

The Practice of Social Policy in Botswana

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Introduction

This paper is a product of the social policy project, sponsored by the International Development Centre (IDRC), Canada, to foster a common understanding of social policies as they impact on socioeconomic development processes in Southern and Eastern Africa. The main objective of the project was to examine the overall social policy dynamics in Botswana with respect to formulation, implementation and evaluation and the underlying factors involved. In addition to this, it was hoped that the project would help to anticipate the direction of future social policy. The project sought to address several questions, including: the core areas of the policy process; the major features of social policy; the nature of intersectoral linkages in policy and the significant factors in these linkages; the determinants of the policy agenda at various levels; and the research strategies that can be used to influence the social policy process.

The approaches used for data collection were both qualitative and quantitative. Focused group interviews and review of official documents formed the basis of qualitative data. The focused group discussions consisted of semi-structured interviews with small groups of people, usually between 3 and 6. Interviewees were those familiar with issues in given policy areas from government, NGOs, and communities. The idea was to capture the subjective experiences of persons exposed to particular policy issues and to ascertain their understanding of the issues.

The Evolution of Social Policy in Botswana

The evolution of social policy traces the development of different social policies from the pre-colonial period to the present day Botswana. It is evident that problems in the pre-colonial period were addressed through the primary institutions of social support such as the family, next of kin, chieftainship system, benevolent neighbours as well as community members.

The colonial period saw the birth of statutory social policies which by and large catered for the expatriate European workers of the colony. With independence in 1966, a conscious effort was made to promote capital investment in mining with

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a view to trickling down the benefits of such investment to the masses, particularly in the rural areas.

In the early 1970s Botswana achieved budgetary self-sufficiency and a variety of social policies were formulated to address problems in the areas of health, housing, education, employment and social welfare. An assessment of these policies has revealed that they did in fact cause deep inequalities between classes and the struggle at the moment is to formulate policies that would cater for the stratum of the population that was by-passed by earlier development policies.

The policy agenda and process are dominated by the bureaucratic and technocratic elite. This is because political representatives and civil society are weak. To a lesser extent, international considerations are a factor in the determination of policy formulation and direction, especially with respect to policies for the Basarwa (ie, the indigenous San peoples) and women.

It is observed that the process of social policy formulation is dominated by the central government, particularly the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning which has an overall jurisdiction over the formulation of National Development Plans (NDP). Other structures which exist such as District- and village-level institutions are consulted in the complex processes, but their interventions are normally disregarded. For instance, input to the policy process by the District Development Committees is normally not accorded the significance it deserves. In spite of this, critical linkages between government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector seem to be taking root and the influence of such organisations in the policy process is apparent.

As regards social policy research, it appears that research which normally informs government policy decisions is that which is sanctioned and sponsored by government. The conception of social policy, therefore, emphasises the centrality of the government in the construction of social policies and the role of private and non-governmental organisations as mainly supplementary to those of government. However, the contribution of informal networks of care and support are recognised and acknowledged.

The evolution of social policy in Botswana can be traced through three distinct historical periods: the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. In each of these times, the obtaining socioeconomic, cultural and political conditions dictated the form and nature of social policy.

Pre-Colonial Period

In the pre-colonial period, response to needs was situated within the traditional tribal framework with the extended family playing a major role. The neighbours, community members and the chief all played a pivotal role in addressing need. The

chief who was the highest political authority intervened during times of drought or poor harvest. When the British colonised Botswana in 1885, they decided to retain most of the traditional institutions. However a conscious decision was taken to spend as little money as possible in Bechuanaland as the country offered very little or no opportunities for viable investment. All responses to needs were to be met through the traditional tribal structures.

Tswana societies, before contact with the Europeans, were relatively self-sufficient agricultural economies. The sense of community obligation was very real and most needs were addressed within the family and tribal framework. Children, the aged and the disabled were cared for by various members of the family in a fixed order of responsibility. Provision of such essential services as housing was the responsibility of household heads assisted by relatives, neighbours and other members of the community. The poor members of the community also benefited from affluent members of society through such institutionalised systems (at that time) as the *mafisa* in which those who were well-endowed in terms of cattle could lend some of their stock to those who did not have cattle. The chief who was the highest political authority amongst communities, occasionally collected levies from his subjects which were used for public undertakings and sustenance of communities in times of hunger and economic strife. By 1800, according to Parsons (1980), the economy of Tswana societies was based on extensive cattle production and food crops, supplemented by hunting.

