

## Battlefields of wits: interface between NGO's, Government and donors at the development site

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*Development has always been conceptualised and understood differently by different parties. The common divide is between the 'developers' and those being 'developed'. Yet, equally important is the difference of perception among the 'developers' themselves. The last point is particularly important because of the many actors found in any development site, some being more conspicuous than others. Often, the different actors push agendas that may not only be different but may be conflictive as well, sometimes with negative consequences for the target community.*

*In Botswana, perhaps the best case that exemplifies such a situation is the case of the development of the Basarwa, especially those who are being moved by the government from the Central Kalahari game reserve to settlements outside, where they are to pursue a lifestyle that is different from the one they have known and lived by. In the development sites, political parties, NGOs and foreign governments are active. Each is attempting in its own way and with the resources it can command, to channel development of the Basarwa in ways it ostensibly perceives as being in the best interests of the Basarwa in question.*

*This paper brings to the fore the inherent problem of variation in the perceptions of different actors and how the conflict born of such differences impacts on the target community. The paper emphasises that Basarwa are not passive on-lookers in this drama, it shows how they respond to the challenge by skilfully reshaping their own knowledge by combining it with what they perceive as being advantageous from what each of these external actors offers. Eventually, Basarwa undergo a transformation which seems to re-structure their social organisation in terms of the mainstream social formation of a visibly differentiated community, yet without any tangible benefits from the development process.*

*The case therefore raises two issues. First, it challenges the applicability of development as a linear or monolithic process. Secondly, the paper manifests development as a complex phenomenon in which different actors push up their stakes with the result that the outcome of projects on the ground is often very different from what might have been intended by any of the actors singly.*

### Introduction

The challenge that contemporary scholars face with respect to explaining the complex notion of development in the context of social groups is not so much to give an account of the survival strategies of individual members of groups as to focus upon and isolate the linkages that develop between the interacting individuals or parties concerned. More enlightenment can be gained from an analysis of interlocking intentionalities in which attention is drawn to the forces making for conflict or incompatibility between the individuals or parties under discussion. In this context, it may be misleading to assume that just because an individual represents a specific group or institution, or belongs to a particular social category, he necessarily acts in the interests or on behalf of these others (Long 1989:4). In the study of development within the context of the developing countries and especially the more backward communities, the link between representatives and constituencies, with their differentiated membership, needs to be empirically established, and should not be taken for granted.

This paper brings to the fore the inherent problem of variation in the perceptions of different actors at a development site and further shows that such variation may result in conflicts that sometimes impact negatively on the community for whom development was meant. The paper focuses on Basarwa, a marginalised minority ethnic group of people in Botswana. Basarwa are also known as bushmen, or, sometimes, the San. They insist on being called 'Basarwa' because they are keen on maintaining their identity. Basarwa are found in seven of Botswana's eight administrative districts. The area of focus for this paper is the Gantsi district where Basarwa, who form twenty percent of the population of this district, are more concentrated than anywhere else in the country. In particular, focus is on Basarwa in the settlement of Xade, within the Central Kalahari Game reserve.

For the past decade a fierce war of words has been raging between the Botswana government and the residents of Xade, all of whom are Basarwa. The government does not wish to bring any developments into Xade because it wants to develop the game reserve in line with its recently re-emphasised policy of promoting tourism in the country, in the wake of declining revenues from diamonds. There is another major reason for the government to want Basarwa to move out of Xade. For a long time the policy of the government has been to bring 'developments' to remote area dwellers, the larger portion of whom are Basarwa. The new policy is to integrate Basarwa into the mainstream tribes. The government sees such a move as the only way to improve the economic condition of Basarwa, who are perceived as the poorest ethnic group in the country by all the actors in the Xade matter. These actors include the government, NGOs, donor agencies, representatives of some foreign governments and the Basarwa themselves. As stated earlier, all these actors attempt each in his own way to influence Basarwa in Xade to follow a certain model of development.

Finally, Basarwa in Xade undergo some social transformation which is closer to the social structure of the mainstream tribes of Botswana. Yet, in this structure, Basarwa have become much more dependent upon the government for their livelihood. Hence, while some commentators have viewed the social transformation as a sign of development, others have regarded it more as an exchange of one form of poverty for another.

