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CHAPTER 15

Botswana's Social Protection System: Lessons for the SADC Region

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Abstract

Over the years the government of Botswana has managed to develop a fairly robust and efficient social protection system. Literature suggests that the country boasts of one of the most comprehensive state-led social protection regimes in the southern African region, with programming for poor, vulnerable and excluded groups being quite comprehensive by African standards. Apparently, the social protection system in Botswana has metamorphosed through four distinct phases, ranging from the *Pre-Independence (botho) Phase (1900-1965)*, through to the *"Pre-rights" Phase (1998 to-date)*. The phases have involved the launch of several social protection programmes, a development which has helped in a significant reduction of poverty across the country. The chapter argues that next milestone (Phase 5) ought to involve rolling out of social protection programmes basing on the *Human-Rights Approach*. This Phase is achievable but only if the country takes the bold step of embedding social protection in the country's constitution. Even so, the reality is Botswana has managed to make remarkable headway in respect of rolling out social protection to many of its marginalised citizens. What lessons, if any, can the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region draw from Botswana's success story?

Keywords: Botswana, charity, diamonds, poverty, rights-based, SADC, safety nets, social protection

15.1

Introduction

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), is a regional economic block made up of 16 countries which are all striving to improve the welfare of their people through the promotion of a variety of development initiatives. Article 5 of the SADC treaty deals with the theme of Fundamental Social Rights. Most of the activities of the Block operate based on protocols, and these include the protocols on health, on science and technology, employment and labour, as well as education and welfare. The SADC's Human and Social Development Directorate has as its key mandate the reduction of human poverty, among other issues. Relevant to issues around social protection is the SADC Tripartite Sub-committee on Social Protection, whose preamble states that everyone in SADC who has insufficient means of subsistence to support themselves and their dependants should be entitled to social assistance. The SADC's Code on Social Security too unequivocally stipulates that everyone has the right to social security.¹ The protocol also gives a comprehensive definition of social protection, noting that social protection refers to public and private, or mixed public and private means designed to protect individuals against life cycle crises that curtail their capacity to meet their needs. The relevant protocols advocate for the rolling out of decent social protection programmes in the various member countries. Sadly, many of the countries have been found wanting in this regard, and this for reasons which range from limited resources through maladministration to corruption.² Botswana is a SADC Member state, and incontrovertibly, has performed much better than most of the other states in the SADC region in terms of rolling out meaningful, viable social protection programmes.

By many accounts, Botswana boasts one of the most comprehensive, impactful social protection regimes on the African continent. There is broad consensus that, over the years, the government of Botswana has managed to develop an efficient social protection system. Admittedly, implementation challenges and constraints that include those related to weak targeting, lack of sustainability and resource scarcity have been noted. However, despite these challenges, the social protection system in Botswana has performed beyond expectations by African standards. The question that has not received sufficient attention is a historical account of how Botswana has managed to get where it is today – “a model for Africa”, as some

1 Mpedi, L.G. & Nyenti, M.A.T. 2015. *Key International, Regional and National Instruments Regulating Social Security in the SADC: A General Perspective*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media.; Devereux, S. & Getu, M. 2013. “The conceptualization and Status of Informal and Formal Social Protection in sub-Saharan Africa.” In: S. Devereux & M. Getu (eds.). *Informal and Formal Social Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers, pp. 1-8; Mupedziswa, R. 2018. “Social protection initiatives for Zimbabwe’s vulnerable groups: Learning from sub-Saharan African Region.” *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 33:2-9.

2 Mupedziswa, 2018, pp. 2-9.

authors have put it. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the various phases of the development of social protection in the country and then conclude by trying to determine lessons the SADC region can draw from Botswana's rich experience.