Colonial Period, 1885 - 1966

The colonisation of Botswana by the British in 1885 marked the beginning of a long process which culminated into rapid changes in the social, cultural, political and economic structures of Tswana societies. Botswana was of strategic importance to British expansionism to the North, but the country did not offer any meaningful opportunities for capital investment. The main interest of the British was metropolitan South Africa. In this regard, the British adopted a deliberate policy of spending as little as possible in Tswana communities. To achieve this the British adopted indirect rule as a strategy of governance. This entailed ruling the colony through the local chiefs and as much as it was convenient, retaining the social relations of production and consumption.

A system of taxes was introduced to generate income for the provision of minimal services in the territory: first the Hut Tax in 1899, followed by the Native Tax in 1919. The revenue accruing from such taxes was to be used for financing African education, medical developments and the eradication of cattle diseases.

In 1932 all adult males above 18 years old became taxable. During this time, major responsibility for the provision of social services rested on communities and

missionaries. However, education, housing and health services were subsidised for Europeans by the colonial government.

When the tax system was made compulsory in the 1930s, large numbers of Batswana men migrated to the South African mines to earn a wage that they could use to pay tax and remit to their families periodically. The British, through local chiefs, administratively facilitated this migration, and according to Parsons (1980), by 1940, there were 18 411 persons from Bechuanaland (now Botswana) who were at work in South Africa. By 1943, nearly half of all males between 15-44 years were away from Bechuanaland. This state of affairs undermined and distorted the traditional structure of the Tswana society. Agriculture which was the mainstay of Tswana societies collapsed as a result of the absence of men. Traditional informal helping networks also suffered a great deal of strain. The extended family unit which was the custodian of all dependent members of society also received some battering.

It could thus be safely argued that the migrant labour system marked the beginning of the end of relative self-sufficiency for Tswana communities. Most families were condemned to poverty and hunger of immense proportions.

Parsons (1980:1) observes that:

"...by 1939, a Botswana child could look forward to a malnourished and uneducated childhood; grow up to spend his/her adult energies as a hired labour for low wages; and at old age become impoverished and a burden on his/her children."

This observation sums up the situation of Batswana after the 1930s and beyond. In spite of this evidence of poverty, disease and ignorance, there were no systematic efforts to improve the quality of life of the people of the Protectorate. The British Government still showed very little enthusiasm to develop social welfare policies that could assist the people of Botswana. All welfare activities, during this time, re-emphasised the centrality of the extended family and community organisations in alleviating social problems and meeting the needs of the people.

After the Second World War, however some interest was shown in welfare matters. In 1946, a welfare officer was appointed and shortly thereafter the Bechuanaland Soldiers' Benefit Fund (BSBF) was established. The Fund was to assist ex-servicemen to re-establish themselves in the economy, through the purchase of plough-oxen and agricultural machinery.

Developments in such areas as education, housing, and health were very slow during this time. Government-funded services mainly catered for the British expatriate workers in the colony. The few missionaries then assisted with the provision of multi-racial services in education and health. The colonial govern-

ment, in the 1930s and 1940s, continued to reiterate, in successive reports, that its major role was to assist communities to be self-reliant, and yet there was no provision for the necessary institutional and financial requisites to enable communities to realise their aspirations. To the British Government, the emphasis on self-reliance was a cost-saving strategy rather than a well-thought-out plan to assist impoverished communities.

Around 1955, the colonial Government altered its development strategy. The winds of nationalism were sweeping across Africa and independence for Botswana was imminent. However, there was no national economy to support an independent nation, and the British panicked somewhat. The state of the country and its population was deplorable. This was a heavy indictment on the colonial government, and hence some desperate measures were needed to hurriedly correct the situation.

In 1955, the grant-in-aid was resumed and within three years it formed one-third of the recurrent budget, and by 1963-64 one-half of the same budget. In addition to the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, international loans, especially from the British Treasury, increased rapidly between 1955 and 1965. The development expenditure increased tenfold to about US\$2,5 million. A lot of this money was used to finance new infrastructural developments for the headquarters of the executive branch which was moved from Mafikeng to Gaborone.

Other projects financed included those contained in the Protectorate's Five Year Development Plan published in 1963. Among issues of social policy significance at the time was the expansion and improvement of facilities for formal education and training; improvement of medical facilities; provision of housing for government officers; provision of social welfare; provision of a territorial broadcasting station for purposes of education, information and entertainment; performance of basic social surveys and provision of such other infrastructure that would facilitate productive investment.

