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# Youth Insights Into Botswana



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# List of Acronyms

<b>BOPA</b>	Botswana Press Agency
<b>DRTS</b>	Department for Road and Transport Safety
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GCC</b>	Gaborone City Council
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus /Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>JT</b>	Just Transition
<b>MICE</b>	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>PTSD</b>	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>STI</b>	Sexual Transmitted Infection
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



## **The Implications of Refugee's Access to Adequate Healthcare in Botswana: The Case of the Dukwi Refugee Camp.**

*By Angela Joubert*

This study examines the implications of access to adequate healthcare for refugees in Botswana. It explores the barriers refugees face in accessing healthcare services, the health outcomes resulting from these challenges, and the policy frameworks in place to address these issues. Findings highlight the systemic challenges and propose recommendations for improving healthcare access and outcomes for refugees in Botswana.

## **Mobility in Gaborone: Exploring Public Transport Challenges and Needs**

*By Markus Wolff*

Through a street survey and expert interviews, this research aimed to assess the current state of public transport and identify opportunities for reform in Gaborone. The report underscores the necessity of reform, recommending the establishment of a dedicated transport agency, investment in modern infrastructure, and the development of a comprehensive public transport policy. These measures are expected to reduce emissions, enhance mobility, and boost economic productivity, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable urban environment.

## **Economic Diversification in Botswana: Opportunities of Service-led Development**

*By Alissa Lavagno*

Botswana has achieved significant growth and improvements but its reliance on the mining sector made the country vulnerable to volatile commodity good prices and economic shocks. This study argues that service-led development is a promising area that could address several major challenges in Botswana and contribute to growth and improvement of living standards of Botswana.

## **The Visual Representation of Women in Botswana: Cultural Studies Textbooks**

*By Johanna Halder*

Although Botswana's constitution enshrines gender justice in Article 3, women remain underrepresented in many areas of society. A key factor that has a negative impact on this injustice is the representation of women in educational materials. Therefore, the study examines how women are visually represented in Botswana's Cultural Studies textbooks. The analysis revealed that although women are frequently depicted in the textbooks, they are predominantly portrayed in subordinate and stereotypical roles. With regard to the results, the study provides various stakeholders with recommendations on how the representation of women in school textbooks could be improved.

# **The Implications of Refugee's Access to Adequate Healthcare in Botswana: The Case of the Dukwi Refugee Camp.**



# The Implications of Refugee's Access to Adequate Healthcare in Botswana: The Case of the Dukwi Refugee Camp.

By Angela Joubert



## About the Author

Angela Joubert graduated with a BA in Political Science from the University of Botswana in October 2023. She was part of the inaugural cohort of Model Parliament Botswana which further exposed her to the socio-economic realities of the people living in Botswana. This increased her passion for solution-focused research in issues relating to human rights, human security, and migration with Vision 2036 and the Sustainable Development Goals in mind.

## Introduction

The 1951 Refugee Convention was a pivotal time in history for it demanded and brought about free access to healthcare for refugees worldwide. However, 73 years later, globally, refugees still face significant barriers to accessing healthcare, which exacerbates their vulnerabilities and

impacts their overall well-being. Botswana is known globally for its stable and enduring democracy governed by the national principles of development and democracy which inform its nation-building goals. So, caring about refugee matters is one step closer to attaining the Vision 2036 goal of being a moral, tolerant, and inclusive society that provides opportunities for all. Despite efforts by the government and international organizations, refugees in Botswana encounter various obstacles in accessing adequate healthcare services. These challenges range from legal and administrative barriers to socio-economic and cultural factors.

## Defining a Refugee

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a refugee as an individual who has been compelled to escape their home country due to persecution, war, or violence, and who has a legitimate fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a specific social group (UNHCR, 2019). However, Botswana only accepts political refugees (Refugees (Recognition and Control) Act of 1967).

## The Healthcare Policy for Refugees In Botswana

The main policy framework for refugees in Botswana is the Refugees (Recognition and Control) Act of 1967. Unfortunately, in its outdated form, this Act does not detail the procedure for healthcare provisions for refugees in Botswana. Furthermore, healthcare services for refugees are also not covered by Botswana's National Development Plan (NDP) 11, National Health Policy, the Revised National Policy on Refugees and Asylum Seekers, and the Immigration Policy (Oucho & Ama, 2009). So, organizations that work with refugees in Botswana rely on international policy frameworks to ensure that refugees receive adequate healthcare.

The 1951 Refugee Convention is a landmark international agreement that establishes the legal responsibility of states to protect refugees, including access to healthcare, and defines who is a refugee. Article 23 declares that, refugees should receive the same treatment as nationals in terms of medical care" (Refugee Convention, 1951).



Furthermore, Article 23 of the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees echoes this above provision<sup>1</sup>. In Botswana, the 1951 Refugee Convention serves as a stand-in for a comprehensive strategy that handles refugee healthcare.

Additionally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948. As a member of the UN, Botswana is required to abide by it because it signed the agreement making it legally binding<sup>2</sup>. Since everyone has the right to a standard of living sufficient for maintaining their health and well-being, including access to medical care, as stated in Article 25(1) of the UDHR, this framework also covers refugee rights<sup>3</sup>. It emphasizes that, regardless of their legal status, refugees are entitled to the same basic rights as everyone else.

## The Dukwi Refugee Camp

The Dukwi refugee camp is situated in North-Eastern Botswana, over 570 kilometers away from Gaborone (the capital city of Botswana) and approximately 120 kilometers away from Francistown (the second city of Botswana). There are approximately 760 refugees currently residing in the camp (UNHCR Botswana, 2024). They come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. Some stay their entire lives within the camp, some resettle back in their home countries or their country of choice and very few are integrated to gain Botswana citizenship. In the refugee camp, there is one small clinic, a primary school, the office of the Ministry of Defence and Security, one non-governmental organization (NGO) and a small store. The clinic is short-staffed and is not capacitated to assist with specialized medical treatments such as heart operations. Additionally, Skillshare International is an NGO that focuses on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) awareness and education to reduce HIV/AIDS prevalence among the refugee community<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence and Security is there for refugee management and welfare such as issuing out permits and processing of refugee status to name a few. Refugees globally are handled by the UNHCR. This is a UN branch that focuses on refugees and their wellbeing and has the mandate to keep refugee statistics to monitor

global trends and think of sustainable solutions. Therefore, they have offices and staff in every refugee-receiving country<sup>5</sup>. However, for the Southern African region, there is one office serving nine countries namely; Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, and South Africa.

## Methodology

This study examined the implications of refugees' access to healthcare in Botswana using a qualitative research methodology utilizing primary and secondary data. To gain insight into healthcare difficulties and experiences, semi-structured interviews were conducted with human rights activists, academics, representatives from NGOs, and refugee populations. In order to comprehend the policy environment and highlight gaps and difficulties, a review of academic literature, reports, and policy papers on refugee healthcare in Botswana was also conducted throughout this study. Six interviews were conducted in total, three of which involved urban refugees and three of which involved experts in the field. Two of the three urban refugees had moved to Gaborone and the neighboring areas after spending several years living in the Dukwi refugee camp.

## The Challenges of Refugees Access to Adequate Healthcare

### Legal and Administrative Barriers

In Botswana, the Ministry of Defence and Security is responsible for addressing refugee matters<sup>6</sup> and has an office set up within the camp. There is an encampment policy for refugees in Botswana<sup>7</sup>. Section 9 subsection 2 (a and b) of the Refugees (Recognition and Control) Act states that unauthorized refugees may be imprisoned if they leave the camp (Refugees (Recognition and Control) Act, NO. 8 of 1967). Only the office of the Ministry of Defence and Security may grant them permission to leave the camp, and even then, it is frequently at their own discretion and on a time-censored permit. The disadvantage is that, it restricts refugees' access to quality healthcare, particularly for those who need urgent specialized treatment which the camp clinic does not offer.

1 "The Contracting States shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as is accorded to their nationals." See on page 24 of the protocol. When interpreted by the UNHCR, public relief includes healthcare as well.

2 Legally binding refers to enforcing legal accountability through legal action, such as a consciously agreed-upon agreement between two or more entities. Failure of Botswana to adhere to the agreement could lead to legal action from the UN.

3 "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." See on page 52 of the document.

4 So, in terms of general and overall healthcare for refugees, the topic is beyond their knowledge. This was evident in the data collection of this study. This author reached out requiring an interview but the feedback gotten was that Skillshare does not have anyone knowledgeable on the research topic.

5 That used to be the case for Botswana as well until a few years back when most of the staff was deployed to South Africa because refugees in Botswana were not in large numbers.

6 The Ministry of Defense and Security oversees refugees in Botswana. It does so under the Refugee Management and Welfare Unit.

7 This is a legal constraint that is introduced to monitor and manage refugees for the maintenance of national security.

Encampment policies are also costly because they require resources to be provided for the refugees residing there as well as ongoing facility security and maintenance (Mr. Rebaone Mmereki, Former UNHCR officer, 2024) . Furthermore, refugees are ostracized from society because of encampment. In the end, encampment can prolong a vicious cycle of dependence and despair among refugees, as it is the government's responsibility to meet their fundamental needs—food, shelter, healthcare, and education.

Additionally, the very policy of encampment ostracizes refugees from society (Donger et. al, 2017). They are secluded by the laws that restrict their movement and are unable to interact with people in the communities surrounding the refugee camp. This has further increased the language and cultural barriers between refugees and Botswana because their lack of assimilation has led to delayed adaptation into the way of life in Botswana. That is why there are some refugees who have lived in the camp for over two decades, and yet, they do not know Setswana. A lack of association and restricted movement furthermore results in a scarcity of employment options.