15.2

The *botho* (pre-colonial) phase

Before the colonial period up to around 1885, Botswana (then Bechuanaland) relied on non-formal social protection measures. Although chiefs and headmen traditionally regulated some of the social protection initiatives, the philosophy during this era was predicated on *botho* (ubuntu) as it emphasised solidarity and reciprocity (*quid pro quo*). This suggests the system was embedded in people's cultural beliefs, norms and values. Ntseane³ notes that, in those days, the country relied basically on traditional support systems in which the extended family system played a key role. The notion of *botho* (i.e. *ubuntu*) promoted the idea of cooperation and working together, with individuals and families taking care of the needy in their midst out of a moral obligation.⁴ Unity and solidarity were emphasised with family and kinship members assisting without necessarily expecting anything in return.⁵

Communities depended largely on self-organised informal safety nets based on membership of a particular social group, such as family, kinship, age group, neighbourhood or ethnic group.⁶ These mechanisms helped people address a wide range of socio-economic and (local) political issues, including the challenges of poverty and destitution. The extended family played a critical role, particularly in mitigating life cycle crises. Mupedziswa and Ntseane⁷ note that the principles of solidarity and reciprocity emphasised shared responsibility and a sense of unity towards fellow family members, ensuring members within the family supported each other, both in good and in bad times.

According to the Botswana Institute of Policy Analysis (BIDPA),⁸ several initiatives served to reinforce the principles of solidarity and reciprocity, and these included

3 Ntseane, D. & Solo, K. 2007. *Social Security and Social Protection in Botswana*. Gaborone: Bay Publishing.

4 Rankopo, M., Osei-Hwedie, K. & Modie, T. 2007. "Issues in service and volunteerism in Botswana" *Joint issue of The Social Work Researcher/Practitioner and the Journal of Social Development in Africa*, pp, 24-38.

5 Ntseane & Solo, 2007.

6 *Ibid.*

7 Mupedziswa, R. & Ntseane, D. 2012. "Non-formal social protection initiatives and their role in promoting social development: The case of Botswana." *Development Southern Africa (DSA) Journal*, 30:84-97.

8 See Botswana Institute of Policy Analysis (BIDPA). 1997. *A Study of Poverty and Poverty Alleviation in Botswana: Phase One*. MFDP.

LIBER AMICORUM

mafisa, *majako* and *go tshwara teu*. The *mafisa* system allowed able-bodied destitute persons to access cattle from rich households in return for looking after the cattle and using them as draft power, for milk, transportation, etc.; the *majako* system which enabled poor people to work in the fields of rich people in return for a share of the harvest and the *go tshwara teu* or *bodisa* initiative provided able-bodied poor people with an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty by looking after cattle of the rich in return for a cow each year. The chief and other traditional leaders redistributed surplus food and cattle to the poor, especially during periods of distress. Thus, apparently during the pre-colonial period, Tswana society was generally self-sufficient with very few people classified as poor.⁹

15.3

The paternalism (colonial) phase (1885-1965)

Botswana endured approximately 80 years of British colonial rule, starting from 1885 through to 1965. The new administration was interested more in the welfare of the small group of white settlers than the black majority, and decisions were taken in a very paternalistic manner, with blacks hardly involved in decision-making. This era saw the introduction by the colonial administration of the Hut Tax and later the Native Tax in 1899 to raise funds to finance social services. Ntseane and Mupedziswa¹⁰ cite Schapera (1947) as stating that, by 1932, the two taxes had been collapsed to form the African Tax, which was levied against every African male of age 18 and above. The taxation policy forced many able-bodied black people to migrate mostly to South Africa to earn wages. The impact was so huge that by 1943, about 33 000 Batswana were working in South Africa.

As can be imagined, this unprecedented outflow of labour impacted negatively on the economic system as well as on the family structure, as women were left behind to raise children alone, tend the cattle and work in the fields.¹¹ The drought that visited in the early 1960s served to exacerbate an already difficult situation. The period 1960-1965 saw a third of the country's herd being decimated by a severe drought. Consequently, poverty levels rose quite significantly as people could no longer depend on subsistence agriculture. Not surprisingly, the informal social protection arrangements in place gradually collapsed as traditional forms of economic activity got eroded.

