

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN BOTSWANA SINCE INDEPENDENCE: AN EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

THABO T. FAKO

Background

On 26th March 1986, the Faculty of Social Sciences agreed to organise a workshop as part of several national activities to mark the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of Independence in Botswana. The main aim of the workshop was to give an opportunity to local and international scholars to share their research findings and exchange views on various aspects of development in Botswana. The specific objectives of the workshop were outlined as follows:-

1. to provide an opportunity for the exchange of views on development trends since Independence;
2. to systematically identify and evaluate strengths and weaknesses of past development trends;
3. to draw up broad suggestions for strengthening future development efforts;
4. to update and supplement written works on development in Botswana;
5. to prepare a manuscript based on the workshop for publication.

The implementation of workshop objectives was done through the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor P. N. Takirambudde, who provided the overall leadership and logistical support as Chairman of the three man Faculty Organising Committee which included B. Otlhogile and T. T. Fako. The workshop was held on the University of Botswana campus between 22 and 24, September, 1986.

His Honour The Vice President and Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Mr. Peter S. Mmusi performed the official opening of the workshop. His Speech reassured scholars of the important role that research plays in development and encouraged them to know that his government supports the free exchange of ideas between scholars, intellectuals, as well as ordinary citizens. The speech is included in this volume for the benefit of the reader.

It took a year to get all the papers typed, proofread, and presented for publication. After consideration by several publishers, PULA: Botswana Journal of African Studies, under the leadership of Professor M.J. Melamu (Editor), offered to publish selected papers in two volumes. The first volume contains selected papers on development trends while the second volume will contain papers that discuss development "issues" since independence. After another year of editing and consultations with authors to get the papers ready for publication in PULA, we are happy to present the first of the two volumes based on selected papers from the Twentieth Anniversary of Independence Workshop on Development Trends in Botswana.

Population Trends

In the first paper of this volume, Shastri argues that, although the population of Botswana is small relative to the size of the country, the growth rate of 3.7 percent per annum is one of the highest. This means that Botswana has one of the

fastest growing populations in the world. Due to high fertility and declining mortality, the population has a large proportion of children and young people. In addition, the population is characterised by a high rate of urbanisation and a preponderance of women in the young adult (reproductive) age groups. This has very serious implications for development indeed.

It is well known that a youthful population requires large expenditures on education, health and other social services. The current trend in population growth will necessitate very rapid economic growth in order to maintain, and possibly increase, the standard of living and the quality of life. Given relatively scarce financial, technical and human resources, however, Botswana may find it increasingly difficult to meet her future needs in the extra social infrastructure required to support a large number of dependents. What is more, there is no guarantee that the economic growth rates to which Botswana has become accustomed will continue into the 1990s as the country increasingly becomes urbanised. The rapid rate of urbanisation imposes strains on housing, transportation, and employment opportunities. Shastri concludes by pleading for measures to be taken to ensure a reduction in the population growth.

Economic Trends

The second paper by Sekgoma argues that although trends in the economy and its future looked bleak at Independence, within a short period of six years, positive trends in Botswana's economy began to be felt and the country was able to balance its budget without assistance from Britain. The main reasons for Botswana's success include the following:

1. Favourable weather conditions in the latter part of the 1960s and early 1970s resulted in improved crops and livestock production which resulted in the

agricultural sector dominating in terms of contribution to GDP until the mid 1970s when the mining sector overtook agriculture.

2. The relocation of the capital from Mafeking to Gaborone stimulated the growth of the public sector and job creation in the economy.
3. The discovery of diamonds at Orapa and copper-nickel at Selibe-Phikwe in the mid 1970s generated phenomenal economic growth which enabled government to undertake infrastructure development on a wide scale, and generated further employment opportunities.
4. An efficient civil service played a major role through an effective choice of projects, timely implementation and overall prudent financial housekeeping. As a result, Botswana experienced one of the highest growth rates in Africa.

In spite of a successful economy, the conditions of the poor seem to have deteriorated. Social inequalities in the rural areas intensified and workers in towns received wages that were too low to help them subsist above the poverty trap. This does not augur well for political stability in the future. Sekgoma concludes by pleading for greater efforts to be made to ensure that the lowest socio-economic groups are not by-passed by the benefits of economic growth.

Education and Manpower Trends

Kann and Taylor show that the history of manpower planning can be traced through a variety of committees beginning with the Standing Advisory Committee on Recruitment, Training and Localisation Policy in 1961, through several major studies carried out by various consultants and through the National

Development Plans. The committees, studies and the Plans, reflect an on going concern with how to develop staff and manage government offices; how to create new jobs; how to promote localisation; how to increase the participation of women among others.