Furthermore, encampment policies impede refugees' freedom of movement, and most refugees are not allowed to work (AfricanLII, 2023). Their not being allowed to work prevents them from being self-sufficient and providing for themselves or their families which leads to a reliance on food hampers and basic humanitarian provisions by the Botswana government and the UNHCR. However, these provisions are often not enough to last a whole month and do not include luxuries such as cosmetics or stylish clothes. As a result, to make ends meet financially and cater to their luxuries, women and young girls are now allegedly involved in commercial sex activities with truck drivers who travel along the Dukwi route. Sexually transmitted illnesses have increased among the camp population as a result of these activities<sup>8</sup>.

### Financial Constraints

Despite that refugees in Botswana with legal status have free access to healthcare in public hospitals, getting quality care can be costly. When individuals residing in the Dukwi refugee camp are referred to Nyangabgwe Hospital for specialized medical care such as heart operations which are often an emergency, they face financial difficulties because they must seek care outside of the camp. Referred refugee patients must pay for their own transportation because the ambulance is not always available to take them to Nyangabgwe; however, as the refugees in the camp are not permitted to work, patients frequently lack the funds necessary to cover this cost (Ms. Monalisa Mungure: Human Rights Activist and Founder of Molao

Matters, 2024). Their already precarious circumstances are then made worse by this lack of access to healthcare, which would also make it more difficult for them to enhance their general well-being.

### Language and Communication

Language barriers frequently prevent refugees from getting the assistance and medical care they need. Some of them do not understand English, which makes it difficult for them to communicate their symptoms to the medical staff<sup>9</sup>. In order to obtain healthcare services, literacy is helpful. Inadequate communication might lead to delayed or inaccurate diagnosis and treatment.

Furthermore, language barriers often lead to stigma and unprofessional attitudes from healthcare providers (Al Shamsi, 2020) who prefer using the vernacular language when treating patients. This has often led to inadequate medical care and unfavourable experiences for the refugees.

### Cultural and Social Factors

In Botswana, refugees frequently experience restricted access to healthcare due to religious factors. This is especially true for Muslim refugees, whose access to quality healthcare may be hampered by certain beliefs. Mr. Rebaone Mmereki provided information regarding a case involving a Somali man some years back. Cultural discrepancies arose during his stay at a Roman Catholic shelter while he was waiting for his surgery in a nearby hospital. Eventually UNHCR had to make other accommodation arrangements leading to a delayed surgery.

Furthermore, the human rights expert, Ms. Monalisa Mungure, alluded that, it is culturally expected of Somali husbands to take decisions regarding their wives' bodies. Due to the fact the men not believing in the use of contraceptives, it has made the provision of sexual and reproductive healthcare difficult. This has several consequences, including a higher chance of unintended pregnancy and HIV transmission as well as a high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) within the camp, especially in light of the polygamous practices encouraged by some cultures. Culturally sensitive approaches are crucial in meeting the requirements of refugees, as cultural beliefs and practices have a substantial impact on the of healthcare services provided to them. In order to properly support and aid refugees, organizations working with them must recognize and appreciate these cultural practices. Failing to do so may put this vulnerable population at risk for barriers to access adequate healthcare.

<sup>8</sup> No recent statistics available.

<sup>9</sup> Normally, there should be a translator provided for such scenarios but there is not one available within the camp.

Within the camp, there are refugees who engage in Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)<sup>10</sup>. Some women arrive in Botswana already mutilated, while others conduct this unsafe procedure within the camp as it is a cultural practice passed down through generations in their home country. For women and girls, it presents significant health hazards, including excruciating pain, infections, and long-term repercussions. Botswana medical professionals within the Dukwi camp lack the necessary tools to treat FGM cases effectively; the emotional and psychological effects it has on women, as well as the physical treatments (Ms. Monalisa Mungure & Prof. Tirelo Modie-Moroka, 2024 ).

### Geographical Accessibility

The Dukwi refugee camp is roughly 126 kilometres from the nearest health facility, Nyangabgwe Hospital in Francistown. For refugees who might not have access to dependable transportation or the funds to go this far for medical care, this location is out of reach. The geographic barrier makes it more difficult for refugees to get access to timely and quality medical care, which emphasizes the need for creative ways to make healthcare more accessible in isolated camps. Delays in receiving medical attention can worsen health outcomes and raise mortality rates among the population of refugees.

### Healthcare Infrastructure

The Dukwi refugee camp clinic provides basic treatment and does not operate 24 hours a day (AfricanLII, 2023). This is risky for an enclosed camp with movement restrictions since it limits refugees' access to emergency medical care during non-operational hours. Long wait times and inefficient care result from the clinic's inability to accommodate the requirements of the hundreds of refugees living in the camp.

In the refugee camp, mental health is a crucial aspect of healthcare that is often neglected (Prof. Tirelo Modie-Moroka, 2024). Numerous reports exist of women and girls being forced to perform sexual favors for those who are allowing them to go to the country of refuge, or being raped while traveling (Friedman, 1992). When these traumatic events go untreated, they frequently result in depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental diseases.

In addition, the health concerns that the refugees in Dukwi suffer are made worse by the absence of adequate sanitary facilities and clean water supplies. Due to its rural position and lack of development, access to clean water is a challenge (AfricanLII, 2023).

## The Consequences of Refugee's Limited Access to Adequate Healthcare

### Poor Health Outcomes

Primary care and SRH are among the essential treatments provided by the camp's clinic. However, it fails to provide mental health services, maternity care, specialist care, or treatments for more complicated medical conditions. To continue treating the refugees, the clinic relies largely on donations from the UNHCR because it has limited and sometimes insufficient funding. More urgent medical problems among refugees require them to be referred to hospitals outside of the camp, which can be challenging given the limited financial resources and transportation options available. There are multiple cases of undiagnosed chronic illnesses that go untreated until they reach advanced stages. Some refugees may experience worsening health outcomes as a result of their inability to receive specialized treatment, underscoring the continued need for more assistance.

### Impact on Mental Health

Stress related to displacement, uncertainty about the future, and experiences of trauma can negatively impact refugees' mental health. Limited access to mental health services further exacerbates these issues. It is concerning that there are no procedures in place for mental health screening when refugees initially arrive in Botswana. The absence of early evaluation and assistance may cause refugees' mental health issues to go untreated (Prof. Tirelo Modie-Moroka, 2024). When left untreated, this has frequently resulted in explosive outbursts and depression, which worsen over time and has affected a large number of the refugees currently residing in the camp.

### Conclusion

Despite international agreements and legislation aimed at protecting refugees' rights, significant barriers to accessing healthcare remain. These challenges worsen mental health conditions, raise mortality and morbidity rates, and put stress on the local and humanitarian healthcare systems. They also lead to poor health outcomes. A comprehensive strategy including regulatory changes, improved funding, better infrastructure, and culturally competent healthcare practices is needed to address these issues. The primary areas of concentration should include expanding the capacity of refugee camps' medical facilities, guaranteeing that all individuals have equal access to healthcare services, irrespective of their location or legal status, and including mental health treatments in regular care planning.

<sup>10</sup> It is a traditional practice that entails the partial or complete removal of a woman's external genitalia or the infliction of other injuries to her genital organs for non-medical purposes.

## Recommendations

### To the Ministry of Defense and Security

- Abolish the encampment policy, as it restricts refugee movement. This would allow timely access to healthcare without undue bureaucratic hurdles and give them an opportunity to find employment so that they are sufficient enough to fund their healthcare expenses in times of an emergency.
- Review and amendment of the Refugee (Recognition and Control) Act of 1968. The amendment should include, in great detail, provisions on refugee healthcare aligned with international standards and the Refugee Convention.

### To the Ministry of Health and Wellness

- Integrate mental health screening and support into routine healthcare within refugee camps, with a focus on trauma-informed care.
- Allocate resources to upgrade the Dukwi clinic, ensuring it operates 24/7 with adequate medical personnel, equipment, and supplies.
- Provide specialized training for healthcare staff on refugee health issues, cultural competency, and trauma care.

### To the UNHCR

- Work together with government to establish strategies for mental health services and improvements to healthcare facilities in refugee camps.
- Organize awareness programs about mental health, reproductive health, and sanitation habits that are sensitive to the cultural differences of refugee communities.
- Bring back more staff to Botswana; translators and protection officers.

# Mobility in Gaborone: Exploring Public Transport Challenges and Needs





# Mobility in Gaborone: Exploring Public Transport Challenges and Needs



By Markus Wolff



## About the Author

Upon completing his undergraduate degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, and an internship at the German Ministry for Economic Affairs, Markus developed a profound interest in policy and development issues with a focus on the southern African region. While living in Gaborone and facing everyday mobility struggles, he set out to explore the city's public transport system from various perspectives.

## Relevance

Public transport in Gaborone has the potential for improvement to better serve its residents. Run-down vehicles, poor facilities, and inefficiencies make public transport in Gaborone a challenging policy area. However, a functioning urban public transport system is crucial,

especially from a social, economic and environmental perspective. Following social-democratic ideals, the government could provide its residents, especially vulnerable groups, with the most accessible, safe, and affordable transportation options to allow them to participate in urban mobility and, by that, in society. Further, it is essential to understand the link between public transport and economic benefits. A functional public transport system allows people to move around the city easily and boosts the economy. In addition, productivity gains can be realized. Against the backdrop of the Just Transition (JT) debate, there is immense national and international pressure to promote climate protection. Under the right conditions, public transport, especially in urban areas, can significantly reduce environmentally harmful emissions.