⁹ Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2012, pp. 84-97.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Schapera, I. 1947. *Migrant Labour and Tribal Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

15.4

The Charity Phase – part 1 (1966-1970)

Botswana attained independence from Britain on 29 September in 1966, and at the time, the country was counted among the poorest nations in the world. In those days the agricultural sector was contributing up to 90% of the national income and the period was characterised by non-existent physical and social infrastructure, with no manufacturing sector to boast of.¹² The government promoted the idea of traditional support networks, as there was no meaningful alternative. The Bechuanaland Protectorate Development Plan (1963-1968) in place then acknowledged that solutions to social problems could still be found within the framework of customary law and traditional support systems. Hence the non-formal social protection system continued to flourish, particularly given that much of the budget expenditure at the time was externally funded.

This period witnessed the launching of the first formal social security programme in Botswana.¹³ The World Food Programme (WFP) financed initiative included a food-for-work programme, which according to Ntseane,¹⁴ saw community members working on a variety of projects including the construction of small dams, building classroom blocks, de-stumping of land, making of rural roads, etc., in exchange for food. During this period, the country continued to depend largely on subsistence agriculture, particularly cattle production. Botlhale¹⁵ cites Picard (1979) as noting that, at the time, political elites and bureaucrats shared similar socioeconomic characteristics such as education, cattle-rearing and command of key sectors of the economy. It was therefore in the interests of the elite to build infrastructure and generally develop institutions.¹⁶ Hence, modernisation and urbanisation gradually set in and this began to fuel a general decline in the operations of Botswana's non-formal social protection system.¹⁷

At the time, not enough resources could be marshalled for social programmes. Apart from the food-for-work programme, people continued to rely on non-formal social

12 Tsie, B. 1998. "The state and development policy in Botswana." In: K.R. Hope & G. Somolekae (eds.). *Public Administration and Policy in Botswana*. Cape Town: Juta, pp. 1-20.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Ntseane, D. 2007. *Welfare regime, social protection and poverty reduction*. Prepared for the UNRISD project on Poverty Reduction and Policy Regimes. Geneva.

15 Botlhale, E. 2010. *Natural resources – blessing or curse? The case of Botswana*. Paper presented at OSISA Conference on the theme Rethinking Governance and economic development in Africa: Prospects and possibilities for a developmental state, Pretoria, 21 May 2010.

16 Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S. & Robinson, J.A. 2001. "How Botswana did it: comparative development in Sub-Saharan Africa." Available online: <https://bit.ly/30P0ttv> [accessed on 18 May 2010].

17 Ntseane & Solo, 2007.

LIBER AMICORUM

protection initiatives. The limited formal social provision that was made available, was apparently ensconced in the philosophy of *charity*, characterised by the giving of handouts to the neediest. Plagerson¹⁸ has explained that where social protection is viewed as *charity*, provision is at the discretion of the state.¹⁹ Invariably, in such a scenario, the idea of a statutory framework is often remote and benefits are made available to only a minimal number of people in extreme exceptions.²⁰ Where social protection is envisaged as *charity*, there is always an element of discretion or even voluntarism on the part of the giver (i.e. in this instance the state) with the receiver (vulnerable members of society) commanding virtually no voice, or at most, only a limited voice. Thus, the state decides to whom and for how long a social protection benefit will be granted.²¹ This arrangement was true of Botswana in the mid-1960s.

The independence government, in the 3rd National Development Plan (1970-1975), appeared to propel provision of social protection consistent with the *charity* mode, with services being provided at the behest of the state. Since the country was poor, the government at the time was faced with making difficult decisions. Chiepe²² quotes the then President, Quett Masire as grappling with several questions: "Because Botswana is such a poor country, we can undertake only a few projects and the task of choosing is much harder. Do we provide more schools or more hospitals [...] Do we improve roads or water facilities." Indeed, these were difficult choices in an environment of limited resources.