Whatever the truth may be, my position is that it is more important to realise that the 'development' path taken by Basarwa in Xade at the end of a phase of intervention from different actors is an outcome of struggles between those various actors, namely, the Basarwa representatives (about whom we shall say more later), the government, the representatives of donor organisations and NGOs that purport to support the cause of Basarwa, and the Basarwa themselves. In other words, the specific patterns and paths of change that emerge within the Basarwa community at Xade cannot be explained only by the intervention of public authorities or of powerful outsiders. They have to be seen as a direct consequence of the interactions, negotiations and social and cognitive struggles that take place between specific social actors.

Such a development path is contrary to the received notion that development occurs as a result of the implementation of development models.

Nor is the response of the Basarwa to outsiders always uniform, irrespective of whether these outsiders are the Botswana government or NGOs. The response is differential according to the perceptions of various Basarwa groups in Xade. This differential response further complicates the notion of development by bringing to full view more of its varied faces.

A fuller account of the lives of Basarwa in Xade and their resistance to the government's move to evacuate them from the settlement is presented later in this paper.

## **The Basarwa question in Botswana**

Since the 1930s, the colonial government had been contending with the problem of the marginalisation of Basarwa, and with the fact that they were not being accorded treatment similar to that given to non Sarwa groups. Basarwa were virtually treated like the wild animals among whom they lived. Actually, in the 1930s, two special advisors who came at the invitation of the South African government to ponder the fate of Basarwa suggested that Basarwa should be considered as fauna and not as natives (Hermans 1993:3). With time, and through efforts of more sympathetic colonial administrators such as George Silberbauer, the colonial government accepted that Basarwa deserved a more humane treatment. In order to preserve both the Basarwa and the wildlife, the colonial government decided in 1961 to set up the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) which measures 561 square kilometres. Basarwa were to remain inside this game reserve and in it 15 boreholes were to be drilled and equipped for their use and also for use by wildlife.

Certain restrictions were imposed on the way Basarwa were to hunt inside the game reserve. They were to use only their traditional weapons (the bow and the arrow) and their natural hunting methods (mainly chasing animals into deliberately dug pits). The use of the rifle was expressly prohibited within the game reserve. In addition, Basarwa were to obtain special licences to hunt, even inside the game reserve. Hunting inside the Central Kalahari Game Reserve has been a source of intense conflict between Basarwa and the game wardens. Basarwa are frequently arrested for killing game without licences. For such offences, they are punished severely, and often they are tortured to divulge information about illegal hunting inside the game reserve by themselves and by non Basarwa who usually engage them to hunt on their behalf.

In 1993, the number of Basarwa in Botswana was estimated between 40,000 and 50,000 (Botswana Government 1993). They formed 4% of the population of Botswana. They are spread out, the majority still living in cattleposts outside the game reserve where they are easily exploited by cattle owners for whom they provide cheap labour. Botswana has eight administrative districts, and Basarwa are found in seven of them. The major settlement that is nearest to the Central Kalahari Game reserve is Gantsi town, which is within Gantsi administrative district. It is in Gantsi district that Basarwa are mostly concentrated, forming 20% of the population of that district. However, everywhere in Botswana, Basarwa are the poorest ethnic group, few read or write, none of their number has entered the super-rich class of urban entrepreneurs, none has been elected to Parliament or promoted to a high civil service job since independence in 1966.

In 1974, in response to a proposal by an anthropologist, Liz Wily, the post-colonial government of Botswana established the post of Bushman Development Officer and appointed her to fill it. The post was eventually entitled the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP), in a bid to embrace non Basarwa who lived in the remote areas along with Basarwa. Nevertheless, Basarwa remain the dominant ethnic group that constitutes the remote area dwellers (RADs). Like their Basarwa counterparts, non Sarwa RADs are poor people. However, non Basarwa RADs are slightly better off than their Basarwa colleagues.

The RAD Programme is funded largely by the Norwegian government. The Norwegian government has been doing that through its former development agency, NORAD, which has just been disbanded. In 1993, NORAD provided P4 million (US \$ 1.5 million) for the remote area development programme. The stated concern of the Norwegians is the improvement of the welfare of Basarwa. There are other NGOs, both local and foreign, which also give various types of assistance to RADs in general and to

Basarwa in particular. Like the Norwegians, these bodies all mention the improvement of the lives of Basarwa as their aim. It would appear that the desire for an improvement of the welfare of Basarwa provides a common ground for all of them. Yet, the different donor organisations, NGOs and the government all have a different conceptualisation of the ideal pattern of development for Basarwa.