## Current State

Due to its higher market share and popularity, the study focused primarily on the minibus taxis – so-called combis. Instead of publicly provided buses, private actors operate in the public transport industry who either own the combis or rent them for a certain proportion of their daily revenue<sup>11</sup>. As new vehicles are mostly unaffordable, the combis are usually second-hand vehicles with an average age of 18 years and a capacity of 12 to 16 people (Beukes et al., 2022; Krause et al., 2021)<sup>12</sup>. With its national and regional offices, the Department for Road and Transport Safety (DRTS) is responsible for controlling, fare-setting and issuing driver permits. The permits issued allow drivers to operate their vehicles on a specific route. However, the buses do not follow a fixed route schedule, as the drivers decide freely when to operate (ibid.). Prices are currently at seven Pula per trip, regardless of the traveled kilometers.

## Identified Issues – Evidence from Literature and Street & Expert Interviews

As part of an explorative study that does not claim representativeness, a street survey conducted at selected nodes of the public transport system in Gaborone, interviews with experts, and a literature review provided valuable insights into Gaborone's public transport sector. At and around the Game City, Station, Central Bus Rank and Main Mall stops 29 people were asked about their

<sup>11</sup> Ca. 2,200 mostly individually owned combis are operating in Gaborone (Krause et al., 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Second-generation (or older) vehicles stem from East Asia or South Africa. The Toyota HiAce is most common.

experiences with public transport in Gaborone<sup>13</sup>. The research findings are presented and discussed in the following sub-sections.

### The Demand-based System

The demand-based system<sup>14</sup> diminishes the efficiency of public transport and presents obstacles to its social accessibility. As the drivers are primarily self-employed and do not receive a fixed salary, they rely on working during peak times to make a profit (Beukes et al., 2022). The result is long queues at bus ranks where drivers wait and compete to fill their buses with passengers. Supply of minibuses surpasses demand during these hours, thus diminishing profit margins (ibid.).

However, outside of peak times, public transport options are limited since drivers make little to no profit due to low demand (Krause et al., 2021). This can affect night workers or people who want to follow recreational activities outside of peak hours, as they may have to wait a long time to find a suitable connection or resort to alternative transportation methods such as private cars or taxis.

In addition, people from urban or peri-urban low-demand areas who would like to use public transport may find it challenging to do so in the existing system. Due to a lack of service, they may have to resort to other means of transportation.

### Training of Drivers

Some participants in the street survey raised concerns about the drivers' abilities to navigate people safely through city traffic. They criticized reckless driving, driving under the influence of alcohol, and unfriendliness. These factors have a massive impact on passengers' perceived safety. Many users have no choice between transport modes due to their economic situation and are exclusively dependent on combis. Therefore, they do not have the capacity to choose an alternative and safer mode of transport..

### Public Transport Industry

The street survey included interviews with two combi drivers. They reported overall dissatisfaction with the current state of the public transport system. Their main points of concern regarded long waiting times at bus ranks due to heavy competition with other drivers and high fuel prices. These factors result in relatively small profit margins (Krause et al., 2021). The drivers further complained about very little government support, for instance, a lack of fuel

subsidies. Interestingly, some of the interviewed passengers mentioned high fuel prices as one of the biggest problems for the public transport sector as well.

Additionally, fragmentation represents a substantial problem for the public transport sector in Gaborone (Rabash, 2024). Many permit holders lack the financial resources to invest in cleaner, safer and larger transport units. As a result, a lot of small transport units on the road contribute to environmental pollution and traffic congestion. In 2015, the number of combis operating in Gaborone amounted to approximately 2,200 (Krause et al., 2021)<sup>15</sup>. The fragmentation also makes it difficult for drivers to coordinate with each other and to advocate for meaningful policy change collectively. While the Taxi and Local Bus Service Association<sup>16</sup> in Gaborone can serve as such a portal for coordination, it presumably only represents a small share of the people working in the industry.

It is unclear how many people are actually employed in Gaborone's public transport sector. However, the number is likely substantially higher than the number of permit holders initially suggests since the workforce consists of drivers, operators, conductors, and other individuals (ibid.). Thus, the public transport sector plays a key role not only as a means of mobility for passengers but also as an income source for many people.

### Infrastructure

One expert mentioned that Gaborone's infrastructure is not suitable for the demand for urban transport. During peak hours, the current traffic system cannot handle the volume of vehicles. New traffic systems like smart street lights, more designated bus lanes or an intra-city railway could alleviate urban traffic congestion during peak hours.

Bus stops are often poorly placed or informal, so passengers face unsafe conditions when (dis-)embarking (Beukes et al., 2022). In addition, the condition of the public transport vehicle fleet is qualitatively poor. The utilized vehicles are old and rarely maintained or uncomfortable (ibid., Krause et al., 2021). Survey participants highlighted 'overloading' and safety issues related to the vehicles' conditions. The provision of newer and bigger passenger-carrying units was mentioned as a potential solution to alleviate concerns regarding comfortability and safety by passengers and experts.

<sup>13</sup> The street survey is not representative but was supposed to provide the researcher with in-depth insights from the passenger's perspective

<sup>14</sup> Here, the "demand-based system" describes that drivers respond to demand and usually choose freely when to provide service and where to pick up or drop off passengers.

<sup>15</sup> 61 % of permits are held by combi operators with no more than two permits.

<sup>16</sup> Next to the Taxi and Local Bus Service Association, drivers coordinate in associations for each route.

## Governance & Policy

An efficient public transport system can significantly contribute to urban development on an economic and environmental scale. However, the Government of Botswana has not yet created a public transport policy that recognises the importance and proposes measures to restructure the current system. Hence, it is not surprising that most survey participants perceive the efforts of public authorities to improve the public transport system as insufficient. Some respondents mentioned that they do not believe in the government's capacity to implement such policies due to negative experiences from the past. In 2016, the Ministry for Transport and Communications conducted a feasibility study for reforming Gaborone's public transport system. The results indicated that installing a bus-based system in Gaborone by modernising the vehicle fleet, street infrastructure, and facilities over a three-year period would require investing 2.5 billion Pula. However, apart from a planned cabinet memorandum in 2021, the research could not reveal how the Government of Botswana plans to translate the results of the feasibility study into tangible action (BOPA, 2021).

The Gaborone City Council (GCC) plays little to no role in the decision-making processes evolving around public transport<sup>17</sup>. Instead, the DRTS, with its national and regional offices, is solely responsible for implementing projects, drivers' permits, and price-setting (Beukes et al., 2022; Krause et al., 2021). Providing the GCC with decision-making capacity is crucial for inducing meaningful policies that contribute to Gaborone's city development..

## Social Accessibility and Affordability

Public transport should be accessible, affordable and reliable for all population groups to maximize mobility, reduce emissions, and increase overall well-being. In addition, public transport is crucial for citizens to realize access to education or health care. About 45 % of the street survey respondents indicated they were somewhat to very dissatisfied with public transport in Gaborone. By contrast, 27.5 % were each neutral or somewhat to very satisfied. Despite high levels of dissatisfaction, the vast majority of respondents uses combis daily, primarily for commuting or to access essential services<sup>18</sup>. Combis are rarely used to participate in social or recreational activities.

People are particularly dissatisfied with long waiting times at bus stops until the combis fill up and long travel times. A non-representative mobility survey revealed that people travelling by combi in Gaborone travel the longest in comparison with transport alternatives such as taxis or

private transport. Thus, the average travel time by combi was at more than 80 minutes per day (Krause et al., 2021)<sup>19</sup>. Many participants of the street survey conducted specifically for this study must get up early to arrive at work or appointments on time. Additionally, respondents mentioned that they usually arrive late at their destination. It further appears that bus ranks are not passenger-friendly or sufficiently accessible for people with disabilities (Beukes et al., 2022).

In addition to the inefficiencies, 34.5% of respondents indicated that public transport is not affordable. This concerns mainly people with a monthly income of 3000 pula or less. Although the current fare of 7 pula per journey does not seem exceptionally high, as many respondents travel daily and often pay for several members of the household, the weekly expenditure on public transport may represent a significant burden for low-income groups. Additionally, the lack of a ticketing system contributes to unfavourable dynamics. As public transport users pay per journey, they may pay a lot for a relatively short trip. At the same time, users may have to change combis once or more to get to their destination and, therefore, pay twice.

However, if well-designed, survey respondents generally regard public transport as positive. An overwhelming majority indicated they would use public transport more often if it better satisfied their needs. This concerns people who are solely dependent on travelling with combis and those who reportedly use both modes of transport regularly<sup>20</sup>. Hence, users are willing to make use of an improved system.

## Environmental Pollution

By utilizing its full potential, an efficiently designed public transport system can have a tremendous impact on the environment (Giles-Cortis et al., 2016; Potter, 2003). Currently, Gaborone's public transport system imposes severe challenges for the environment. Many of the combis are imported models from South Africa that, on average, are 18 years old. Restrictions on imported vehicles are weak, and vehicles seem to be rarely controlled for quality when public transport permits are issued to the drivers (Krause et al., 2021; Rabash, 2024). Arguably, the age and number of the combis operating in the greater Gaborone area account for a considerable share of environmentally unfriendly pollutants. By implementing a fixed schedule and shifting to bigger buses or rail systems, emissions can be significantly reduced.

In addition, private car ownership has increased for several years, likely resulting in increased emissions. From 2013 to

<sup>17</sup> According to an interviewed expert at the DRTS, the GCC plays a consultative role at most.

<sup>18</sup> Most of the users presumably cannot afford an alternative mode of transport.

