

GOAL 3



GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

“No citizen of the future Botswana will be disadvantaged as a result of gender, age, religion or creed, colour, nationality or ethnic origin, location, language or political opinions. The future Botswana will have eradicated negative social attitudes towards the status and role of women, the youth, the elderly and the disabled, and will be free from all forms of sexual harassment.”

VISION 2016

Targets	Will target be reached?	Conducive Environment?
5. To reduce gender disparity in all education by 2015	Achieved	Strong
6. To reduce gender disparity in access to and control of productive resources by 2015	Likely	Strong
7. To reduce discrimination and violence against women, and the incidence of rape by 50 percent by 2011	Potentially	Strong
8. To raise women's participation in leadership and decision making positions by at least 60% by 2016	Likely	Strong

Since the Beijing conference, Botswana has taken significant measures to create a policy environment that promotes gender equality. Discriminatory Laws have been reviewed. Political commitment to gender is reflected in appointments to cabinet and senior positions in the civil service, and the establishment of a full-fledged department responsible for coordinating the implementation of Government Policy on Gender.

1. WHAT IS THE SITUATION LIKE?

Botswana has made significant progress in promoting gender equality. It has reviewed its legislation to remove discriminatory clauses. Further work may still have to be done to complete the exercise.

Women's representation in decision-making positions, including political office, senior management in both the public and the private sector, and in traditional male domains such as chieftainship and priesthood, has risen. Botswana now has three women in the house of chiefs and ordained female priests in some of the major Christian denominations. These developments were preceded by robust grass root debate of the type that suggests recognition that society is making a major breakaway from tradition.

There is still need for deliberative processes in the more difficult areas such as rape within marriage, where issues of "consent" and "conjugal rights" are often confused in public opinion, and the unification of the marriageable age for boys (16 years) and girls (14 years). These issues are difficult in part because of the strong influence of tradition and institutional culture, the result of which is that practice lags behind progressive policy and legislative reforms. Social mobilisation and public education on gender and human rights, targeting not only communities but also institutions, could bridge this gap between policy and practice.



GENDER DISPARITY IN EDUCATION

Botswana has eliminated gender disparity in most formal education. Girls' enrolment in primary and secondary education is at par with that of boys. The Government Statistician sums the achievement well in Educational Statistics 2001 when she observes:

"Females tend to participate as much as males do at all levels. There is no significant difference of female participation at primary schools, secondary schools and at the University of Botswana."

Even though there are no significant disparities between female and male enrolment in most formal education, enrolment in teacher training colleges and nursing institutions is skewed in favour of women, whilst enrolment in vocational training institutions is skewed in favour of males. This divide is also found at the University of Botswana and its affiliated institutions, where men dominate science-based training and women dominate the humanities and some social sciences.

Significant differences can also be found in respect of gender-specific vulnerabilities that interfere with schooling. For instance, one of the main reasons girls drop out of school is pregnancy, whose incidence among teenage learners is high. However, government policy allows girls to come back to school if they left due to pregnancy. Boys on the other hand may drop out, or never enrol because of household economics - for instance, a family may opt for its son(s) to work rather than study. Boys from poor families are especially vulnerable to such decisions.

GENDER DISPARITY IN ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OF PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

Although Botswana has made good progress towards achieving gender equality over the last two decades, women do not as yet enjoy equitable treatment vis-à-vis men in many substantive areas of life, including control of productive resources. Even when legislation may be gender neutral, tradition and institutional culture perpetuate practices that disadvantage women in relation to men.

For instance, some financial institutions, and Government departments, treat married women as de facto minors, requiring them to seek their husbands' consent for transactions for which they would not place similar requirements on married men. Furthermore, inheritance and succession practices in traditional communities generally favour men.