Several programmes were launched during the *Charity Phase*. The Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Programme, for example, launched in 1966, emphasised on distributing meals and nutritional supplements to vulnerable, poor or low-income households. Beneficiaries included lactating mothers, pregnant women, TB patients, malnourished pre-school children, primary school children, and children aged 6-10.²³ The government in 1973 introduced rural and urban councils, and these were tasked with coming up with 5-year development plans. Also, a National Policy on Rural Development was launched to help improve conditions in rural areas.²⁴ Needless to say, although the formal social protection (VGF) programme was launched, there was no proper legislative framework driving the process. Thus, it was more an act of the government feeling pity for the country's vulnerable groups. At least this showed the government had a conscience.

18 Plagerson, S. 2014. "Charity or justice?". Johannesburg: Centre for Social Development in Africa, University of Johannesburg.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Bitso, B.P. 2012. *Country profile, gender and social protection in Lesotho*. Paper presented at FES Conference in Lusaka, Zambia, 22-23 October 2012.

21 See Plagerson, 2014.

22 Chiepe, G. 1973. "Development in Botswana." *African Affairs*, 72:319-321.

23 See Ntseane, 2007.

24 Dipholo, K. 2010. *Rural development in Botswana: challenges and opportunities*. Paper presented at a BOCONGO National Stakeholders workshop, Fairground Holdings, Gaborone, 18 May 2010.

15.5

The Charity Phase – part 2 (1970-1975)

It is common course that the discovery of massive diamond deposits in the country in the 1970s ushered in a new economic era, marked by a significantly improved resource base. As Jefferis²⁵ notes the real economic turn-around occurred with the discovery of the Orapa kimberlitic pipe which marked the beginning of a booming diamond mining industry. This was followed later by the discovery of diamond deposits in Letlhakane and much later (1982) in Jwaneng. This, coupled with the exemplary leadership of founding President Sir Seretse Khama²⁶ set the tone for improved social provision in the country, although this did not immediately result in the government abandoning the *charity* philosophy; it simply ushered it to higher levels.

In a move that seemed to show a determination to take the *charity* model of social welfare provision to a higher pedestal, the government in the 1970s, announced its intention to introduce a formal social protection system, noting further that henceforth, national planning would follow the principles of democracy, development, self-reliance and unity. Significantly, the launching of the Social Welfare Unit was timely given that, there was evidence of a general decline in the traditional social safety nets.²⁷ The Unit (later called the Department of Social Services) was mandated to develop a social protection regime that would address not just the social challenges, but also the prevailing critical problems of poverty and destitution.²⁸

A Home Economics Unit whose brief was to organise, train and actively involve women essentially to address challenges associated with the drought spell, poverty and unemployment was launched. The period also witnessed the introduction of Youth Brigades and Youth Clubs to facilitate skills training and character-building, respectively. The period also saw the launching of the Basarwa Development Programme (later renamed Remote Area Development Programme or RADP) whose brief was to uplift living standards of marginalised communities in remote areas.²⁹ These moves marked the birth of a more robust formal social protection system, which according to the government, would be realised through adherence

25 Jefferis, K. 1998. "Botswana and diamond-dependent development." In: W.A. Edge & M. Lekorwe (eds.). *Botswana: Politics and Society*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, p. 301.

26 Bauer, G. & Taylor, S. 2005. *Politics in Southern Africa: State and Society in Transition*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

27 See Ntseane, 2007.

28 See Ntseane & Solo, 2008.

29 See Ntseane, 2007.

to the principles of social justice and equality of opportunity.³⁰ The launching of a dedicated Social Welfare Unit and the various initiatives meant, in earnest, that the social protection regime in Botswana began to move beyond the philosophy of *charity*, to what can be termed a *Caring State* Phase of social welfare provision.

15.6

The Caring State Phase (1975-1997)

According to literature, a *caring state* is one which offers a variety of services, including care services for children, older people and other socio-economic groups as a matter of course.³¹ The services are offered in a systematic manner, and with consistency. The Nordic Welfare States, for instance, have frequently been designated with labels like ‘*caring states*’ or ‘social service states’³² because of their commitment to ensuring that the basic needs of all their citizens are catered for. In the context of Botswana, the *caring state* philosophy appears to be predicated on the traditional notion of *botho*, (alluded to earlier) imbued in the spirit of sharing, and a belief that an individual earns respect by respecting and empowering others.