It may be necessary to begin with government's view, since the other benefactors have emerged with the aim of either complimenting it in part, or, in some cases, apparently with the aim of opposing it. Broadly, government's policy is to encourage and to foster the integration of Basarwa into the mainstream Tswana communities. Government considers this to be the best way to address the question of marginalisation of Basarwa. Consonant with this framework, the government took two steps with respect to Basarwa who have been living inside the Central Kalahari Game reserve since 1961. The first step, taken around 1979, was to group all of them in one settlement called Xade, inside the game reserve. In this settlement, development infrastructure such as a school, a clinic and other social amenities were provided for the Basarwa. Because the settlement is inside the game reserve, it had to be fenced so as keep out wildlife. The purpose of grouping the Basarwa in Xade was to make the provision of services to them easier.

In 1986, government took the second step. It considered that there was a limit to the number of social amenities and development projects which could be provided inside Xade, since the settlement is inside a game reserve. A major component of the remote area development programme is the allocation of two heifers and two female goats to households of remote area dwellers. In addition, the government allocates small arable fields to RADs and ploughs these fields at no cost to the RADs. The RADs outside the game reserve benefitted from this package but it was not possible to extend it to Xade residents. There were two obstacles in this regard. First, there was not enough land as Xade had not been planned as an agricultural settlement. Secondly, cattle production could not be practised within a wildlife area such as a game reserve, since cattle would be prone to infection with the foot and mouth disease that is transmitted by buffalo.

Government then resolved, without consulting the Basarwa in Xade, that the best way out of the dilemma would be to re-locate the Basarwa outside the game reserve, where they could have access to land sufficient to enable them carry out the development projects that were being implemented by remote area dwellers in other parts of the country. Accordingly, all development projects have been frozen in Xade since 1986. The residents of the settlement were encouraged to find a suitable area outside the game reserve where they could be re-settled. The government would help them find a suitable spot and also facilitate their movement from Xade into it.

Simultaneously with attempts to re-locate the Basarwa outside the Central Kalahari game reserve, the Botswana government has been planning to promote tourism vigorously, following indications that revenues from diamonds, the mainstay of the economy for the past two decades, would experience a slump in the 1990s. The government considered that the Central Kalahari game reserve stood a better chance to be developed into its full potential as a game reserve if people could be removed from it. The government was open about this matter, and it publicised it through the media. Unexpectedly, the Basarwa representatives, NGOs who are working to improve the lives of the Basarwa and some donor organisations sponsored by foreign governments interpreted the planned removal of Basarwa from the Central Kalahari Game reserve as a ploy by the government to sacrifice the cultural values of the Basarwa, who are powerless, in a bid to improve the livelihood of the politically powerful non Basarwa, who are also the overwhelming majority of Batswana.

The perception has created a rift between the government on the one side and the Basarwa and all their sympathisers on the other. Consequently, there have been accusations and counter-accusations from one side to the other. The thrust of the

accusations by the sympathisers of the Basarwa has been that the Botswana government is discriminatory against the Basarwa in at least two ways. First, the government has been accused of trying to de-tribalise the Basarwa through its policy of integrating them within the mainstream tribes of Botswana, none of which has a culture similar to that of the Basarwa. Secondly, through its policy of moving Basarwa out of the Central Kalahari Game reserve, the government has been seen to treat them as second class citizens who need not be consulted about their own fate, the argument goes. It has been alleged that through these actions the government has violated the human rights of the Basarwa.

*Ditshwanelo*, a local NGO and *The Kalahari Support Group*, based in the Netherlands have worked with the Basarwa, sensitising them to the need to stand up for their rights. The Norwegian government, which provides the greater bulk of the funds used by the Botswana government for the remote area development programme, has, along with these two NGOs and other sympathisers of the Basarwa, opposed both efforts of the Botswana government to integrate the Basarwa within Botswana's main tribes and the government's policy to remove them from the Central Kalahari Game reserve. The main opposition political party, the Botswana National Front, has also joined the sympathisers of the Basarwa and has used the rift to gain political mileage. In the paragraphs that follow, more is said about the Botswana National Front and the Basarwa problem. Meanwhile, Basarwa have now become vocal against the government over what they call the injustices it is perpetrating against them. There is now tension not only between the Botswana government and Basarwa but also between the Botswana government and the rest of the organisations and foreign governments that work closely with Basarwa.