In response to manpower needs, the educational system has grown in both quantity and quality. In addition to primary schools, secondary schools and the University of Botswana, institutions such as the Polytechnic, Botswana Agricultural College, Institute of Development Management, National Institute of Health, The Botswana Institute of Administration and Commerce, Department of Non-Formal Education, teacher training colleges, brigades, etc, testify to attempts to provide educational facilities and training centres to meet manpower needs of various sectors of the economy.

Kann and Taylor note that although manpower needs have provided the official justification for educational expansion, the actual determinants of expansion have been population growth, political pressure, availability of qualified entrants at each level, and availability of funds. A machinery for the implementation and monitoring of manpower plans is still inadequate. Overall, there has been little serious attempt to integrate manpower planning and educational development. In particular, little thought has been given to how education could or should contribute to rural development and employment creation. The educational system has not had such a beneficial impact on production, employment, rural development and social justice.

Twenty years after Independence, there continues to be a shortage of skilled and professional manpower. At the same time, there continues to be far too many Batswana seeking incomes from employment than there are income earning opportunities available. In spite of commitment to education in the form of increased expenditure, quantitative expansion of

facilities and equipment, more systematic operation of the educational system, there has been very little participation by Batswana themselves in the shaping of productive activities. Policy formulation documents continue to be dominated by an international network that excludes effective participation by citizens. It is not yet clear whether the integration of manpower planning within different sectors e.g. education, health, agriculture, etc., will improve the overall picture in the future.

Crop Production Trends

Selolwane notes that in the past 20 years of independence, Botswana has not produced enough to satisfy the dietary needs of its population. Only a tiny proportion of households produce enough for their subsistence needs during climatically favourable years. Thus, self sufficiency has not risen above 50 percent. As a result, Botswana has consistently received food aid since independence. Commercial imports have also been rising in relation to increasing demand for food.

There are several reasons for low crop production in Botswana. Firstly, the country's physical ecology is harsh and inclement to crop farming. Extremely hot temperatures in the growing season raise soil temperatures and increase the rate of moisture loss. The rainfall comes in the form of erratic intense storms which result in rapid run off and drainage, as well as damage to crops. These conditions create an adverse environment for crop production.

The second major reason for low crop production in Botswana is lack of adequate government protection and incentives. For example, the crop sector has, on the average, been attracting only a fifth of the development funds channeled into agriculture. At the same time, crop producer prices have been fixed 50 to 60 percent below world market prices. Due to poor incentives, large farmers with the capacity to significantly

alter the level of food crop output have tended not to participate in crop production. This has been largely because of the rising profitability of commercialised livestock production where farmers have enjoyed the benefits of guaranteed and higher world market prices via the European Economic Community, infrastructural subsidies, credit facilities, and excellent disease control services.

There are indicators that there is scope for increasing land productivity and food crop output. Government strategy has been to identify producers with the capacity to adapt new, ostensibly higher-yielding, technologies and to back them with research, marketing channels, subsidies and credit facilities. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of empirical data on the nature and capacity of various classes of food producers who respond to incentives. Selolwane concludes by noting that there is need for more relevant social science research in order to shed greater light on the problems of food crop production and the nature of the response of those participating in specific programmes.

Livestock Production Trends

Arntzen notes that Livestock production has been heavily influenced by government intervention through veterinary campaigns, breeding programmes, the tribal Grazing Land Policy, etc. However, emphasis by government and the Botswana Meat Commission on cattle has resulted in better veterinary services and prices for cattle, but has tended to result in comparative neglect of other livestock.

Although as much as 62 percent of rural households have agricultural holdings, in general, there is very little participation of these households in livestock production. The percentage of households without cattle continues to increase. By all indications, almost half of the households in the country do not own any cattle at all. In 1981, nine percent of

cattle holders had 45 percent of the national herd. With the recent drought, the distribution of cattle holding has become even more skewed. Small cattle holders will have lost the few cattle they had since small herds tend to be more vulnerable to drought than large herds. Goats could play the role of "poor man's cattle". Indeed, in the recent drought, the average traditional farmer built up sizeable goat herds. But goats are not able to replace cattle as draught power. Besides, goats are highly vulnerable to diseases most prevalent during wet periods, when profitable farming could occur.