Post-colonial period, 1966-1972

At independence, Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world with per capita GNP of less than US\$50. Education and health services were rudimentary and inadequate. Available schools were crowded. There was no comprehensive housing policy. Employment opportunities were very limited as there were no industries and the government could only employ a few people, most of whom were expatriates with superior educational attainments. These problems could only be addressed through foreign and donor assistance. As a long-term strategy, however, the post-colonial government adopted the Transitional Plan for Social and Economic Development which aimed at making Botswana a financially viable entity

within the shortest possible time. To do this, a conscious decision was taken by government to intensify investments in mining so as to achieve rapid and large returns which could be ploughed back into improving the living standards of those who did not benefit directly from the mining sector.

Thus, developments in the social sector initially, were minimal. This strategy worked in part in that within seven years of Botswana's independence, the country achieved budgetary self-sufficiency and the stage was set to undertake a major assault on the problems of the majority of the people.

A range of programmes and infrastructural programmes were put in place after 1973. However, this development was concentrated in the urban areas to the detriment of rural areas resulting into the disparities between the rural and the urban areas which have since continued to widen.

Developments in Social Policy, 1973-1990

Between 1973 and 1990, Botswana's economic growth rate was ranked among the fastest and highest in the world, averaging an annual growth rate of 13%. The mineral sector's contribution to GDP and national revenue increased substantially during the '70s and '80s. Real GDP per capita increased almost tenfold between independence and the 1990s. As a consequence, expenditure in all areas of social and economic infrastructure as well as in defence increased considerably (Hope, 1996). The Accelerated Rural Development Programme was one of the most significant post-1972 social policy initiatives. The policy sought to provide basic infrastructure in the rural areas.

Several primary schools were built, health facilities were expanded and other infrastructure such as roads were constructed. It is also during this time that such entities as the Botswana Housing Corporation and Self-Help Housing Agency were born to respond to the housing problems of the time. Efforts to improve agriculture through such schemes as the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) were also initiated in the 1970s. This decade also saw the birth of welfare measures to cater for the Basarwa, starting with the Bushmen Development Programme, which later became the Remote Area Development Programme. In the 1970s, primary school enrolments increased.

The 1980s saw the ascendancy of the principle of universal nine-year basic education which was endorsed by the 1977 education policy commonly referred to as "Education for Kaggisano." This led to the introduction of free education and the exponential rise in the number of community junior secondary schools. This was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of senior secondary schools as well as vocational training institutions.

In health, significant progress was achieved between 1973 and 1990. Health facilities as well as trained personnel have increased substantially. Through a system of decentralised health services and the adoption of the Primary Health Care strategy, the health status of the nation has recorded positive trends in almost all the indices that are customarily used to measure progress in this sector. The infant mortality rate declined from 100 in 1971, to 45 in 1991. Under-five mortality also declined from 147 in 1971 to 109 in 1981, to 56 in 1991. Maternal mortality had declined to about 200/100,000 in 1991. The population within 15km and 8km to the nearest health post also increased significantly.

The period between 1973 and 1990 also witnessed the rapid development of the housing sector, but unlike education and health, this sector was mainly concentrated in the urban areas to cater for the large numbers of people who migrated to the urban areas to seek or take up employment. The housing sector has mainly been dominated by the Botswana Housing Corporation (BHC), a parastatal corporation established in 1970, to provide rental accommodation for Botswana on a non-profit basis.

The BHC only served a proportion of the upper lower-income people to the total exclusion of the low-income. Even then, the BHC could not cope with the demand for housing as evidenced by long waiting lists. Because the BHC did not cater for low-income households, a low-income housing scheme, Self-Help Housing Agency (SHHA) was conceived. Initially it was largely sponsored by donors, with the government playing a much more active role in the 1980s. SHHA benefited quite a large proportion of the low-income people, but it could not meet the housing demand in most urban centres. In all this, the rural areas were left out.

Despite increased expenditures in such sectors as health, education, housing and others related to social development, poverty has remained a persistent problem that affects a substantial proportion of the population. Duncan, et al (1994) attribute poverty to harsh climatic conditions, which lead to low and variable agricultural production; lack of employment opportunities; lack of skills; and limited access to such productive assets as cattle, draught power, water, productive land, labour and credit. These have been exacerbated by high population growth and a rapidly degrading environment. Duncan, et al (1994) argue that income distribution is highly skewed in Botswana. Most people's incomes are below US\$2 590, which is the per capita income figure of the country. This assertion follows Granberg and Parkinson (1988) who indicate that the Gini Coefficient for Botswana was 0,52 in 1974 and 0,73 in 1987. The 1985/86 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) found that 50% of rural households were living below the Poverty Datum Line (PDL); 40% of households earned only 11% of the total cash and in-kind income; the middle 40% earned 28% of the total income; while 20% earned 61% of the total income. Rural and female-headed households fared even worse (Duncan, et al, 1994).