In response to the accusations, the Botswana government has placed all the blame upon foreigners (ostensibly both *The Kalahari Support Group* and the Norwegian government) and the Botswana National Front. For a reason that is not easy to understand, the government has avoided making any statements against local NGOs who are working with Basarwa in Xade and elsewhere in the country. It is possible that the government finds it politically imprudent to try to discredit *Ditshwanelo*, a local NGO because it is run by Basarwa who have clout through the great respect that they command and also because they appear to be operating above politics.

Meanwhile, many events have occurred which seem to have had the effect of making Basarwa a community to reckon with. Between 1961 and 1986, Basarwa in Botswana experienced a lot of social enlightenment. Much of it began as a corollary to the Tribal Land Act. The Tribal Land Act of 1968 gave land rights to members of the different tribes and excluded Basarwa because they were not regarded as tribesmen by the Constitution of Botswana. The Act was silent about the right to forage. The inequity of the Tribal Land Act became glaring when the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) was implemented seven years later, in 1975. This Policy allowed ranches to be delineated on communal grazing areas in those districts that had enough land to allow for that. Large scale cattle producers with over 400 head of cattle or farmers with fewer heads who could group themselves to make the required figure of 400 head of cattle were given the opportunity to apply through land boards of various districts for allocation of such ranches. Basarwa living on such grazing lands were evicted by the ranchers without compensation because, not being members of any tribe, they were regarded as having no rights to the land they had been occupying.

Basarwa had been living on the land for ages. The implementation of the TGLP sparked a land rights movement among them. Both in communal and commercial areas of Botswana, they protested the treatment they received and took their complaints to district councils and appealed against allocations of land done by land boards in what they had always considered to be their areas. Some of them talked to the media, arguing vociferously that they were not being treated fairly.

It was at this time that NGOs, both within Botswana and outside, came into the scene on the side of the Basarwa, who, they contended, were manifestly being discriminated against by the Botswana government and the dominant non Sarwa Tswana groups. With the help of some NGOs, some Basarwa requested that the matter be placed before the International Court of Justice with the hope that Botswana could be required to provide just compensation for loss incurred by the establishment of the TGLP ranches, all of which had been demarcated on land formerly occupied by them.

It is necessary at this juncture to bring into the discussion some of the ways in which NGOs have responded to the marginalisation of Basarwa in Botswana, and also how the Basarwa themselves have been conscientised to speak for themselves. While it is the case that Basarwa have been empowered by NGOs in Botswana to stand up to injustice, it is perhaps the *Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative* (NNFC) in Namibia which inspired Basarwa in Botswana to think more along the lines of combining advocacy with development. NNFC was established in 1986 as a multipurpose organisation that was also involved in political and development activities such as education, a mobile shop, land use planning and water provision. Through the help of *The Kalahari Support Group*, visits were arranged between Basarwa in Botswana and those in Namibia.

But as Basarwa in Botswana were receiving influence from Namibia, various organisations, some from within Botswana and others from without, were working hard forming pressure groups among Basarwa and carefully selecting leaders of such groups from among those Basarwa with the qualities to lead others. *The Kalahari Support Group* was among the first NGOs to work with Basarwa in Botswana. There is also another lobby group formed outside Botswana, and known as the *Kalahari People's Fund*. Both organisations provide various kinds of assistance to Basarwa, ranging from small grants for community projects to technical advice to community organisations.

Many Basarwa have been able to increase their involvement with self-help activities through the efforts of the *Kalahari Support Group*, the *Kalahari People's Fund* and the *Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative*. For example, by the 1990s, a number of Basarwa communities had formed their own Basarwa self-help organisations, with the help of these foreign organisations. The Basarwa community in D'kar in Gantsi district formed *Kuru Development Trust*, a multipurpose development organisation which has its own horticultural and marketing projects. Furthermore, in 1992, Basarwa established, with help from *The Kalahari Support Group* and *Kalahari People's Fund*, an organisation called the *First People of the Kalahari*. First People of the Kalahari is basically a pressure group which aims to fight for the rights of Basarwa and it consists of representatives from the different Basarwa groups within Botswana.