The most serious constraint on livestock production and development is the limited and declining availability of grazing land, in spite of the large size of the country. Grazing is a problem mainly because of prevailing environmental and rainfall conditions. Low, erratic and unevenly distributed rainfall makes large parts of the country to be unsuited for extensive forms of grazing.

Although the environment puts limits on livestock expansion, rapid population growth may increase livestock numbers which would lead to increasing degradation of the land. Expansion of livestock with inefficient land use practices, especially over-grazing, reduces herd performance and overall benefits to the holder. Arntzen concludes by noting that there are too many factors and uncertainties that are beyond government control. Overall trends indicate increasing land pressure which has in turn increased the tendency towards privatization of ground water sources and surrounding grazing. This will tend to put pressure on the small holders who will increasingly be forced out of livestock production.

Nutritional Status Trends

Kgosidintsi, Khulumani and Mpofu note that a rapidly expanding population and a concomitant rise in the demand for food will remain one of the major challenges facing the government in the

foreseeable future. Agricultural statistics show that the demand for basic food grains has risen from 100,000 tons in 1979 to 190,000 tons in 1985 and is expected to exceed 200,000 tons by the end of 1991. Meanwhile, the 1978 National Migration Study found that 90 percent of all households produced harvests that were insufficient to feed themselves. In addition, there has been a decline in the performance of the agricultural sector and food production levels have been dropping drastically. Instead of growing by 7.3 percent per annum as projected by the fifth National Development Plan, the contribution of the agriculture sector declined by 4.1 percent per annum by 1984/85. The overall agricultural component of GDP in 1984/85 is estimated to have fallen by 80 percent of its 1978/79 level. Food grains production, compounded by a rapidly growing human population, has resulted in a declining per capita production from 159Kg. per annum in 1975/76, to 58Kg. per annum in 1980/81 and to a mere 7Kg. per annum in the worst ever drought year of 1983/84.

With the sharp decline in food production during the drought, there has been an increased dependence on imported foods from donor agencies and the commercial sector. While the Drought Relief Programme is on going, and "blanket coverage" of vulnerable groups continues, nutritional status should remain reasonable, and even improve in spite of declining food grains production. At present, an extensive, relatively efficient and closely monitored food distribution and relief programme (covering 60 percent of the nation) has resulted in an improvement in the nutritional status observed through the National Nutrition Surveillance System (NNSS) since 1978. If current support is withdrawn, many households would suffer.

After the drought, many households are expected to have difficulty in regaining their former levels of production due to loss of assets, especially livestock. The most vulnerable households include: those without viable cattle herds, those without cattle at all, female headed households, and those who

do not engage in agriculture at all. Thus, drought relief dependency has set-in and in spite of the national principle of self-reliance (Boipelego). Clearly, the greatest challenge remains that of providing the means of securing household incomes and food for vulnerable rural households after the drought, given that many of them will not be able to take advantage of numerous agricultural schemes intended to uplift farming households.

Kgosidintsi, Khulumani and Mpofu conclude by noting that simultaneous developments in the health, agriculture and other sectors have had a positive impact in sustaining encouraging trends in the improvement of health in spite of the drought. Food distribution programmes seem to have most positively influenced the utilization of health services, especially when agricultural activities diminished. The challenge now facing the government is to continue the positive trends in nutritional status and other health indicators.

The Regional Context of Development

In order to comprehend the quality and volume of development in Botswana, it is important to understand the basic geo-political constraints that the country faces. For one thing, Botswana is in the middle of a region that has been characterised as the "vortex of violence". Botswana's land-locked status imposes economic and political limitations which have direct and indirect implications for social, cultural and economic development. Imports and exports are subject to an increasingly turbulent political climate which makes the country vulnerable to both predictable and unpredictable changes in the region.

Chipasula and Miti note that while Botswana has made major strides to extricate herself from South Africa's stranglehold, the country remains dependent on South Africa for migrant labour, trade, transport links, as well as revenue from customs

and excise. In fact, as a "Labour Reserve", Botswana is among those countries that fall under the most direct "mercy" of South Africa. The need for good neighbourliness is dictated by strong economic reasons.

The economic, political and military dominance of South Africa does not only ensure the country's centrality in the region, but also makes prudent statesmanship and good neighborliness imperative for the survival of Botswana. In practice, it has meant that while Botswana condemned apartheid, she could not afford to give cause for South Africa's military retaliation. This tenuous and risky path has led Botswana to adopt foreign policy principles that include non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and preference for peaceful negotiations.

Over and above the internal development of the country, Botswana has spent much energy developing an international visibility in order to prevent diplomatic and economic isolation. She has also carved out an image of stability and adherence to democratic principles which have strengthened her relationship with Western powers: which has become a useful shield against potential South African aggression.