Government has for a long time acknowledged the existence of poverty, but it has, until the late 1970s, been reluctant to directly intervene in the alleviation of poverty. The Government tended to shift such responsibility to the traditional structures of social support. In the late 1970s and early 1980s a plethora of policies emerged to wage a direct assault on poverty. In this regard, a number of agricultural policies emerged, the most significant of which was the Arable Land Development Programme (ALDEP). ALDEP targeted small farmers with less than forty head of cattle. Through the scheme, farmers could obtain donkeys, cattle, ploughs, water tanks and cultivators. The other programme whose coverage included larger-scale farmers, the Accelerated Rain-fed Arable production was introduced a few years after ALDEP. It entitled farmers to some payment for ploughing, de-stumping, planting in rows and weeding.

Drought-induced poverty was tackled by such schemes as the labour-based Drought Relief Programmes which employed rural people in various community development projects such as road construction, construction of VDC houses, erection of *kgotla* shelters and other projects deemed important by communities. Other programmes included the supplementary feeding programme for school children and the direct feeding program for under-weight or malnourished children. The Destitute Policy has, over the years, benefited a lot of people who passed the eligibility criteria, but at the same time it has also excluded large numbers of people. In addition to this policy, there is the Remote Area Development Programme which was established in the 1970s to assist people residing in the remote rural areas, a majority of whom are the Basarwa. This Programme has been generously supported by donors. In 1996 the Old Age Pension scheme was introduced. This schemes entitles everyone over 65 years to a P100 monthly allowance. The scheme is ill-targeted in the sense that everyone will benefit irrespective of their income status and inadequate in the sense that the amount involved is insufficient to meet household requirements, of the elderly who often have the burden of caring for their grandchildren.

Social Policy And Environmental Issues

In Botswana, discussions of policy and the environment centre on agriculture that is both pastoral and arable. The country, with a semi-arid climate characterised by unreliable rainfall and periodic droughts has posed several policy dilemmas for the government. In the determination of policies, the government has attempted to mitigate the effects of the harsh climatic conditions on the people, especially in view of the ever-existing possibilities of crop failure or loss of cattle due to drought and very little rainfall. One such intervention by government was the Tribal

Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) of 1975 which was aimed at stopping overgrazing through:

"...the creation of commercial leasehold ranches for those with large livestock numbers; increasing cattle productivity through improved range and livestock management (paddocking, rotational grazing, selective breeding, etc) and promoting social equity. Commercial leasehold ranches were supposed to leave room for small farmers to expand; and upgrading rural quality of life by improving incomes from cattle" (Mufune, 1995: 24-25).

Contrary to its intended goals, TGLP led to land alienation and degradation of immense proportions. Observers also cite TGLP as having contributed substantially to the impoverishment of the rural people. Selolwane (1995), in this connection, maintains that development policy has enabled big cattle ranchers to put their short-term interest for profit before that of the welfare of the poor and judicious exploitation of the environment.

Social Policy in the 1990s and Beyond

The developing situation of the country has presented new challenges, dilemmas and paradoxes that have a direct bearing on the development of social policy. Notably, these changes have necessitated some shift in the socioeconomic strategy of the day. The government has since openly embraced a private sector-led, open market strategy. Prior to the 1990s, the government had always been identified with the mixed economy approach. The extent to which the market approach has been followed in the last five years is not yet clear, but government has introduced a number of reforms including the liberalisation of exchange controls, the reduction of company tax and other economic reforms consistent with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank prescriptions.

The question then is – what does this mean to such public services as education, health, housing and other social services, as well as subsidies in the area of agriculture? In the case of housing, the effects are already felt by many people. Botswana Housing Corporation is retrenching employees as well as increasing rentals on its properties. This is likely to impoverish many households. The number of people who cannot afford decent accommodation is likely to rise, and so is the number of people who will be completely without accommodation. In the area of education and health, it is likely that there will be a proliferation of private services. Private services in health are already available as is the case with the Gaborone Private Hospital and numerous other private surgeries, especially in the urban areas. In education, private education facilities are likely to increase. These private

services which presumably provide quality services will continue to benefit a handful of affluent people. Standards in the public sector are likely to deteriorate especially that government spending is likely to go down.