The organisation met with the Botswana government in 1993 to outline what they said were important issues to their constituents. The issues embraced first and foremost, land rights. Hunger for land has driven some Basarwa, especially those in Gantsi, to press for a separate Basarwa district. However, this is not a widely shared view among Basarwa. The majority of them will be content to have a Mosarwa councillor, a Mosarwa Member of Parliament and a Mosarwa chief. A Mosarwa chief, they insist, must sit in the House of Chiefs, just like chiefs of the major tribes of the country. Thirdly, Basarwa are demanding the right to education in mother tongue languages for their children. Botswana's official policy is that only Setswana is recognised and used as the vernacular language in schools. Basarwa argue that this policy puts their children at a disadvantage vis-à-vis non Sarwa children who are taught in their mother tongue.

The leaders of the *First People of the Kalahari* were not elected by Basarwa; they were brought together by their sponsors who helped them form the movement. As such, it is more correct to describe them as Basarwa spokesmen, rather than leaders. These Basarwa spokesmen have been given prominence by their sponsors who often send them

to attend conferences at home and abroad where they speak on the injustice Basarwa suffer in Botswana.

In June 1992 and October 1993, the Basarwa spokesmen attended conferences in Namibia and Botswana respectively, at which they spoke strongly on the plight of their fellow Basarwa. Both conferences were funded by the Norwegian government, who also paid the costs of the Basarwa representatives. Basarwa spokesmen have also attended congresses and symposia including one entitled 'Voices of the Earth: Indigenous Peoples, New partners, The Right to Self Determination in Practice' sponsored by the Dutch Centre for Indigenous Peoples. It was held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, November 10–11, 1993. They also attended another one entitled 'The Question of Indigenous People in Africa' which was sponsored by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and the Centre for Development Research, and held at Tüne, Denmark, June 1–3, 1993. The last trip was made possible by donors and discount tickets from Air France.

Within Botswana itself, various organisations with their own objectives have also become active in the Basarwa question. The most prominent of them is *Ditshwanelo*, an NGO which, within the scope of its mandate also addresses the question of the rights of Basarwa. For example, in 1993, *Ditshwanelo* was commissioned by the Botswana Christian Council to investigate an allegation of sexual abuse against Basarwa in the Gantsi district. The report, which was contested by the ruling party's Member of Parliament for the district, confirmed and publicised more instances of abuse than had been reported in the media.

A conspicuous consequence of the association that Basarwa have enjoyed with various organisations and the outside world is the heightening of their understanding of civics, which also manifests itself more clearly in their participation in party politics. Throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, there had been little evidence of any significant participation of Basarwa in Botswana's politics at national or local levels. There were no Basarwa councillors or Members of Parliament, even in the Gantsi district where they are mostly concentrated. One reason for the low level of participation in politics of the Basarwa around Gantsi is that for a long time European ranchers have had the tendency of refusing opposition party members to canvas for support on their ranches.

But in 1989, the pattern of the participation of Basarwa in politics changed dramatically in Gantsi district, due largely to stimulation from the Botswana National Front (BNF), the main opposition political party in the country. Voter registration increased by 67%, due to high participation by Basarwa. Out of 20 candidates in the district, seven Basarwa ran for office of councillor and all of them won. For the first time, seven Basarwa were elected councillors.

BNF leaders decided to make major push in the settlements of the remote area dwellers where Basarwa were in the majority. BNF leaders exploited the marginalised condition of Basarwa in Botswana and their denial of human rights by the government and non Basarwa groups. It also highlighted the exploitation of Basarwa by cattle barons and their neglect by government. The ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) tried to counter with their own strategy of appeasing Basarwa by appointing Basarwa to district Land Boards for the first time. The ruling party tried further to woo Basarwa into its ranks by appointing a losing Mosarwa BNF council candidate. Apparently, BDP had woken too late in the day to the reality that times had changed.

On the strength of the all-round knowledge that they had gained over time, and also being aware of the support they enjoy outside Botswana, the Basarwa spokesmen have become bold enough to oppose the government's move to remove their people from Xade. The argument of the spokesmen was that the Central Kalahari Game reserve had been established for the benefit of Basarwa and wildlife. They claimed it was their right to live among wild animals and to hunt them for their subsistence without any restriction from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks since they are not agriculturalists.

The Central Kalahari Game reserve affair provides an opportunity to analyse in depth a number of issues around the concept of development and the authenticity or legitimacy of representation. The aim of the analysis is to illuminate the connection or interaction between the two concepts and not so much to explain what each concept means to the parties involved.