<sup>19</sup> This compares to less than 60 minutes travelled by private transport.

<sup>20</sup> Only people who are solely reliant on private cars due to their business operations indicated they would not use public transport more often



2022, the number of privately-owned cars increased annually by 4.3 per cent on average (Statistics Botswana, 2024). In 2016, Botswana was among the countries with the highest car ownership per capita in sub-Saharan Africa (Our World in Data, 2024). During peak times, the combination of combis and cars contributes to traffic congestion in the city, which gives rise to environmental pollution in Gaborone. It is imperative that the Government of Botswana implements measures to increase the attractiveness of public transport users as a means to reach its climate goals.

## **Economic Viability**

An efficient public transport system is vital for a city's economic prosperity. Enhanced mobility allows for interactions and free movement of people and goods (Lam & Head, 2012). Currently, due to the unattractive nature of public transport, not everybody who would like to participate in urban mobility in Gaborone can do so. By developing a public transport system that accounts for people's needs, they have more freedom and financial means to spur the urban economy through daily market interactions and social activities. This consideration also plays a role in diversification strategies. Offering a reliable, modern, and efficient public transport system increases Gaborone's attractiveness as a hub for holding conferences or events in the southern African region.

Additionally, the delay caused by the growing number of private cars and combis can result in productivity losses due to unsatisfied, tired, or late workers and delayed provision of goods. Investments in bigger carrying units, dedicated bus lines, and innovative traffic systems can improve traffic flow and economic productivity.

In combination with a decline in emissions and safety improvements, public transport can substantially reduce public health costs. By improving traffic flow and reducing the number of vehicles on the streets, an efficient public transport system contributes to a reduction of pollution, accidents, and stress levels (Giles-Cortis et al., 2016).

## **Recommendations**

### **FES & other non-State Actors**

#### **1. Understand public transport and mobility as a social issue**

FES and other non-state actors must understand that mobility is always a social issue. The current public transport system in Gaborone does not provide the desired levels of social accessibility, affordability, and mobility. Low-income households and other vulnerable groups are mainly dependent on a public transport system that, in its current form, does not satisfy their needs.

#### **2. Engage in conversations with important stakeholders and include them in JT undertakings**

Public transport can play a key role in Botswana's sustainability efforts. Currently, public transport receives little room in public discourse. FES should raise awareness of this issue among other non-state and state actors in its JT undertakings and invite stakeholders from the sector to meetings or workshops.

#### **3. Support retraining initiatives for drivers**

Regardless of the design of potential public transport policies, the combi drivers are likely to be severely affected by a reform. In Gaborone, a large number of people are employed in the broader public transport sector, and numerous drivers rely on the income they earn from providing these services. On the one hand, civil society organizations should highlight the positive aspects of reforming the industry. However, it is crucial to support vocational retraining projects for combi drivers in order to drive other vehicles.

#### **4. Support and accompany the creation of more powerful driver associations**

Combi drivers appear only to have little bargaining power. In cooperation with the Bus & Taxi Association, FES should support and accompany the creation of bigger and more significant driver associations and equip them with the necessary capacities.

### **Government**

#### **1. Understand the link between mobility, quality of life, environment, and the economy**

Improving the public transport system is in the best interest of policy-makers, as an efficient public transport system is vital for Gaborone's city development. In addition to the beneficial impacts on the local community, Gaborone can become an increasingly attractive destination for hosting international events and conferences on a larger scale. Hence, the Government of Botswana should discuss and implement a public transport system reform.

#### **2. Develop a public transport policy**

The key priority should be developing a national public transport policy in which the government acknowledges the significant role of urban public transport for Botswana and creates framework conditions to spur investment. As a part of that, the government should provide the city councils with sufficient capacity to handle urban public transport issues themselves while at the same time funding or subsidizing projects to improve the current infrastructure and vehicle fleet.

### **3. Create a public transport agency for Gaborone**

An urban public transport agency overseen by the GCC with the capacity to drive policy changes and implement public transport projects could lead to substantial improvements. The agency can contract private and public transport providers that operate with big buses in separate zones. Minibus providers could be contracted as so-called feeder buses for the routes served by the larger providers. Additionally, the agency should design a ticketing system and a reliable bus schedule that ensures the operation of bus services at times and places currently undersupplied. Creating such an agency has reduced travel time, led to cheaper fares, and improved facilities in other cities such as Lagos or Kigali (Krause et al., 2021).

### **4. Create a fund to invest in public transport infrastructure and vehicles**

The Government of Botswana might have the fiscal space to provide funds to improve the public transport system. Public transport providers and the GCC could access these funds to invest in bigger, safer, and cleaner vehicles such as buses or intra-city rail systems. Funds could be further used to subsidize tickets for low-income households, improve facilities, and for further infrastructure improvements.

### **5. Create an independent passenger oversight board**

Gaborone's citizens depend highly on the public transport system and would welcome measures that make public transport usage more attractive. However, they have almost no voice in the decision-making process. Consequently, the GCC should create an independent passenger oversight board to provide more opportunities to participate in public transport matters. The board should consist of ordinary public transport users and transport experts. It should serve as a representative body for the interests of the broader public. The GCC and public transport agency should be obliged to consult the board prior to policy or project implementations and meet with the board regularly to discuss public transport developments.

# Economic Diversification in Botswana: Opportunities of Service-led Development



# Economic Diversification in Botswana: Opportunities of Service-led Development

By Alissa Lavagno



## About the Author

Alissa Lavagno, a student of Development Economics, completed an internship at FES in Botswana and further spent a year in South Africa close to the border of Botswana for a voluntary year. Interactions with people in Botswana, their openness and approach to life were an important learning experience and deepened her interest in development challenges especially in Southern Africa. Currently, she studies in South Africa and is looking forward to exploring further approaches to development, such as the economic diversification in Botswana.

## Introduction

As a well-developed diamond economy today and with an impressive political history, Botswana is a country that offers many contrasts. On the one hand, a landlocked country with low population density and wide deserts, on the other hand a tourist paradise with beautiful, untouched nature and a strategically unique position as a logistical link in Southern Africa. A country that is perceived as a

stable democracy but is challenged by youth unemployment and high inequality. Botswana can look back at many achievements and endowed with key equipment is striving to break out of the shadow of its neighbour, South Africa.

Since independence in 1966, Botswana has had high growth rates and classifies as an upper-middle-income country today. However, most of that growth can be attributed to the mining sector, more precisely diamonds, which still contribute to a third of government revenues (Government of Botswana, 'Botswana Vision 2036', 2016). Its reliance on diamonds poses major challenges for the country and calls for economic diversification to also overcome other challenges like poverty and unemployment, especially among the youth.

The Government of Botswana announced a strategic transformation (Government of Botswana, 2016). Buzzwords like knowledge-based economy, export-led growth, a financial hub, and digitalization are often mentioned and are supposed to highlight the good intentions to transform the economy. How could an economy that incorporates all those factors look like? How can this improve the economy and therefore the everyday life of the people of Botswana?

Service-led development is a rather new idea that suggests focusing government resources on modern services such as technology and finance, shifting away from an agricultural or manufacturing-based economy. This study aims to identify existing approaches of the Government of Botswana and explore possibilities of service-led development in Botswana and its potential to fight youth unemployment.

## Methodology

In order to address the topic, literature on both the theoretical approaches and case studies of other comparable countries on service-led development are reviewed and combined with literature on Botswana (Behuria & Goodfellow, 2019). Data from sources such as the World Bank and UN is used as well as studies on Botswana's economy, e.g., from Statistics Botswana and Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (Raboloko, 2021).

Further, semi-structured expert interviews have been conducted with seven key stakeholders who have research

or practical expertise about the economic structure and job market of Botswana to provide a qualified assessment of the economic situation in Botswana and realistic approaches for the future. Open questions on current challenges, strategies and possible growth opportunities were asked.

## The Idea behind Service-led Development

Through export-promoting policies and manufacturing-led growth some countries managed to improve their economic situation substantially. This process is seen as a shift from an agricultural to industrial based economy and referred to as **industrialization** (Szirmai, 2015). According to the political economist Alice Amsden the industry “borrows” technologies from developed countries, i.e., using previous innovations instead of developing new ones (Amsden, 1989). Through the labour-intensive manufacturing sector, a country can benefit in this first stage of economic development from reduced costs due to the production of larger amounts, the so-called economies of scale, and thereby compete on the world market. Over time product quality can be improved and innovations and more technologically advanced goods can be produced. Through spillover-effects and linkages, the economy shifts in a second stage to a **service-based economy**. In most countries that are considered advanced today, services are the most important sector (Szirmai, 2015). Especially when talking about modern services, for example financial and

business services, technological services or logistics, high returns are expected and countries like South Korea with a well-developed service sector are in an economically beneficial position.

As a landlocked country, Botswana’s import and export costs for physical goods are quite high. When trading with another country that is not a direct neighbour, goods always have to transit through one of its neighbours to reach a port. This makes it harder to compete with existing products on the world market. Therefore, it has been suggested to skip or “leapfrog” the step of manufacturing and move directly to a focus on services. This could entail many advantages for Botswana.