Perhaps nowhere is the notion of a *caring state* philosophy more aptly captured than in the country’s Vision 16 document, one of whose pillars emphasises the need to promote a ‘compassionate, just and caring nation’. The policy document (Vision 2016) launched in 1997, advocated for the provision of “an adequate and dignified safety net for those who are in poverty in a way that does not encourage dependency and provides a means of escape from the poverty trap and a return to productive society”.³³ The statement has all the trappings and features of a *caring state*. Hence the *caring state* philosophy became embedded in the thinking of the leadership, and many of the initiatives put in place reflected this notion.

In 1978, the government, in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Bank of Reconstruction (IBRD), launched the Labour Intensive Public Works Programme (LIPWP) whereby poorer members of the community were paid for participation in such activities as the construction of rural roads and related infrastructure.³⁴ The launching, in 1980 of the National Destitute Policy, among other initiatives, was probably the surest sign that the

30 Government of Botswana. 1970. *National Development Plan 1970-1975*. Gaborone: Government Printer Gaborone.

31 Szebehely, M. & Vabo, M. 2018. *A caring state for all older people?* Paper prepared for the Mid-term Conference of NCoE REASSESS, Oslo, 18-20 May 2018.

32 Leira, A. 1994. “Concepts of caring: Loving, thinking, and doing” *Social Services Review*, 68:185-201.

33 Government of Botswana. 1997. *Presidential Task Group for the Long Term Vision for Botswana: A Long term Vision for Botswana*. Gaborone: Government of Botswana.

34 See Ntseane, 2007.

government had enthusiastically embraced the *caring state* philosophy. This policy was introduced to assist destitute persons, particularly older people. Other social protection initiatives, such as the World War II Veterans Programme (1998) and Old Age Pension (1996), introduced through a Presidential Directive, were further evidence the government had firmly predicated its activities on the platform of *caring state* philosophy. In 1997, the government launched the Community Home Based Care programme to mitigate the impact of the AIDS pandemic, while in 1999, it launched the Short Term Plan of Action for Care of Orphans (STPA) in response to the critical needs of children who had been orphaned by AIDS.

Propelled by the *caring state* philosophy, Botswana's social protection regime has, over the years, grown from strength to strength. It is little wonder therefore that a respected 'think tank' in the area of social development,³⁵ categorically stated that Botswana boasted of one of the most comprehensive state-led social protection regimes in the southern African region, further noting that in this country, "Programming for poor, vulnerable and excluded groups is comprehensive by African standards [...]". The same suggested that Botswana's system might qualify as a model for Africa. Not surprisingly, some began to argue that the country's social protection regime had, since around 1997, graduated from a *Caring State* phase to the more advanced *developmental state* phase.

15.7

Developmental State Phase (1997 to-date)

Through fiscal discipline and sound management, a good governance record and stable democracy, Botswana transformed itself from one of the poorest countries in the world to upper-middle-income status.³⁶ Records indicate that in the 1990s the country's real GDP growth averaged 8.5% and remained buoyant at 6% in the 2000s.³⁷ With a per capita GINI of USD 6 240 in 2009, Botswana was described by the World Bank as one of the world's greatest development success stories.³⁸ In 2013 the per capita GDP stood at USD 16 400, and today Botswana is ranked among the best credit risk countries in Africa. The country has thus done extremely well in this regard. The launching of the Vision 2016 document, by some accounts, effectively qualified Botswana to assume the label, *developmental state*.

³⁵ Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP). 2011. *Social Protection in Botswana – A Model for Africa?* Johannesburg: Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme, p. 1.

³⁶ Mafela, L., Maundeni, T. & Mookodi, G. 2011. "Introduction: Socioeconomic Development in Botswana." *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 26:7-10.

³⁷ See RHVP, 2011.