As far as the government is concerned, Basarwa can only remain within the game reserve to their own detriment; it is in their interest that they should move out. The government has another reason for wanting Basarwa to re-locate outside the game reserve. The country wants to make wildlife-based tourism a major industry in the next National Development Plan that is being currently proposed. In other words, government sees moving Basarwa out of the game reserve as something that will also be for the benefit of the entire nation.

There does not appear to be consensus on the part of Basarwa on the question of moving out of the Central Kalahari Game reserve. It may be in order, here, to give a narrative of what transpired at a meeting addressed by the District Commissioner of Gantsi at Xade, late 1995. The District Commissioner stated government's point of view and also elaborated the advantages to be gained by moving out of Xade. He then asked for an indication of how many people would like to move. About three quarters of those present indicated they would like to move. The problem seemed to arise only in respect of agreeing on a suitable site for re-settlement outside Xade. It seemed difficult for those that wanted to move out of Xade to agree on an alternative site. They ended up with two sites but without agreeing on which one would be acceptable to all.

Those that refused to move out of Xade re-stated the old argument that the game reserve together with the game in it were theirs. In this claim, they were strongly supported by one of the Basarwa spokesmen, Roy Sesana, who argued that it was unfair for the government to make them leave their fathers' graves for a settlement where they would lead a completely new lifestyle to which they were not accustomed. However, according to Roy Sesana, the underlying reason for the refusal of some Basarwa to move out of Xade is the fear of being integrated into other tribes which have their own culture. Such integration would mean that the Basarwa are detribalised. Once they are detribalised, they would be weak as an ethnic group and would no longer be able to exert force as Basarwa, speaking with 'one voice', something that they are doing currently, Sesana asserted.

The occasion was complicated by the presence during the discussion, of government trucks which are normally used for ferrying cattle. On this occasion, these trucks were ready to carry people to a new settlement. Some Basarwa interpreted the presence of the trucks as an indication that government wanted to force them to move immediately. In response to that impression, which was voiced out quite clearly by the ordinary Basarwa (not the spokesmen) the District Commissioner explained that the trucks were there to take people to sites for inspection purposes only. In other words, people wishing eventually to move would use the trucks for inspecting sites tentatively identified by the government.

Notwithstanding the strides made by Basarwa in terms of their understanding of civics and particularly in demanding their rights, there is an obvious difference between the position taken by the majority of Basarwa on the one hand and their spokesmen on the other, in so far as the issue of moving out of Xade is concerned. Many Basarwa want to benefit from the government's package for the remote area dwellers. They appreciate the difficulty of giving them such benefits while they remain in Xade. The Botswana government is capitalising on the difference of opinion between the majority of Basarwa and their spokesmen and is projecting it as an indication that the Basarwa spokesmen do not represent the views of Basarwa but of themselves and their sponsors.

In view of that, it becomes expedient at this stage to present brief profiles of the important Basarwa representatives so as to lay some foundation for testing the validity of the assertion of the government about whose interests each representative is likely to represent.

**John Hardbattle**, the most travelled and by far the best known of these Basarwa spokesmen, owned a freehold farm on which he produced cattle and goats in Gantsi district. Unfortunately, he died end of 1996, at the age of 50 years. His mother was a Mosarwa and his father an Englishman (his parents never married, neither did they live together). Hardbattle's lifestyle was very different from that of most other Basarwa spokesmen. Basarwa are the poorest ethnic group in Botswana; he was a rich man, even by the standards of the dominant non Sarwa Batswana. Hardbattle was fluent in Sesarwa, English and Afrikaans. He was literate; the overall majority of Basarwa are illiterate.

The fact that he was a half caste who had European blood raised his status significantly, hence he did not suffer the injustice that is suffered by ordinary Basarwa. This does not necessarily mean that he did not speak for Basarwa. It does mean, however, that he did not feel the pinch personally. Together with Roy Sesana, Hardbattle went to the UN High Commission for Human Rights in March, 1996 to appeal to this body against the forcible removal of Basarwa from Xade.