## A Definition of Services

To provide a framework for understanding the different facets of an economy, its activities are categorized into three sectors based on the nature of goods and services produced: the primary, secondary, and tertiary sector (see also Figure 1). The **primary sector** involves the direct extraction of raw materials from nature, such as agriculture, fishery, forestry, and mining. Any subsequent processing of those raw materials is then part of the **secondary sector** that encompasses the transformation of raw materials into manufactured goods and products through processes like manufacturing and construction. The **tertiary sector** is then completely detached from

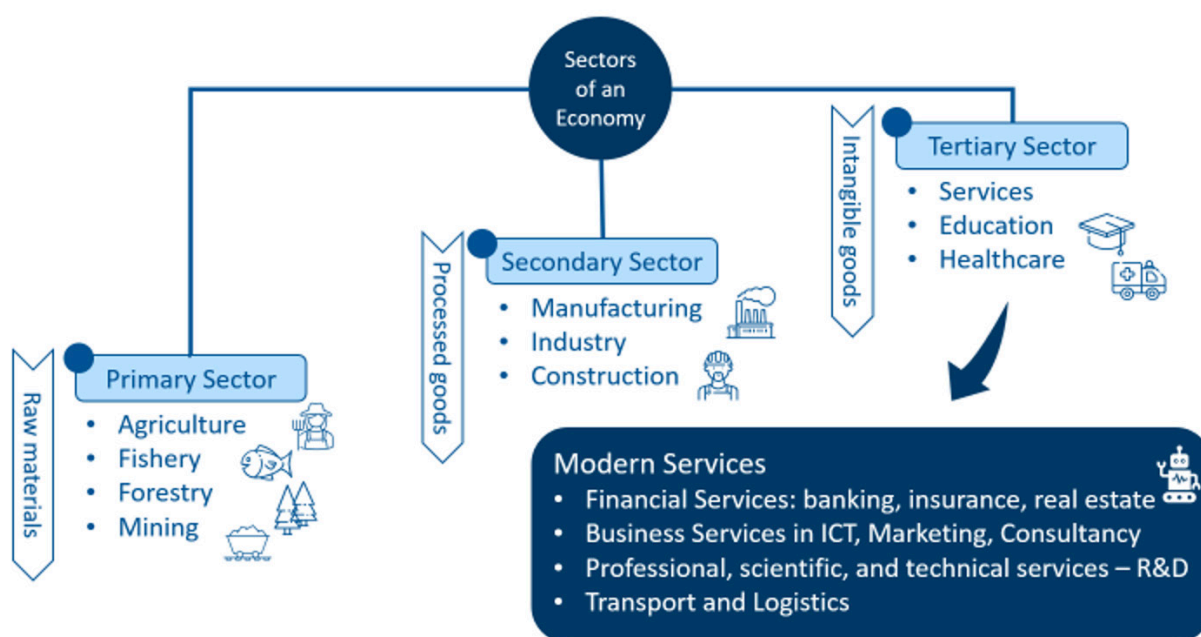


Figure 1: Overview of the different sectors of an economy (authors compilation)



physical products and provides intangible goods, i.e., services including retail, healthcare, education, tourism, and entertainment. Today also services like marketing, consulting, or insurance are considered as services. Some definitions also include a quaternary or quinary sector, which divides the tertiary sector, but we use the classical division here.

## Challenges for the Economy in Botswana

Despite its significant development and progress, Botswana still faces several challenges. In particular, its high reliance on diamonds has limited the possibilities to develop further. Prices for diamonds are very volatile and can drop significantly in harder times. As most of Botswana's export revenues consist of diamonds, the country is vulnerable to fluctuations in diamond prices and crises hit Botswana harder than they affect other, better diversified countries. Although the country thrived during the last decades because of its diamonds, the number of people that benefited has been very limited, and, as mainly raw diamonds have been produced, spillover-effects to other sectors have been narrow.

In order to position oneself better worldwide, to become more resilient against crises, and to enable more Botswana to have an improved living standard, the country has aimed to diversify its economy for quite a while. Programmes like the Local Preference Scheme (1976), the Reserved Sectors Policy (1982), the Financial Assistance Program (1982), and the more recent 'Hubs' and Special Economic Zones, along with agencies (The Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA), The Local

Enterprise Authority (LEA), Botswana Exporter Development Programme / Botswana Investment and Trade, (BEDIA/BITC), etc.) were implemented to promote sectoral diversification (The World Bank, 2015). However, achievements have been limited so far, raising the question of what is hindering an ambitious country like Botswana from extending its export revenues to other sectors. Through expert interviews, four main areas were identified that contain barriers encountered by policymakers in Botswana when addressing economic diversification.

## Unemployment

A major challenge faced by Botswana is the persistently high unemployment rate. Around every fourth person above 15 years is unemployed and among the youth (from 15 to 35 years old) even every third person is affected (The World Bank, 2023). As noted in expert interviews, the high GDP growth rates do not correlate with a similar employment creation. There could be several reasons for that, and Botswana is also not the only country in its region to have high unemployment rates (South Africa: 28,8%, Namibia: 19,9%). However, the focus on diamonds is seen as one factor that might have contributed to an economic structure that hindered coordinated job creation and qualification of the equivalent workforce.

Due to the capital-intensive nature of diamond mining, the industry requires a relatively small number of highly specialized skills. While diamonds contributed immensely to GDP growth, mining them did not create the correlating number of jobs. Other sectors experienced limited growth and job creation as besides diamonds the focus was set on

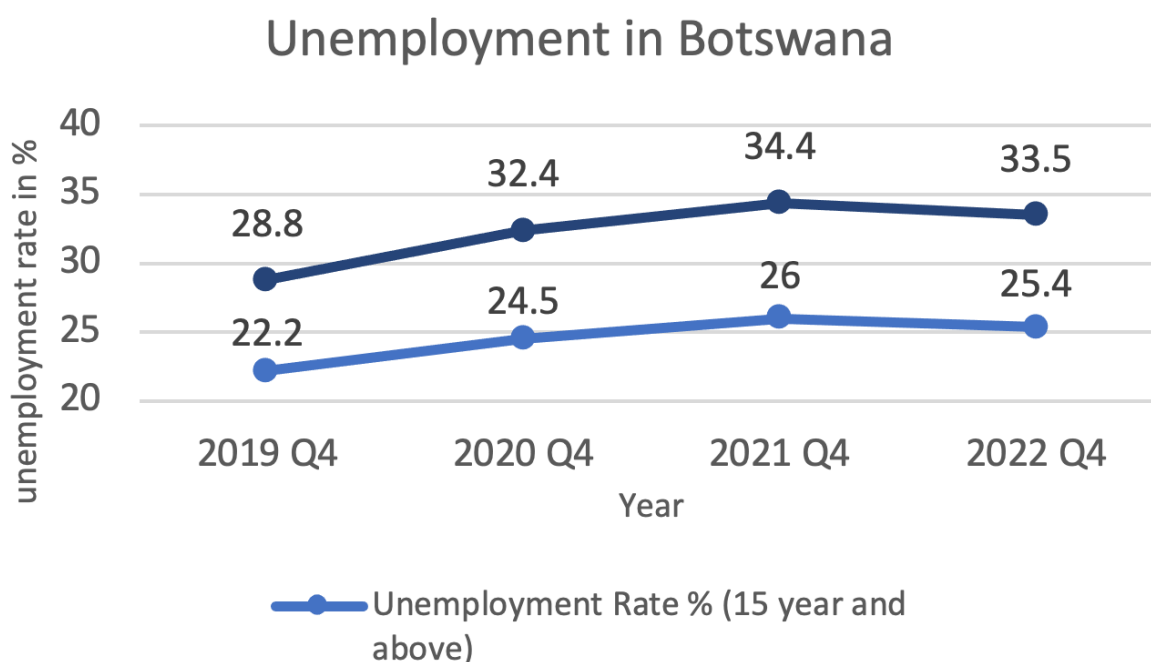


Figure 2: Employment rates in Botswana from 2019 until 2022, 4th quarter (Source: World Bank- DataBank)

basic education, while technical and vocational skills were neglected. This economic structure created a mismatch between the skills being developed and the skills needed in other sectors of the economy (Government of Botswana, 'Botswana Vision 2036', 2016). Demand and supply in the labour market are now so far apart that even graduates with a tertiary degree might struggle for several years until they find employment.

This trend is difficult to reverse now. In interviews, the education system is mainly blamed for the skills mismatch, where the youth is not equipped with the right skills required by employers. There have been some revisions to the educational system, including more specialization possibilities at a secondary level now, but the adoption takes time, and more revisions are necessary. Therefore, one reason for Botswana's struggle to diversify its economy is that its workforce is not equipped with the right skill sets.

## Crises

As mentioned above, its reliance on diamonds makes Botswana more vulnerable to crises, as it accounts for a substantial portion of the country's revenue and foreign exchange earnings. The latest being the COVID-19 pandemic, but also others like the global financial crisis around 2008 and the commodity price crash in 2014/15 let the economy of Botswana fall behind. Instead of planning and investing in the future, policymakers and the business world were busy recovering from crises.

## Political Environment

The expert interviews also indicated several shortcomings regarding the political environment. While some criticized that decision-making is not inclusive enough, most stated that ideas and policies might be quite good and innovative, but the implementation is insufficient. In order to develop a well-diversified economy, business incentives for infant industries, i.e., emerging or newly established sectors that require assistance until they are able to compete on the world market, are needed. Kaboyakgosi and Marata (2013) argue in their analysis that governance implementation in Botswana is hindered by increasing policy complexity, declining levels of accountability, and lack of commitment to reform. The need for improvement of implementation is also pointed out in Botswana's Vision 2036 as lessons learned from its previous Vision 2016 (Government of Botswana, 'Botswana Vision 2036', 2016).

## Structural Challenges

As already addressed shortly above, Botswana also faces several structural challenges and bottlenecks. Due to the small population of only around 2.5 million, the domestic demand for goods and services is not that high (ibid.) In addition, the low population density ensures that providing sufficient infrastructure throughout the sparsely populated

areas is very challenging.