As the government seeks ways of playing a minimal role in the provision of services, there are very interesting developments in the civil and political sphere which have an enormous bearing on the future of social policy. The civil society is getting stronger and very influential. Women's groups, the press, human rights lobbyists and youth organisations are putting pressure on the government to provide services and opportunities for the marginalised and the disadvantaged. These developments have presented a dilemma for the government. The culture of entitlement in the general population has been effectively cultivated and maintained at a time when the government seeks to discourage it. However, it appears there are some activities in the social sector as demonstrated by the passage of policies and programmes related to youth, the disabled, and women and health.

Determinants of Social Policy

Available information suggests at least four principal determinants of social policy in Botswana. First is the conservative, but pragmatic economic philosophy that has been pursued by the Botswana state since independence. The second relates to political expediency which has seen the introduction of policies and programmes on the eve of election years. Third, is the influence of a bureaucratic and technocratic elite. Lastly, there is pressure to conform to international expectations. All these factors have conspired to shape the direction of social policy in Botswana. It is worth noting that, depending on the policy one looks at, the influence of any one factor or set of factors will differ significantly.

Economic Conservatism

Botswana's social policy agenda has been largely influenced by a conservative but pragmatic economic philosophy. Throughout the independence years, Botswana's economic philosophy emphasised the need for sound development planning and management, characterised by a prudent but conservative fiscal and monetary regime. In this connection, every effort was made to ensure that all policies pursued did not place undue burden on the financial resources of the state. In fact, most social policies in Botswana were only pursued after the country had attained budgetary self-sufficiency in the early 1970s. Even then, all efforts were made to ensure that favourable or positive balance of payments were achieved.

Political Expediency as a Determinant of Policy

Some evidence abounds which attests to political expediency as a determinant of policy in Botswana. The Accelerated Rural Development Programme (ARDP) and the Arable Land Grazing Programme (ALDEP) preceded the 1974 and 1979 general elections. Therefore, some people believe that the policies were introduced for purposes of the political survival of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party. The ARDP, Picard (1987) observes, was introduced in 1974 by the Botswana Democratic Party government so that it could perpetuate its political hegemony in the rural areas. According to Picard (1987), a presidential directive was issued ordering the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to ensure that projects were visible on the ground by September 30th 1974, which was twenty-one days before the general elections. The timing of such an exercise clearly points to the real possibility of political manoeuvring by the ruling party.

It is argued that lately, the government has introduced the Old Age Pension Scheme in the aftermath of the 1994 elections during which the opposition won more seats than usual. The Old Age Pension Scheme is seen in some quarters as an appeasement of the elderly electorate ahead of the 1999 general elections. It is in the same light that the policies for the youth, women and the disabled are viewed. There has also been the Vision 2016 task force which is charged with the responsibility of developing a long-term vision for Botswana. All these have happened after the 1994 elections and observers see this enthusiasm as nothing but "politics as usual" by the ruling party to pacify certain constituents.

The Influence of the Bureaucratic and Technocratic Elite

The bureaucratic elites in Botswana are very powerful and have significant influence on the social policy agenda. The organs of civil society in Botswana have been relatively weak. Opposition political parties have, for a long time, been fragmented and uncoordinated, thus allowing a *de facto* one party arrangement. Given this situation, an educated, mostly expatriate bureaucratic and technocratic elite dictated terms in the policy arena.

International Expectations, Considerations and Influence

There is a body of opinion which sees the social policy agenda in Botswana as nothing but responses to international expectations. This view is not widely documented in the literature but there is evidence that some policies in Botswana have been formulated either with the direct intervention of international donor agencies or through local NGOs sponsored and wholly supported by international donors. For instance, Basarwa development issues have been put on the agenda by international donors, especially those from the Nordic countries. These donors and

their governments have directly or indirectly put pressure on the Botswana government to institute policies and programmes that would cater for this particular population group. The Government has reluctantly obliged, hence the introduction of such policies as the Remote Area Development Programme.

The invisible hand of the international community was also felt at the time of the Boro Dredging project which was halted as a result of the intervention of the local communities and the Greenpeace Movement. Some people believe that if Greenpeace had not intervened the Dredging Project would have gone ahead despite protests from local communities. The Government also came into the spotlight regarding the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government only acceded to this Convention when international pressure mounted. In all these, it could be discerned that the government of Botswana has a history of seeking to preserve its image in the international community and where possibilities for its image to be tarnished in the international community arise, the government has always responded promptly.