**Komtsha Komtsha** is the chairman of the *Kuru Development Trust*. He lives in the small village of D'Kar, where the Trust is located, outside Gantsi town. His insight of civics is admirable and he has a good grasp of politics. Komtsha's lifestyle is less sophisticated than the one Hardbattle led. But he too is not poor. In 1993, the government suddenly issued a deportation order against Rev le Roux, a foreign cleric who was the manager of the *Kuru Development Trust*, of which he is chairman. No grounds were advanced by the government for its move. When Komtsha was challenged that they as the Basarwa spokesmen were being used by foreigners, he retorted: does the government think we are incapable of thinking for ourselves? Komtsha then solicited the support of foreign governments to pressure the government to go back on its decision to deport Rev le Roux. The President of Botswana finally acceded to the plea and gave Rev le Roux a last minute pardon, although the reasons for threatening to deport him were never advanced, despite several inquiries from many quarters including Rev le Roux himself.

**Jim Morris** is regarded as the firebrand of the First People of the Kalahari organisation. He is an activist within the opposition Botswana National Front political party. Hence, he has spoken out against the government much more vigorously than any of his colleagues. He lives in Gantsi where he is a councillor.

These are the three most prominent Basarwa spokesmen. There are others who are less prominent such as Roy Sesana who lives in Xade, Aaron Johannes who lives in D'Kar town in the Gantsi district and Hunter Sixpence from Tsabong, which is outside Gantsi district.

It is not possible to establish whose agenda the Basarwa spokesmen are pushing, solely on the basis of the brief profiles given above. It is clear, nonetheless, that they do exert pressure on the government through the clout that derives in part from the support they receive from outside sponsors. There is no doubt that the interests of the Basarwa sponsors are served well through the advocacy of the Basarwa representatives. What is not clear is the extent to which those interests coincide with those of the rest of Basarwa. However, the fact that over half of Xade residents indicated a willingness to move outside the settlement suggests that at least on the point of refusing to re-locate outside Xade, the Basarwa representatives do not enjoy the support of the majority of the Basarwa.

The second issue is that of developing Basarwa as an ethnic group. A view that is shared commonly by the sponsors of the Basarwa spokesmen, especially the Norwegians, is that Basarwa should be developed as an ethnic group and within their own natural

environment. According to this view, Basarwa will be detribalised if they are taken out of this set up, and they will cease to exist as an ethnic group. With specific reference to the Xade incident, the view can be said to have some merit because it was voiced by a resident of that settlement. When the same view has been advanced by Basarwa spokesmen who live away from Xade, ulterior motives have been suspected by the Botswana government. It has been suggested that Basarwa spokesmen who live outside Xade are trying to use the plight of Basarwa inside the settlement for their own economic advantage. The publicity and economically advantageous foreign trips that the spokesmen enjoy can only last as long as the bulk of Basarwa remain backward and isolated. Hence, the allegation goes, such spokesmen are bent on doing everything in their power to keep other Basarwa in their current situation of deprivation.

Both positions appear valid; Basarwa subscribe to both. However, Basarwa have not gained from the discord between the different parties to this development dispute. For the past 11 years, since 1986, they have been waiting for developments which have not been forthcoming. This is how the interface between representation and development has handed the Basarwa a blank cheque.

This is not to suggest that all interventions meant to benefit Basarwa have failed. At least, efforts to change the social organisation of Basarwa have borne fruit. In Xade, as in other RAD settlements elsewhere in Botswana, Basarwa have over time and with the encouragement of the government and certain NGOs adopted a Tswana type social structure which is centred around a formally appointed chief. In their natural social arrangement, they do not have chiefs, even though leaders of hunting expeditions were given some recognition as social authorities (Hitchcock and Holm 1995:9). Because the change is externally induced, some scholars have refused to regard it as being authentic. For example, Hitchcock and Holm have concluded that it is 'foreign aid organisations, their academic advisors, NGOs leaders and top ranking civil servants who are actually deciding the substance and rate of social change among the San' (Hitchcock and Holm 1993:323).

However, in their efforts to appoint chiefs, Basarwa have often encountered problems with government regulations which require that chiefs should be literate in order for them to be recognised by law. This requirement has meant that non Basarwa, who have the advantage of being literate, have sometimes been appointed chiefs over Basarwa, in those Basarwa communities where no Mosarwa satisfied the requirements for being elected chief. This is one of the things that *First People of the Kalahari* is strongly contesting. At least half to three quarters of Basarwa communities still have no form of governance that is recognised by the government.

