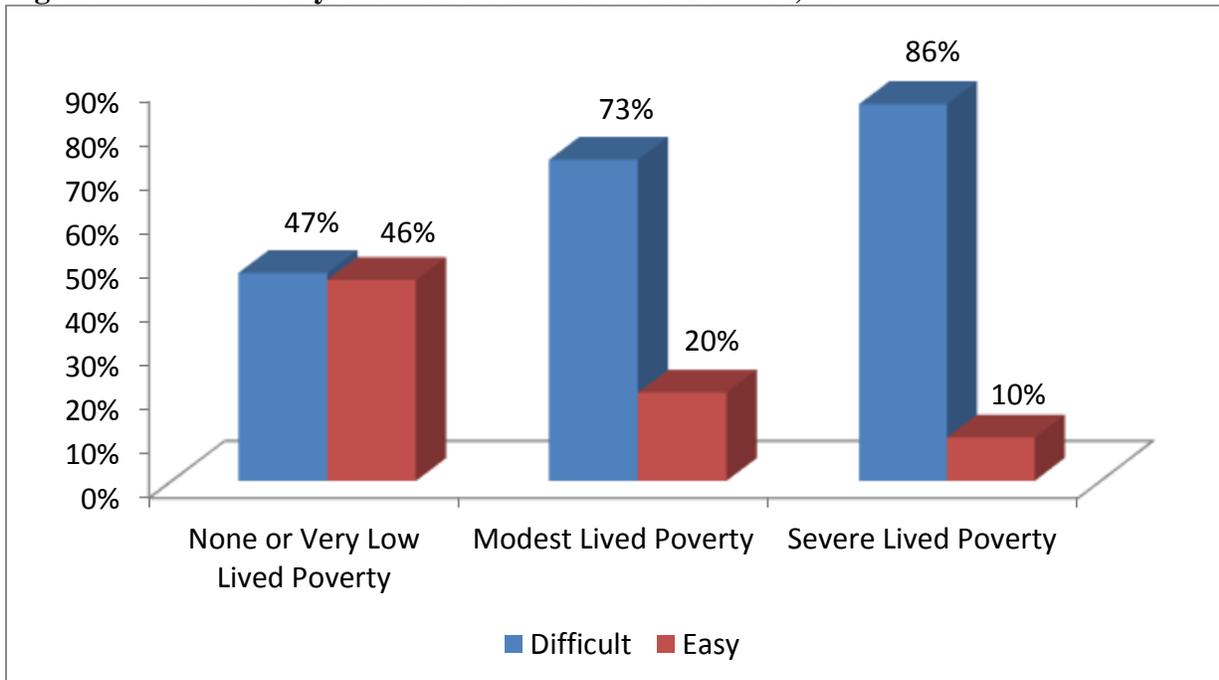
**Figure 6: Lived Poverty Index, 2012**



*Note: The Lived Poverty Index is calculated as the average of responses to five questions that asked respondents: In the past year, how often, if ever, did you or anyone in your family go without: (1) enough food to eat, (2) enough clean water for home use, (3) medicines or medical treatment, (4) enough fuel to cook food, and (5) cash income.*

Comparing across different levels of lived poverty, Basotho who experienced no or very low lived poverty in the past year experienced comparatively lower levels of difficulty obtaining household services (Figure 7). 86% of the Basotho who experienced severe poverty report finding household services more difficult to access, and nearly three-quarters of Basotho experiencing moderate poverty (73%) indicate difficulties. Even among Basotho experiencing the lowest levels of lived poverty, almost a majority of respondents (47%) found it difficult to obtain household services. This illustrates how difficulties obtaining household services—though differing across poverty levels—are a broad based concern for Basotho.

**Figure 7: Lived Poverty and Access to Household Services, 2012**



*Question: Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain household services from the government? (% who say difficult or very difficult; easy or very easy)*

## 5. Conclusion

The provision of household services, such as piped water, electricity, and telephone access, is a country-wide concern, with the difficulty of access greater in rural than urban areas. The registered difficulties are widespread and persist for a majority of urban and rural dwellers, young and old, and individuals experiencing less and great levels of lived poverty. Household services are essential for the enhancement of the quality of life, and making services more easily available should be pursued more vigorously. In addition, more attention is required in order to bring these necessary services to the rural areas, so as to avoid a skewed provision of household services.

The government has a number of initiatives, such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact, which has under its oversight projects to improve rural water supply and sanitation in order to address the issue of clean water in the rural areas. There is also the Lesotho

Rural Electrification project, which is under way. Even though these aforementioned projects are being implemented, most of the population is still in dire need of necessary household services.

In comparison with other SADC countries, Lesotho is lagging behind in the provision of household services. This situation needs serious attention, oversight, and ongoing evaluation in order to make steady improvements.

This Briefing Paper was prepared by Lipholo Makhetha National Investigator at Advision Lesotho P.O. Box 8975 Maseru, LESOTHO. Email: [Advision@ecoweb.co.ls](mailto:Advision@ecoweb.co.ls).

The Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in South Africa (IJR), the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Survey implementation in Afrobarometer's work in Namibia is coordinated by the Institute for Public Policy Research. We gratefully acknowledge generous support from the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank for Afrobarometer Round 5.

For more information and further requests for analysis please visit Afrobarometer website: [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org) or contact Anyway Chingwete on [achingwete.ab@gmail.com](mailto:achingwete.ab@gmail.com).