The Social Policy Linkages

Consultation, or *therisanyo* in Setswana, places a character of democracy on the Tswana traditional society (Ngcongo, 1989). Most observers of the Tswana polity tend to link consultation with citizen participation with regard to the policy process. This is because citizens are consulted at the *kgotla*; consultation, therefore, has always been highly appreciated and recognised as a critical element of governance (Stredman, 1993).

Although the concept of consultation is officially afforded a high profile in the policy system in Botswana, it is, in fact, top civil servants who dominate the policy-making process (Molutsi & Holm, 1990). They initiate discussion of issues through commissioned studies which usually result in a series of proposals. Ministries then conduct policy debates among themselves and interministerial committees constitute the arenas in which decisions are made. These committees cover all major concerns of government, including, housing, drought relief, conservation, rural development, and land use. The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning oversees the whole process, setting budget priorities and directing investment of government's vast financial reserves (National Development Plan 7, 1991). This Ministry, therefore, sets the limits and parameters within which the structures of decision-making such as Village Development Committees, District Development Committees, National District Development Conferences as well as Interministerial Committees operate.

Thus the public often witnesses little in the form of a policy debate unless a ministry decides to engage in some form of consultation. When this happens, a conference may be organised or ministry officials may tour the country holding traditional *kgotlas* where they explain their proposals. In Botswana, the *kgotla*, the meeting-place in front of the chief's residence, is the traditional forum for debate and discussion of local issues (Ngcongong, 1989). The *kgotla* has been used to promote, for instance, a national conservation policy, and the discussion of population and abortion issues. Whatever form the consultation takes, the debate is usually limited to matters of implementation.

Currently, the *kgotla* is primarily used for explaining government policies to communities. The expectation is that criticism should be offered in a non-partisan manner which means that party activists cannot determine who attends and who speaks in the *kgotla*. A community's reaction to a particular proposal, therefore, tends to be spontaneous but ineffective. There is a tradition in Botswana that all points of view must be heard. Despite this, it is expected that government leaders speak with one voice.

The ideal is that elected officials are given mandates by the people through *kgotla* discussions. They are expected to report back to the *kgotla* after legislative action has taken place, but before the Bill becomes law. Civic leaders are expected to go back to the people or their representatives with the draft legislation to ensure that the mandate has been captured by the instrument. This popular control sometimes works but often the reality is different. Many councillors and some of the older Members of Parliament do not even hold the required *kgotlas* and, if they are held, attendance is often poor and dominated by older, less politically active members of the community. In addition, politicians often lecture to the people rather than seek their views which allows little opportunity for upward communication.

Interest Groups

The state has some influence on interest groups such as co-operatives, farmers' organisations, and parent-teachers associations, in the form of financial support and the imposition of model constitutions; therefore these groups operate within government frameworks. The absence of a large number of politicised social groups in Botswana means that elected officials must solicit the public directly if they are to keep informed of the feelings and needs of the people with regard to policy matters. Because of this, the *kgotla* has, in recent times, enjoyed a resurgence of acceptability as a medium through which consultation takes place.

Top-Down Practice In The Policy Process

All the ministries in Botswana have an organisational chart delineating the structural linkages from the minister at the top to the lowest formal government institution at grassroots level: for example, in the Ministry of Health, institutional linkages begin with the Minister of Health and descend through the Permanent Secretary and the Deputy Permanent Secretary to the district level, and then to the Village Health Committee which is a sub-committee of the Village Development Committee. Similarly, in Education, the process starts with the Minister, then proceeds down through the Permanent Secretary, to the Deputy Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments. It then goes to the education officers at the regional level, then to the district level, and finally to the headteachers of schools and their Parent Teachers Association (Ministry of Education, Third and Fourth Biennial Reports, 1989-91; 1992-93).

When policy initiatives are transmitted in a top-down fashion they quite often take the form of directives rather than consultations, and this obviously does not allow for peoples' participation in formulation. They are, in fact, expected to become involved in the implementation process, whether they agree with it or not (Harvey & Lewis, 1990). This is the point, perhaps, at which policy may experience difficulty in being translated into reality. This top-down practice in the policy formulation process points to some degree of centralised governance (Schaefer & Lamb, 1995). Despite Botswana's democratic stance, the country continues with the top-down approach to policy, perhaps because of the advantages associated with guiding people at grassroots level in a country experiencing phenomenal social, economic, political, and cultural change.