Government's inertia in establishing Basarwa headmen, apart from the reason given above, is partly explained by the belief of many government officials that Basarwa are ill adapted to participate in governmental hierarchy because of a lack of experience with such a form of governance. While there is some truth in this position, significant evidence to the contrary also exists. In some areas of Botswana, bands of Basarwa have participated in larger social units described as 'group clusters' or nexuses based on kinship, marriage and locational or totemic affiliation. Among the *Tyua* and *Shua* of northern Botswana, the position of headman was institutionalised to the point where it was passed down from one generation to the next, usually through the male line. These leaders had the authority to make binding decisions and to adjudicate disputes between bands. Some used to organise region-wide ritual activities, large scale hunts and even warfare (Hitchcock and Holm 1993: 310)

The government's rationale for changing the social structure of Basarwa was to enable them participate in the current development process. In other words, the government considers the change of the traditional Basarwa social structure as a precondition for management of development programmes. My argument here is that Basarwa have

experienced both gains and losses in the process. On the one hand, Basarwa may be said to have gained by restructuring their social organisation along lines followed by Tswana societies because they are now better able to organise politically and they currently wield more power than before. Various governmental and non governmental organisations have helped settle, train and organise the new lives of former forager populations.

On the other hand, Basarwa are losing their culture as well as their livelihood strategies. As they change from transhumant to sedentary lifestyles, they are also becoming almost entirely dependent on the government.

In this connection it is necessary to recognise that there was one major factor that catalysed their coming into relatively more sedentary groups. The last few decades have witnessed a substantial move among them away from foraging to domestic food production and wage earning. In the drought period of the early to mid 1980s, most Basarwa subsisted on maize meal, oil and powdered milk which they obtained from government drought relief programmes. Currently, some 80–90% Basarwa are estimated to depend on government drought aid mechanisms (Holm and Hitchcock 1993:310).

Such dependence would seem to question the validity of the assertion just made in the last paragraph, namely, that Basarwa have gained from restructuring themselves organisationally. What this reflects is the complexity of the notion of development, particularly that it is not linear. Government's intervention, through the drought relief programme, was aimed at redressing the economic exploitation of Basarwa by large scale cattle owners. But with their mobility now reduced, the Basarwa are becoming more dependent on government than they ever were on cattle owners.

Consequently, government's intervention, with its announced purpose of bringing about 'development', has not addressed the question of dependence and self reliance, which is so essential to development. In the long run, the intervention has the effect of merely being an exchange of one form of domination for another, which is no development in any sense.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyse contestation between different actors at a development site. It has been demonstrated how the 'development' of Basarwa is hampered by conflicts that result from differences in the understanding of the term 'development' by the different parties that are at play in the development field. A struggle then ensues, on the basis of that difference of opinion. Basarwa stand to lose from the conflict. Their case is made worse by the domination over them, of their spokesmen who are appointed by NGOs but not elected by the Basarwa.

All the above is a reflection of the complexity of development at a site. The development site, Xade, is a battlefield for different forces which oppose each other on some issues and support each other on others. Unfortunately for the Basarwa, the intervention of the Botswana government appears to be an attempt to extend state control over them, and not completely an intervention for the purpose of bringing development to Basarwa. There are limited gains for the forces that fight each other at Xade. The delay in moving Basarwa out of this settlement provides a temporary gain for NGOs that are working to keep them inside the game reserve. By the same token, the restructuring of the social organisation of Basarwa is one gain for the government and some NGOs, but is not seen to usher in any tangible development to the Basarwa.

Moreover, government's gain also hurts it in that Basarwa, once they are consolidated into a group, are able to significantly raise their political awareness and to increase knowledge of their civil rights. On the strength of this position, they give political support to the opponent of the government, the Botswana National Front. In other words, Basarwa have in fact also made some gain from the conflict. However, the fact that at the

end they have not received the development projects they had expected suggests that they have missed their prime goal, notwithstanding their accomodation of suggestions to transform their social organisation in line with the desires of both government and some NGOs.

The case has demonstrated how complex representation can also be. The Basarwa representatives serve the interests of their sponsors. While the issues they stand for are against the intention of the government, it cannot be said that the issues are entirely against the interests of the Basarwa, even though many Basarwa are ready to oppose them. Yet, it is through the representatives that foreign powers fight the battle in Xade. It is through them too, that the unfairness of the government against the Basarwa is exposed and opposed. Notwithstanding that, there is justification in concluding that the representatives are responsible for the failure of development projects to reach Basarwa. In other words, representation, as a form of mediation, captures within itself a number of the contradictory angles that characterise development.

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