Another relevant issue is the reliance on South Africa which is enforced through other disadvantages. Its landlocked position impedes international trade through the seaway, making export and import costs higher and intensifying its reliance on neighbouring countries with seaports like South Africa. Botswana is constrained to always keep good relations with its neighbours. Moreover, the composition of exports and imports is inconvenient. Exports mainly consist of diamonds, as their high prices and existing mining infrastructure ensure easy returns. Regarding other goods, however, Botswana lacks a comparative advantage, also because this was long neglected. As described before the reliance on diamonds creates many challenges for Botswana. Imports on the other hand, consist of various basic goods and food items, with a majority imported from South Africa. During crises like the Covid-19 pandemic when South Africa was struggling itself and reducing food exports to Botswana, it became clear how problematic this reliance is.

<b>Unemployment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills-mismatch</li> <li>• Underutilisation of labour</li> <li>• Education system</li> </ul>	<b>Crises</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 Pandemic</li> <li>• Global Financial Crisis 2007-2009</li> <li>• Commodity Crash 2014/15</li> </ul>
<b>Political Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business incentives</li> <li>• Lack of implementation</li> <li>• No inclusive decision-making</li> </ul>	<b>Structural Challenges</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on South Africa</li> <li>• Export/Import structure</li> <li>• Landlocked and small population</li> </ul>

## New Focus on Modern Services

Besides Tourism also other modern services have recently become a priority for the government. A key component of successful growth and diversification away from diamonds is supposed to be an increase of the share of services in export revenues (ibid.). Modern services could be traded internationally and contribute to exports and by that diversify the export portfolio away from diamonds. There are different areas which could be expanded and in the following, some will be discussed.

## Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The importance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been increasing substantially in the age of digitalization. It encompasses any jobs using, developing, and maintaining technology for the purpose of processing and communicating information, for example, data analysis, marketing, or any consulting in that area. As its relevance is expected to rise further, decisionmakers in Botswana announced to pay particular attention to the creation of an enabling environment for a private sector led ICT industry (Government of Botswana, 'Botswana Vision 2036', 2016). By that, global competitiveness can be increased, and foreign investments attracted. Regarding Botswana's challenge with unemployment, ICT could be also an interesting sector, as especially large parts of the younger population are highly educated in those areas and are also the ones with the highest unemployment rate. In addition, it was remarked in expert interviews that several jobs for example marketing have low entry barriers, as you can start with basic technological skills and equipment.

## Financial and Business Services

Any jobs related to financial analysis, assessment of risk and investment opportunities in both private and corporate context are considered as financial services. In addition, also areas like regulatory compliance, insurances and others can be included. Business services can be any jobs related to consultancy and any outsourced sectors of a company like human resource management, marketing, accounting, or project management. Financial and business services could potentially create employment as well as increasing export earnings (ibid.). By reaching international standards and promote their export, the ambition of

policymakers in Botswana is to become a financial hub in Sub-Saharan Africa. Through its macroeconomic stability with a stable currency, peaceful democracy and robust legal framework, Botswana has a favourable environment for becoming a financial hub in the region and attracting foreign investment. This could further contribute to economic growth and competitiveness worldwide.

## Transport and Logistics

Another promising sector could be transport and logistics. Historically, Botswana's landlocked position made it more complicated to stand out internationally as a transport hub. However, recent efforts have tried to make Botswana a regional transport corridor (ibid.) Domestically, it facilitates the movement of goods and people, which spurs trade, reduces production costs, and attracts foreign investment. Also, outside of the country, Botswana could be an interlink in the Southern region of Africa.

Francistown for instance is seen as the potential hub for transportation and logistics between Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Botswana has relatively good and extensive road infrastructure and Francistown's central position in the region could be strategically valuable (The World Bank, 2023). Instead of a seaport, Francistown could therefore be a so-called "dry port", that functions as a hub for the efficient transshipment and storage of cargo between different modes of transportation, such as rail, road, and sea, facilitating trade and reducing congestion at seaports. Regarding employment creation, this sector might be interesting as it also creates jobs for rather unskilled workers (see box above) and is job-intensive.

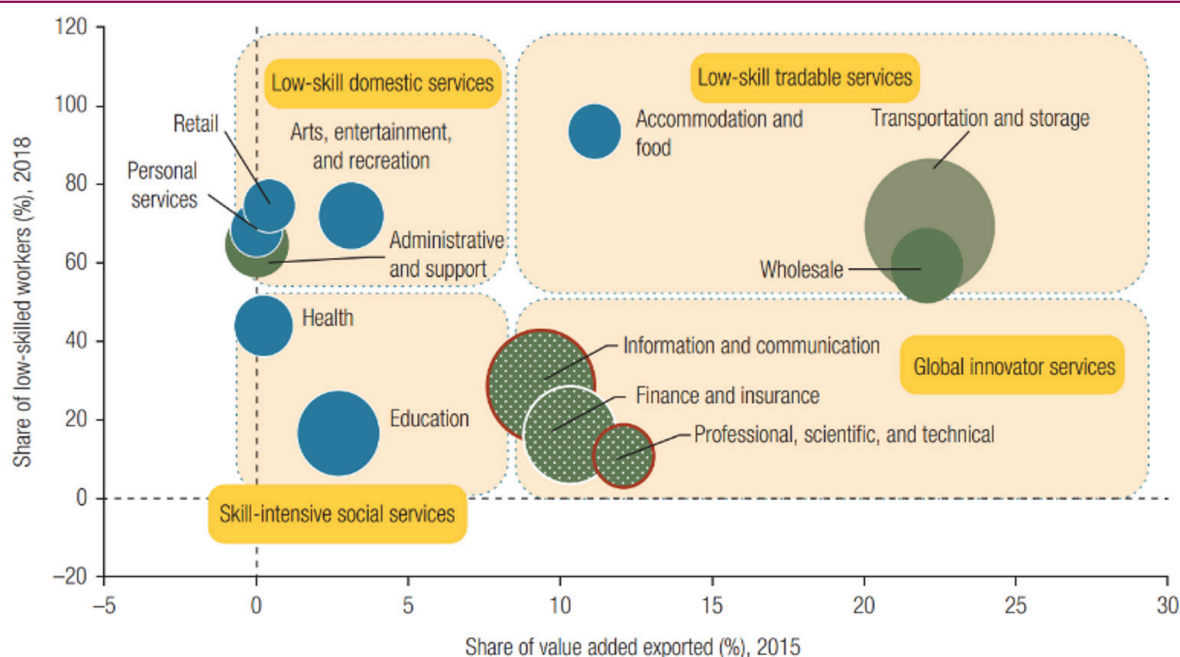


Figure 3: Services subsectors grouped by trade intensity, offshorability, and low skill intensity. Bubble sizes indicate relative gross capital stock per worker. (Source: World Bank - At Your Service?: The Promise of Services-Led Development)



## Service-led Development in Botswana

Focus was set on modern services like ICT, Financial and Business services, and Transport and Logistics, by the government, as they are expected to improve the economic situation in Botswana. However, even though modern services are a promising sector that could promote economic growth and employment creation substantially, it would be too easy to call it the one and only solution to solve all problems. In order to have a stable and functioning economy, all sectors are required to be developed further in Botswana. Initiatives to establish manufacturing cooperatives should also not be damped, as manufacturing and services could possibly also enforce each other as technological services improve. Spillover effects between sectors, where other sectors benefit from a positive development in another sector, should be used to full capacity to build a well-diversified, operating economy. However, through technological advancements fewer jobs are created, environmental constraints have been increasing, and global competition is hard to catch up. Due to those trends, it should not be the priority of the government to allocate support and subsidies to manufacturing. Nevertheless, the essential mineral sector that counts through its diamonds as a major source of government revenues remains important for the government. Since mainly raw diamonds are produced in Botswana, the aim is to extend the sector to the processing of diamonds, exploiting the entire mineral value chain (Government of Botswana, 'Botswana Vision 2036', 2016).

The literature found a significant positive impact of services on economic growth in several countries and also in Botswana (Phiri et al., 2022). An example of another successful country is India. The ICT sector contributed substantially to India's GDP, export earnings, and employment generation and is seen as a significant driver of economic growth (Szirmai, 2015). Nowadays India is known for its well-developed software and IT sector. In Africa, a model for Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of growth and development has been Mauritius. Researchers found a significant long-term relationship between total services exports and economic growth, especially trade and business services and insurance and pension services had a positive effect (Hanson, Tang & Muguto, 2019). Vital for the development of Mauritius has been the creation of hubs and zones that combined favourable government policies, including tax incentives and streamlined regulations, a skilled workforce, and a strategic location (Ramtohul, 2020). This strategy is similar to Botswana's approach with Special Economic Zones.

Having said that, examples like Rwanda, whose government also announced to pursue service-led development, call to attention that there are still many challenges (Behuria & Goodfellow, 2019). There is a risk of an unbalance between human development and economic

growth as many areas of modern services addressed above might create only few jobs, and many of those tailored for skilled workers. This might increase inequalities within the country. In particular, it means that the workforce needs to be equipped with the required skills set, indicating that a lot needs to be done in Botswana's education system. The educational challenges described above have to be addressed in order to make service-led development possible in Botswana. Eventually, Botswana's handling of its diamond reserves and not becoming a victim of the resource curse showed that good governance is central in successfully developing, not the endowment with natural resources or a perfect initial position (limi, 2006). It can therefore be hoped for a similar successful accomplishment of service-led growth.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Economic diversification is an important topic for Botswana and there are different strategies to approach it. The best is yet to be determined but it is certain that there is not just one factor on which one can focus and that will then solve everything. Despite that, if approached correctly, service-led development could address several major challenges in Botswana and contribute to growth and improvement of living standards of Botswana. Digitally traded services allow for easy trade in spite of the country's landlocked position and the idea of a transport and logistics centre in Southern Africa even turns it into a strategic position. Employment creation, especially for an educated youth that is on the job hunt, can fight unemployment rates and a generally more diversified economy will make the country more resilient to crises. Botswana can offer favourable condition to foreign investors as it provides a stable currency and peaceful democracy.