Chipasula and Miti conclude by suggesting that Botswana has to cement her good relations with her Western allies, particularly the USA and Britain, so that they can continue to exercise a restraining hand on South Africa's actions against Botswana. This is important because, while Botswana is at the forefront of SADCC initiatives which will open alternative transport routes for Botswana, these initiatives are not likely to reduce Botswana's transport and other dependence on South Africa substantially. Besides, what holds together the SADCC grouping of countries is the common enemy of apartheid. With the demise of apartheid, the continued future of SADCC is in doubt.

Conclusion

The papers in this volume testify to the fact that Botswana has made fundamental changes that have rapidly moved the country from the status of being regarded as "a worthless piece of territory" to being heralded as "a miracle; indeed one of the few success stories in Black Africa". The level-headedness of the "cool calculating cucumbers" that run the civil service ensured effective choice of development projects and efficient implementation which attracted foreign investors, donors and expatriates to work in a stable environment in which practical economic planning took place. The confluence of these factors meant that, in a very short period after independence, the country was able to display a commendable record in the areas of domestic price stability, balance of payments, stability of the exchange rate, the growth rate of output and employment, among other things. By the 1980s, there was an actual growing excess liquidity in the banking system. By then, the country had developed the best road system in Africa, having more bitumen per capita than any other sub-Saharan country other than South Africa and Mauritius.

Social services have also guaranteed an improvement in the quality of life of many rural households. Efforts to improve delivery and utilization of health services, to increase the benefits of immunization programmes, to provide safe drinking water, to increase rural literacy and to reduce infant mortality have been generally successful. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has declined from 97 per 1,000 births during the 1971 Census to 68 per 1,000 during the 1981 Census. Early childhood mortality has decreased from 126 per 1,000 in 1971 to 94 per 1,000 in 1981. A good Primary Health Care record and a comprehensive supplementary feeding of vulnerable groups during the drought years has resulted in reduced malnutrition rates from around 30 percent to below 20 percent. An observed benefit of the supplementary feeding programme has been an increase in the attendance of health facilities by different

categories of vulnerable groups. Overall, at least 85 percent of the population are, on the average, within 15 kilometres of a basic health facility.

In spite of positive development in social and economic trends, there is very little room for complacency. Many challenges continue to face the government. First, there has been comparatively little participation by Batswana themselves in shaping the practical strategies that have produced positive trends in the economy. A large proportion of productive resources are not owned by citizens and a large proportion of the GDP does not accrue to Batswana. The growing excess liquidity in the banking system has not adequately met the credit needs of households and small businesses.

Secondly, the proportion of citizens falling below the Poverty Datum Line continues to be fairly high. There are, simply, far too many Batswana seeking incomes from employment than there are income earning opportunities available. Many households are without cattle and unable to benefit from livestock sales. These households are also unable to plough since they do not have draught power of their own. The recent drought has further worsened the situation for social groups who were adversely affected by the 1960s drought spell. A few opportunities in urban areas created new, largely unfulfilled, hopes for employment and income generation which led to rapid urbanisation.

Thirdly, and by far the most significant challenge, is the alarming rate of population growth. Due to high (and rising) fertility and low (and declining) mortality, the population has attained a younger age composition (with 56.6 percent below the 20 years of age) which requires large expenditures on a variety of social services, particularly the provision of schools, health facilities, and housing. The rapid rate of population growth also implies:

a rise in the demand for food;

a decline in household food security and per capita production;

increasing dependence on post-drought relief food and commercial food imports;

decreasing ability to secure household incomes;

increasing livestock numbers held by decreasing proportions of citizens;

increasing land pressure and environmental degradation;

inefficient land use practices, etc.

In spite of a rapid population growth rate, Botswana has a small population (a little over a million) concentrated along a narrow strip running North to South along the eastern part of the country. The rest of the country is sparsely populated. The large territory and a small population will continue to pose logistical problems for many years to come. The sparsity of the population, combined with low income levels in rural areas, increases the costs of providing basic services to where the people live. As a result, per capita expenditure on development and maintenance of services, including transport, communications and extension networks, has to be greater than in most other countries.

With the above prospects and problems, it is clear that future generations have more complex challenges than past generations. On the whole, the population factor will remain at the heart of future prospects and problems. If the legacy of level-headedness that the country has enjoyed in 20 years of independence can be brought to bear on future development efforts, much more will continue to be achieved.