The failure of participation to empower people is partly attributable to the fact that, by and large, participation in the policy process and development occurs within hierarchical or patriarchal structures that tend to conserve the status quo and do not attempt to change and fundamentally restructure social relations.

Special Linkages

There are certain situations in which government adopts special mechanisms for interaction and co-ordination in the policy process. Notably, there is a special arrangement between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing whereby policy formulation is the ultimate responsibility of the Ministry of Health (although the Interministerial Committee plays a part in the process), while the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing is an integral part of the implementation of health policy together with various organs of the Ministry of Health.

Linkages With External Agencies

Government has a general framework of establishing linkages with non-governmental organisations, including bilateral and multilateral agencies as there is a recognition that these bodies can make a significant contribution to the well-being of the people. Examples include: The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) International Development Research Centre (IDRC) – bilateral agencies; and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund – multilateral agencies. The input of these organisations tends to enrich the policy process as it substantially complements government's contribution. In fact, for example, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education have a liaison with external agencies at the permanent secretary level so that concerns may be raised by both sides. (Ministry of Education, Third and Fourth Biennial Reports, 1989-91, 1992-93).

Linkages With Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Given the democratic atmosphere that has prevailed in the country since independence it can be postulated that possibilities to influence policy and decision-making by civil society have existed. The possibilities have actually materialised into substantial efforts to forge links between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the state, so as to foster collaboration, partnership, and participation. The state realises that NGOs' contribution, quite often, demonstrates the extent to which the disadvantaged at personal, group, or community level can be empowered.

However, the difficulty in involving the NGOs arises when there is no official framework or linkage between the state and the NGOs (Farrington, et al, 1993). In Botswana, until recently, there has been a lack of an overall NGO body to provide a framework for organisational cooperation with the state. The Botswana Coordinating Non-Governmental Organisation (BOCONGO) was founded to provide a structure for the non-governmental organisations to mutually cooperate with the state in various endeavours. BOCONGO was invited by the government to provide input into National Development Plan 8 and also to sit on the reference committee for the poverty study undertaken by the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA).

The creation of BOCONGO and the existence of the informal mechanisms of linkage provide democratic arrangements for the civil organs to effectively participate in policy processes in Botswana. What this means is that policy initiation can be realised through BOCONGO after consultation has taken place.

Private Sector Linkages

In order to promote national development the government of Botswana has four basic objectives, namely: sustained development; rapid economic growth, economic independence; and social justice (NDP 7, 1991). The current strategy adopted to realise these objectives comprises a move away from traditional government domination of the economy to a more liberalised private sector focus (Third Term Review, NDP 7, 1994). This is premised on the understanding that the private sector will provide the major engine of growth within the country's economy. Therefore, it has become necessary for government to establish formal institutions in order to provide an enabling environment for the private sector (and thus the country as a whole), to prosper. This enabling environment in the main, consists of institutions, networks, and both formal and informal channels of communication to allow for free exchange of ideas and information, and the delineation of respective roles and responsibilities (Lewis, 1993).

The Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry and Manpower (BOCCIM), a private, non-profit organisation registered under the Trade Unions and Employers' Organisation Act of 1983, provides the mechanism for interaction between government and the private sector. BOCCIM has 1 500 corporate members who are organised, at grassroots level, in business councils which operate in 14 centres (city, town, and village) throughout the country.

BOCCIM has representation on governmental and non-governmental boards or committees such as the Labour Advisory Board, NEMIC, Incomes and Manpower Sub-Committee, Medium Wages Advisory Board, Productive Employment Technical Committee, Factories Advisory Board, Central Bursaries Committee, National Conservation Strategy Advisory Board, Botswana Medical Aid and AIDS in the Workplace. Horizontal and vertical linkages with government and other institutions forge a network of communication which assists in both the formulation and implementation of policy mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation facilitate mutuality of interest and process.

Social Policy Research And Planning

In Botswana, there is no central research organisation that coordinates research activities in the country. However, a number of research institutions exist which are either government, non-government or autonomous. Government research institutions directly inform policy and most of them are situated within government ministries. They include the Central Statistics Office (CSO) which is housed in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. The CSO mainly focuses on the gathering, collection and analysis of data of a socioeconomic nature. This informa-

tion helps to define the socioeconomic profile of Botswana with the ultimate aim of motivating the evolution of appropriate policy responses by concerned structures of government. The CSO also coordinates the National Population and Housing Census that is conducted after every ten years. The census provides a rich source of information on most indicators of the quality of life such as housing, education, employment situation, health and the general welfare of citizens.