More generally, women endure relative economic disadvantage. Employment and wealth are decisively skewed in favour of men. Women account for only 39 percent of workers aged 12 years and above, and yet slightly more than 50 percent of the population is female. Women headed 47 out of every 100 households in 1991 and 46 in 2001. Nearly half of these women, well above the national rate of unemployment, were not engaged in any cash-earning employment.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

Political and economic power is still largely controlled by men. Nevertheless, as the tables show, women are making steady progress in politics (though still short of the SADC target of 30%), the civil service, and in governing boards of Public Enterprises (PEs). In terms of board and executive positions, the private sector lags behind at 14.7%. Women's representation in Parliament increased from 6.8% in 1992, to 9.1% in 1994 and subsequently to 18.2% in 1999. The 2003 Cabinet had five (5) women, who constituted 22.7% of the 22-member Cabinet.

In 1999, men outnumbered women 3:1 in senior management positions in central government and 6:1 in local government. This represented a percentage share of 14.7%. Until fairly recent times, there was no woman in the house of chiefs. Now there are three.

Recently, the Dutch Reformed Church ordained a female priest in Mochudi, a major village, against a background of strong resistance within the Church and a large section of the community. In 2002, 33% of the directors of PEs and 67% of the Deputy Chief Executive Officers were women. In the same year, women headed over 50% of Botswana based NGOs.

Women in Political Positions

	1992	1997	2002
Female Parliamentarians	3(6.8%)	4(9.1%)	8(18.2%)
Total Parliamentarians	44	44	44
Female Ministers	3	3	6
Total Ministers	20	20	22

Ratio of Women in Decision-making Positions (%) 2002

Position	Civil Service	Public Enterprises	Private	NGO
Board Members	N/A	33	14.7	48
Head of Company/Org.	33	10	14	52
Deputy Head	25	67	-	-
Head of department	25	26	36	47
Total Female to Male	28	30	27	48

GENDER BASED DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE

Women endure more gender-based discrimination and violence than men, partly because of deep-seated socio-cultural practices and institutional cultures. Botswana is a patriarchal society. Therefore, women are a priori subordinate to men and have historically endured various forms of discrimination and disempowerment on account of their being women e.g., in access to and control of resources such as land, cattle, power, education and business opportunities.



Whilst progress has been made in bridging the gender gap in these areas, there are no indications that efforts to contain and eliminate violence against women are paying off.

Although consolidated national figures could not be located for this report, violent crimes against women and girls - rape, incest, defilement, murder and emotional abuse - seem to be increasing. For instance, one NGO, Women Against Rape, reported a steady increase in rape cases lodged annually with it from 8 in 1996 through 20 in 1997, 30 in 1998, 27 in 1999, to 35 in 2000. Police reports show that women are frequently victims of assault. In one police station in Gaborone, women accounted for more than 65% of all cases of common assault in each of the years from 2000-02.

Whilst there is recognition that violence against women may be a growing problem, it is worrisome that a mechanism for pooling together information from the courts, police records and NGOs into an organised database that gives a credible measure of the magnitude of the problem does not exist.

Progressive legislative and policy reforms will not, by themselves, advance the course of gender equality far enough. The focus should increasingly fall on social mobilisation. This requires an up to date monitoring and evaluation system to provide credible information.

2. MAJOR CHALLENGES

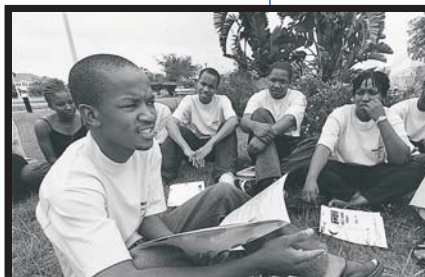
At the policy and legislative levels, substantial progress has been made towards gender equity. The substantive challenge lies in bridging the gap between progressive policy and legislative reforms on the one hand and tradition and deep-seated institutional cultures that stand in the way of equal rights of citizenship for men and women on the other. The key challenge is therefore transformational. It is one of aligning institutional and personal attitudes with progressive policies and laws. Such a transformation will require, amongst others:

PUTTING IN PLACE A MECHANISM FOR MONITORING GENDER INEQUALITIES

Effective action to promote gender equality requires an appreciation of the magnitude of the problem by a broader range of stakeholders. At present, critical information for gender related analysis is out of the public domain. An effective system of monitoring gender-related developments is essential. A number of institutions - the courts, the police, labour department, educational institutions, NGOs etc, generate raw gender related data. This should be pooled to generate a credible database and information that supports gender related policy analysis and advocacy.