However, many areas need a lot of attention to keep Botswana a promising destination for investments. As highlighted in this study education is a key factor, as the labour market is struggling with a skills-mismatch. The education system should be designed so that graduates are equipped with the equivalent qualifications demanded by employers. Moreover, a more incentivising business environment should be established, which can only be achieved if current implementation challenges are overcome.

Education	Business Environment	Dialogue
The education system should be structured in such a way that it is possible to learn practical skills already early on	Competitive investment landscape and support of innovations and entrepreneurship	Increase cooperation between government, private sector and CSOs
Possibility to specialise in technical or ICT topics at secondary level	Provide digital infrastructure	
More cooperation with private sector	Competitive taxes and uncomplicated financial framework and regulations	
Leadership training at school and at university	Easier Immigration	

# **The Visual Representation of Women in Botswana: Cultural Studies textbooks**



# The Visual Representation of Women in Botswana: Cultural Studies Textbooks ♀

By Johanna Halder



## About the Author

Johanna Halder holds a bachelor's degree in International Geography and Law with a special focus on Africa and has now commenced her master's program in International Relations and Development Policy. Following high school graduation, she volunteered for a year at an orphanage in Zambia and interned with an NGO in Nairobi that advocates for the education of children and young people. Through her experiences, she began to engage with the topic of gender justice in education. Especially through conversations with Botswana experts, she realized that gender justice encompasses not only equal access to education but also equitable representation of gender in educational materials.

## Introduction

In most reports about Botswana, there is one piece of information that is never left out: Gender Justice. The country is often considered a model of democracy in Africa, particularly due to its universal suffrage and multiparty

competition (Sebudubudu & Osei-Hwedie, 2006). This is further emphasized by the Bertelsmann Foundation's Transformation Index for Good Governance of the year 2020, which ranks Botswana 6th out of 128 countries worldwide (Governance Index 2020, cited in Mooketsane, 2019). However, one aspect that is often overlooked in these depictions is that democracy also has an obligation to ensure gender justice (Bothale, 2020). Although Botswana's constitution enshrines gender justice in Article 3, women remain underrepresented in many areas of society (Constitution of Botswana, 1966; Fuh & Mookodi, 2004). This is especially evident in the Parliament, where the current female representation stands at only 11% (Mooketsane, 2019). In the latest ranking by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on women's representation in national parliament, Botswana only ranks 168th out of 188 countries (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019, cited in Mooketsane, 2019). Botswana experts emphasize that the underrepresentation of women in society is primarily due to patriarchal structures that have been reproduced over generations (ibid.). Key factors that contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchy include girls' and women's access to education and the portrayal of women in educational materials (Dlamini & Adams, 2014; Morojole, 2011). As a result, this issue has garnered global attention over the past three decades, particularly through resolutions such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which highlight the need for gender justice in education (Unterhalter, 2008; Unterhalter and North, 2011; Bothale, 2020). This has led to a greater focus on relevant policy measures at the national level (Unterhalter and North, 2011). Following the ratification of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, the Botswana government also committed to reforming the education system to promote gender justice and eliminate gender-specific stereotypes in educational materials (Mhlauli, 2011). Efforts, such as demonstrated by the Botswana STEM Mentorship Program, which aims to increase the participation of girls and women in the subjects Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, have resulted in the country achieving gender parity in the education sector (Denson & Jones, 2020; Mooketsane, 2019). However, whether the country has met its goals regarding educational materials remains largely unexplored. To help bridge this gap, this study addresses the following research question:

*'How are women visually represented in Botswana's Cultural Studies textbooks?'*

## Hypothesis

The literature highlights that in the realm of gender justice, governments generally place low priority on measures that go beyond statistical categories (Mannathoko, 1999, Arnot & Fennell, 2008). Therefore, the hypothesis is that the Cultural Studies textbooks will contain gender-specific stereotypes<sup>21</sup>.

## Literature

When you need information but don't have the opportunity to research online, what do you do? Most likely, you'll turn to a book—a trusted source of knowledge (Nene, 2014). School textbooks, in particular, are granted significant authority as knowledge sources, which is why students, especially in lower grades, tend to trust learning materials without question (Lee & Collins, 2009). Textbooks thus possess the power to shape how children perceive the world and what they consider 'right' and 'wrong' (Nene, 2014). This also applies to gender issues, as children are introduced to ideas about gender through textbooks (Aikman & Rao, 2010). Research in the field of 'education and gender' emphasizes that educational materials can strongly influence the behaviour of boys and girls, reflecting on their actions within society, such as their choice of hobbies or careers (ibid.) Therefore, it is especially problematic when a particular gender is not equally represented in textbooks (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009). This is notably true for visual representations, which are highly influential (Chick, 2006). For one, children learn from images before they can read, and for another, images influence how students interpret text (Chick, 2006; Osler, 1994). For example, if a textbook describes that significant societal decisions are made in parliament, but the accompanying image only shows men in parliament, it can easily lead to the assumption that women play no role in politics (Osler, 1994).

As the example suggests, the literature highlights that women are particularly discriminated against in visual representations compared to men (Ansary & Babaii, 2003; Johansson & Malmsjö, 2009). A common pattern is that women are either much less present than men or completely omitted (ibid.) In images that depict both genders, another pattern emerges where men are often shown in dominant leadership positions while women appear subordinate (Gupta & Yin, 1990; Harashima, 2005). In individual portrayals, women are depicted very stereotypically, such as engaging in household chores, performing jobs considered 'feminine' like teaching, or as the sole caregivers of children (Harashima, 2005).

## Methodology

To analyse the representation of women in Botswana's Cultural Studies textbooks, Mayring's structured content analysis for pictures was employed. This method involves categorizing visual material based on categories derived from the literature to answer a research question (Mayring, 1994). Since the literature highlights that women are often less present than men, the images were first categorized into 'women', 'men', or 'images with both genders' (Ansary & Babaii, 2003; Johansson & Malmsjö, 2009). It was also noted that in images depicting both genders, women are often portrayed in subordinate roles (Gupta & Yin, 1990; Harashima, 2005). Therefore, these images were further categorized as 'subordinate representation of women' or 'equal representation of women'. Lastly, a typical pattern is that women in individual portrayals are often depicted very stereotypically, so the relevant data were categorized into 'stereotypical representation of women' or 'non-stereotypical representation of women' (Harashima, 2005). After analysing the textbooks, the results were presented to Botswanan experts (a Sociologist, a Gender Studies lecturer and a Teacher) who provided their evaluations.

## Data Selection

The data analysed consisted of four Cultural Studies textbooks used as teaching material in public primary schools in Botswana. These textbooks represent the entirety of the subject's material, as Cultural Studies are only taught from grades 1 to 4 (Boikhutso, 2013). The decision to analyse primary school textbooks was based on literature emphasizing that younger students tend to trust learning materials unquestioningly (Lee & Collins, 2009). The subject of Cultural Studies was chosen for analysis because it covers topics such as family structures and gender roles (Boikhutso, 2013). It is also important to note that a few pages were missing from the textbooks, as they were borrowed from schoolchildren. Additionally, images that addressed (sexual) abuse were excluded from the data evaluation.

<sup>21</sup> Positionality: As a middle-class white woman from the Global North, I inevitably take a biased outsider position. My socialisation influences how I perceive gender (Francis, 2006; Kaplan, 2024). Therefore, statements about Botswana must originate from Botswana literature or have already been cited by Botswana authors. The results are discussed with Botswana experts and recommendations are developed collaboratively.



## Results

### The presence of women in the visual material

<b>Total number of images showing people (including pictures of children)</b>	487 (100%)
<b>Total number of images showing exclusively women</b>	85 (17.5%)
<b>Total number of images showing exclusively men</b>	98 (20%)
<b>Total number of images showing both women and men</b>	77 (16%)

The analysis of the presence of women in the visual material led to the following results: The four textbooks contain a total of 487 images depicting people. Of these, 85 images show women, which corresponds to 17.5% of all images. Additionally, there are 98 images featuring men, representing 20% of the total. Finally, the books contain 77 images depicting women and men, which accounts for 16% of the total images.

### The representation of women in a picture with a man

<b>Total number of visual images showing women and men</b>	<b>Total number of images showing women in a subordinate position</b>	<b>Total number of images showing women in an equal position</b>
77 (100%)	49 (63.5 %)	28 (36.5 %)

By analysing the images depicting both women and men, the following became clear: Of a total of 77 images showing both genders, 49 depict women in a subordinate role. This corresponds to 63.5% of the total number. When analysing the data, two typical patterns of gender representation became clear.

### The lack of women in leadership positions



Figure 4

A typical pattern is that women are rarely depicted in leadership positions. This is especially evident in office environments. In the analysed Cultural Studies textbooks, for example, the principal's office is often depicted, with the role of the director represented as male (see Figure 4).

A further instance is images depicting hospital settings. In these, women are consistently shown as nurses, while the leading role of the doctor is always portrayed by a man (see Figure 5 and Figure 6).



A doctor A nurse



Figure 6

Figure 5

### The women doing the housework

Another pattern is that women are often depicted performing household chores, such as cooking or cleaning, while men are not involved in these activities (see Figure 7).