Again within the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, there exists an evaluation and research sub-committee of the National Council for Population and Development. This sub-committee, chaired by the government statistician, is mandated to facilitate the development and use of statistics and other relevant methods to monitor progress and impact of programmes and policies; to provide relevant research on policies, programmes and issues, especially under the Family Planning impact analysis and vital statistics support; to identify and build institutional capacity to meet training, research and advocacy needs for different sections of the population, and support and coordinate their use; to advise and promote the active functioning of the data bank; and finally to provide any other technical advisory services as may be required from time to time by the council towards the achievement of the nation's objectives in population and related development field (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1995).

Other government research units situated in Ministries include the Applied Research Unit in the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing; Health Research Unit in the Ministry of Health, and the Agricultural Research Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture. The main foci of these research units is to identify priority policy areas and programmes as well as to evaluate the impact of existing policies. The National Institute of Research and Documentation at the University of Botswana is yet another important research centre which is playing a critical role in policy research. The Research Institute was established mainly to meet the research needs of the University of Botswana. However, over time it has embarked on policy research which has largely influenced policy direction in a number of critical areas of national interest. Non-governmental organisations such as Women and Law in Southern Africa, Emang Basadi and other organisations have embarked on small-scale research, particularly in the area of gender and social development. Other notable research studies have been carried out among the Basarwa people.

The Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA), is another organisation of special interest. It is an autonomous, non-governmental research institute established by a deed of trust. BIDPA's two areas of focus are development policy analysis and capacity building. Although Botswana is the main area of concentration, the whole of southern Africa may be covered in a regional thrust. The initiative for the formation of BIDPA came from government, notably from the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. This seems to indicate that

there is a felt need for the circumvention of the bureaucratic process, even from the bureaucrats themselves, and an understanding that by moving outside the official government framework, the system may operate with greater effectiveness, efficiency, economy, and speed. Thus government itself is aware of the need for linkages with other sectors of the community in the field of research, analysis and formulation of social policy.

A major study on poverty has been conducted on behalf of government. This involves also a critical review of the Destitute Policy which has not been updated since 1980 apart from periodic incremental adjustments in the value of material assistance for those registered as destitute. The study also focus on basic education policy, the Labour Based Public Works Programme, preventive health measures, the Financial Assistance Policy (FAP), and The Arable Land Development Programme (ALDEP). The second phase of the study involved drawing up an action plan for the future, based on a synthesis of the data, including foreign comparatives.

Obstacles to Effective Research and Planning

Some research data are not utilised for informing policy decisions. There are a number of reasons for this state of affairs. First, research carried out by academics and other independent bodies are looked at with suspicion by the government. They are considered critical and anti-government and as such they are least preferred for policy decisions. Second, research undertaken by non-government bodies are normally small-scale research studies and are mostly locality specific. On this basis, such research is considered inadequate for policy purposes as they are not national in character. Third, research findings and recommendations that run counter to stated government policies are not normally utilised to inform policy decisions.

Another obstacle to effective use of research data has to do with poor dissemination of research findings. Most research findings are not known to policy-makers or persons who influence policy-making. Research findings are only disseminated to interest groups. As a consequence most research findings never reach the market place of ideas thus limiting their use value.

Most research institutions and bodies have complained about limited resources and work overload. Research institutions face problems of finance and underqualified researchers. Qualified researchers are not attracted by the salaries in most research institutions. The Government is the most affected by this shortage and turnover of staff. The outcome of this state of affairs is low-quality research which has a potential to misdirect policy. Faced with this, government often resorts to expatriate consultants who may not have a very firm grasp of local issues and conditions.

Conclusion

Social policy practice and research in Botswana is a muddled terrain. In the first place, there is no consensus as to what constitutes social policy. Second, the determinants, process and linkages are not clearly defined and until recently the social policy process has been dominated by central government. Third, the social policy research agenda has not been given sufficient attention except by the relatively underdeveloped and underutilised research institutions found in some government ministries. Research from other institutions have not been adequately disseminated and where it has, it has been largely ignored by policy-makers. The creation of the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis in 1995 may mark the beginning of a systematic and comprehensive approach to the social policy research and evaluation agenda.

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