CHANGING SOCIAL ATTITUDES ON THE ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Botswana's policies and laws do not discriminate on the basis of gender. At worst, some could be faulted for benign neglect but there are many that actively promote gender equality. Often, women suffer discrimination only because institutional practices and social attitudes respond to progressive policy and legislative reforms with a lag.



Thus, official documents from private and public institutions may still have provisions that discriminate against women; and tradition and custom may limit the range of things women can do or be, including chieftainship and priesthood. Public education to transform practices is thus a critical imperative for gender equality.

Gender based discrimination is a human rights violation. Tougher measures, with due sensitivity where culture and tradition are concerned, should be employed where institutions engage in discriminatory practices or retain discriminatory provisions in their official documents – application forms etc.

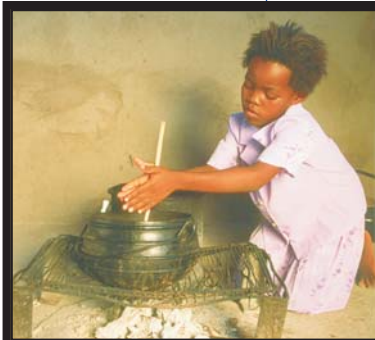
PROMOTING THE ASCENT OF CAPABLE WOMEN TO POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP

There is a connection between life outcomes for particular groups of society and their influence on leadership. Women's empowerment requires women in positions from which they can influence policy. Botswana has built significant momentum towards women's participation in political, corporate and civic leadership.

Many of the women who lead powerful institutions – the Vision Council, the Central Bank, PEs, and Government Ministries at the political and administrative levels, have demonstrated that society suffers no cost from entrusting leadership to capable women. The trend towards having more women in leadership should thus continue.

SUSTAINING THE TREND TOWARDS GREATER DIVERSITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WOMEN

Except for the apparent tendency towards particular disciplines for women, the goal to eliminate gender disparities in education is being met in Botswana. The challenge, therefore, is to facilitate the entry of men and women into disciplines that are traditionally dominated by the other sex, for instance, more women in engineering and more men in nursing.



A second but no less important priority would be to eliminate gender specific constraints on learning. The girl child should be relieved of the burden of household responsibilities beyond normal chores essential for her wholesome development. And no child should have to sacrifice his/her opportunity for schooling in order to work. In this regard, this report argues under Goal 2 for compulsory education and the criminalisation of child labour.

3. SUPPORT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

The Women's Affairs Department (WAD) in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs is Botswana's lead agency on gender equality in Botswana. The frameworks that guide its work and that of its partners are the National Policy on Women and Development (1996); the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); and the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development. Under these frameworks, the government has committed itself to instituting legal, constitutional and social reforms, where needed, to remove discriminatory practices and empower women.

A National Gender Programme Framework with a Plan of Action aimed at translating the national gender priorities into programmes has been developed. Under this programme, Botswana has adopted a gender-mainstreaming strategy for all sectors. In addition to gender mainstreaming, WAD coordinates social mobilisation initiatives.

4. TRACKING PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TARGETS

Gender and development is a priority development issue. Botswana has made progress in setting up institutions and in acceding to key global and regional frameworks.

But the institutional capability to monitor, evaluate, document and analyse issues and trends related to gender is still weak. The Women's Affairs Department (WAD), as the lead/coordinating agency on gender, need not collect all the data required on gender. Indeed, in reality, the relevant data are gathered and summarised by institutions such as the police services, the Ministry of Education, etc.

Many of these institutions have the capacity to gather the relevant data. There is need, however, to harmonise the data into a viable and comprehensive system for monitoring gender and development issues.

Capacity to Monitor Gender and Development

Elements of Monitoring Environment	Assessment		
Data gathering capacities	Strong	Fair	Weak
Quality of recent survey information	Strong	Fair	Weak
Statistical tracking capacities	Strong	Fair	Weak
Statistical analysis capacities	Strong	Fair	Weak
Capacity to incorporate statistical analysis into policy	Strong	Fair	Weak
Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	Strong	Fair	Weak