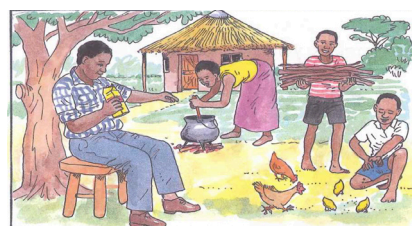


Figure 7

Furthermore, the image analysis shows that in 28 of the 77 images, the woman is depicted as being equal, which corresponds to 36.5% of the total number. For example, the images show man and woman selling fruits (see Figure 8), at the dining table (see Figure 9), or doing household chores together (see Figure 10).

Typical patterns of equal gender representation were not evident.

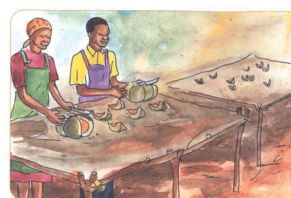


Figure 8



Figure 9

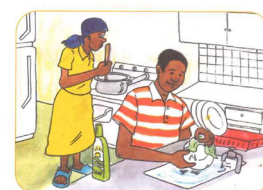


Figure 10

## The portrayal of women in individual representations

Total number of images showing women	Total number of images showing women stereotypically	Total number of images showing women nonstereotypical
85 (100%)	61 (71.5%)	24 (28.5%)

The analysis of the visual representations of women yielded the following results: Out of a total of 85 images depicting women, 61 images show women in stereotypical roles. This corresponds to 71.5% of the total number of images of women. The data analysis revealed three typical patterns of the representation of women.

### The woman in childcare

Women are often portrayed as the sole carers of children. For example, bathing the children (see Figure 11), caring for sick children or helping with homework.



Figure 11

### The woman in charge of the housework

There are also many pictures that show women doing housework. Often washing the dishes (see Figure 12), shopping, doing the laundry, sewing or cleaning.

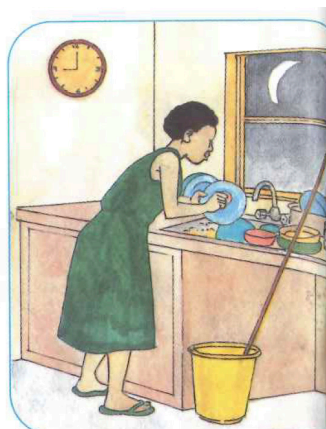


Figure 12

## The Woman in 'feminine' professions

It also became clear that women are predominantly portrayed in occupations that are considered 'feminine'. Particularly frequently in the teaching profession (see Figure 13 and Figure 14).

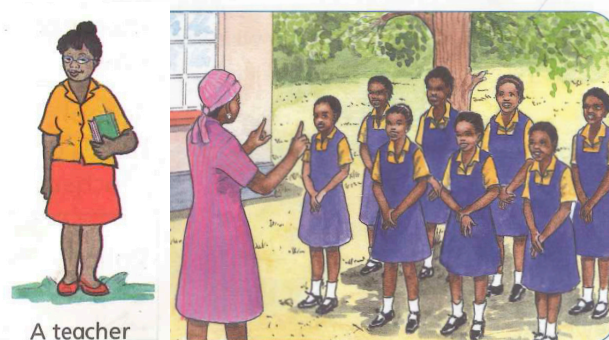


Figure 13

Figure 14

The image analysis also reveals that 24 of the 85 images do not depict women in a stereotypical manner, which corresponds to 28.5% of the total number of images of women. For example, this includes a woman at a computer (see Figure 15), a woman sitting at a table writing (see Figure 16), or a portrait of a woman (see Figure 17). Patterns of non-stereotypical representation of women were not evident.

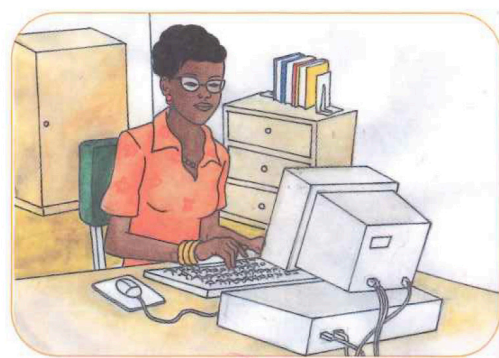


Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



## Discussion

The examination of women in the visual material revealed that the frequency of women's depictions (a total of 17.5%) does not significantly differ from the depiction of men (a total of 20%). This contradicts the literature, which emphasizes that women are less often represented in textbooks than men (Ansary & Babaii, 2003; Johansson & Malmjö, 2009).

However, in the conducted interviews, the experts highlighted that the focus should not be solely on the frequency of depictions but rather on how women are portrayed. The analysis of images depicting both women and men found that women are portrayed in subordinate roles in 63.5% of the cases, which is exemplified, by the lack of images depicting women in leadership positions. Moreover, the analysis of images depicting only women showed that 71.5% of the women are depicted in stereotypical roles, such as caring for children, or in professions considered 'feminine', like teaching. This portrayal, which had been predicted by the literature, was viewed as highly problematic by the experts (Gupta & Yin, 1990; Harashima, 2005). They believe that the predominantly subordinate and stereotypical depiction of women conveys to students— both girls and boys — the notion that a woman's role in society is limited to specific areas and tasks, while men are seen as more capable of leadership. This perception is already evident in classrooms, where students tend to treat male teachers with more respect. In the long term, these textbooks contribute to the underrepresentation of women in many areas of society.

However, the results also revealed that some images depict women in non-subordinate and non-stereotypical roles, such as both genders doing household chores together or a woman using a computer. Although these portrayals are not the majority, they indicate efforts to represent women in more diverse roles and responsibilities, which the experts viewed positively. Overall, the findings confirm the initial hypothesis that Botswana's Cultural Studies textbooks contain gender-specific stereotypes.

## Conclusion and Answer to the Research Question

Although Botswana is often regarded as a model of democracy in Africa due to its universal suffrage or multiparty competition, women remain underrepresented in many areas of society (Sebudubudu & Osei-Hwedie, 2006; Fuh & Mookodi, 2004). Factors contributing to this underrepresentation include women's access to education and their portrayal in educational materials (Morojole, 2011). As a result, this issue has garnered international attention in recent years, for example through the SDGs (Unterhalter, 2008; Unterhalter and North, 2011; Botlhale, 2020). The Botswanan government has also set the goal of

promoting gender justice in the education sector and eliminating gender-specific stereotypes from educational materials (Mhlauli, 2011). These efforts have led to Botswana achieving gender parity in schooling today (Mooketsane, 2019). However, whether the country has met its goals concerning educational materials remains unclear, which is why this study contributes to filling that knowledge gap. This led to the following research question:

'How are women visually represented in Botswana's Cultural Studies textbooks?'

After analysing the relevant data, the research question can be answered as follows: Although women are frequently depicted in the textbooks, they are predominantly portrayed in subordinate and stereotypical roles. This is a fact that both the literature and experts consider problematic (Brugelies & Cromer, 2009). The reason for this concern is that such portrayals may lead students to believe that a woman's role in society is confined to certain areas and tasks, a perception that is also reflected in reality. However, it is important to note that the Cultural Studies textbooks also contain images that depict women in non-subordinate and non-stereotypical roles, which the experts viewed very positively. For future research, a follow-up study of the Cultural Studies textbooks in ten years could provide insights into whether the representation of women has changed in line with the government's goals.

## Recommendations

### • The analysis of further textbooks (To NGOs)

Initially, the analysis of further textbooks that are relevant to the topic should be conducted by NGOs to gain an accurate overview of whether additional textbooks also contain gender-specific stereotypes. This includes, for example, books on social studies or history books. It is important to pay attention not only to images but also to stereotypical language. After the analysis, the results should be presented to the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation of the Botswana Ministry of Education.

### • The revision of textbooks (To the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation of the Botswana Ministry of Education and to Female Experts)

To build on the success of gender parity in education, textbooks that contain gender-specific stereotypes should be revised and made gender-neutral initiated by the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation of the Ministry of Education. This does not mean that the books must exclusively depict women in leadership positions and men in household roles, but rather that women and men should be shown equally in a variety of perspectives and roles.

The revision of textbooks should involve female education experts and professionals specialising in gender justice.



- **Workshops for teachers (To Schools)**

It is further important for schools to offer workshops for teachers to raise awareness about gender stereotyping and its effects in educational materials. Together, strategies and methods can be developed to effectively pass this knowledge on to students.

- **Raising awareness (To the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Botswana)**

In youth and women empowerment programs of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung on topics such as feminism, the foundation could highlight this study to raise awareness of the various ways in which patriarchy is reproduced.

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## Youth Insights Into Botswana

Over 60% of Botswana's population is below the age of 35. With such a young population, Botswana holds a huge potential for progress and change. Young voices deserve greater attention in public discourses as their capabilities, their actions, and their visions is what brings Botswana forward.

This publication aims to give an insight into the youth's perception of Botswana illuminating issues of social justice and inclusivity. Four young people from Botswana and Germany conducted research on a topic of their choice they feel is relevant to Botswana's society. Thanks to the diversity in the authors' backgrounds, this publication applies an international and multidimensional lens without disregarding local contexts and roots. During the research process the authors interacted with local communities as well as academic experts to develop innovative ideas and tangible recommendations of how to unlock Botswana's potential for social transformation.

As a social democratic foundation, we are hopeful that the findings presented will shed light on the needs of groups who are not always at the forefront of public discourses and will contribute to shaping an even more inclusive and just Botswana.

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