³⁸ World Bank. 2010. *World Development indicators 2010*. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3jN0E1I> [accessed on 19 September 2014].

LIBER AMICORUM

Johnson³⁹ is credited with having used the term *developmental state* to explain Japan's very rapid, highly-successful, post-war reconstruction and re-industrialisation. Apparently, a key feature of a *developmental state* is that it puts mechanisms in place to prevent the poor from being excluded from benefitting from and participating in socio-economic development.⁴⁰ Manuel⁴¹ cites one Patrick Heller as stating that a *developmental state* strives to manage the delicate balance between growth and social development and for Taylor⁴² *developmental state* endeavours to integrate social development and economic growth goals within a wider development strategy. Stated otherwise, activities in a *developmental state* tend to be driven by the government, with the collaboration of private enterprises, for national and deliberate development.⁴³ In a *developmental state*, it is the role of the government to lead a strong, concerted drive for economic growth, ensuring the mobilisation of national resources towards developmental goals.⁴⁴ In brief, therefore, key features of a *developmental state* include promotion and adherence to human rights, promotion of equality, equitable redistribution of resources; poverty reduction; capacity building, addressing of social needs, considerable expenditure on state services, social assistance provision with high levels of benefits and *social justice*.⁴⁵

Many commentators appear to believe Botswana has attained the *developmental state* label. RHVP,⁴⁶ for instance, posited, "Botswana has been characterized as Africa's clearest example of a 'developmental state'". Taylor⁴⁷ corroborated this contention by noting that Botswana, alongside Mauritius, belonged to a category of countries outside Asia, "whole phenomenal levels of growth have earned them the label 'so-called *development states*'". The same view was shared by Edge (1998:333) who observed that "[...] Botswana is a *developmental state* comparable to those of the 'Asian Tigers' [...]". In the same vein, Tsie⁴⁸ stated that "Botswana is a democratic

39 Johnson, C.1982. *MITI and the Japanese miracle: The Growth of Industry Policy 1925-1975*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

40 Holzmann, R. & Jorgensen, S. 2002. *Social Risk Management: A New Conceptual Framework for Social Protection and Beyond*. The World Bank Washington.

41 Manuel, T. 2004. *Budget Speech*. National Assembly South Africa.

42 Taylor, V. 2005. *Comparative social policy in Africa*. Notes, Department of Social Development. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

43 Botlhale, E. 2010. *Natural resources – blessing or curse? The case of Botswana*. Paper presented at OSISA Conference on the theme Rethinking Governance and economic development in Africa: Prospects and possibilities for a developmental state, Pretoria, 21 May 2010.

44 Levin, R.M. 2008. "Public service capacity and organization in the South African developmental state." In: B. Turok (ed.). *Wealth doesn't Trickle Down: The Case for a Developmental State in South Africa*. New Agenda Cape Town.

45 Chagunda, C. 2014. *South Africa's Social Assistance Intervention as a Building Block of a Developmental State*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

46 See RHVP2011, p. 8.

47 See Taylor, 2003, p. 6.

48 See Tsie, 1998, p. 13.

developmental state in the sense that it has promoted rapid economic growth and capitalist development without abandoning democratic norms and practices". Thus, there is broad consensus among scholars that Botswana has indeed attained *developmental state* status.

15.8

Critique of Botswana's social protection system

For a country to successfully claim the label of a *developmental state*, there ought to be in place, *inter alia*, a comprehensive social protection regime. According to Chagunda,⁴⁹ the key features of such a scenario would include the nature of the social assistance provision and social justice, both of which are elements of a viable social protection regime. According to Taylor,⁵⁰ a comprehensive social protection system for a *developmental state* would be one that seeks to provide basic means for all the people to effectively *participate* and advance in social and economic life, and in turn to contribute to social and economic development. She adds that in the context of a *developmental state*:

Comprehensive social protection (tends to be) broader than the traditional concept of social security, and incorporates developmental strategies and programmes designed to ensure, collectively, at least a minimum acceptable living standard for all citizens. It embraces the traditional measures of social insurance, social assistance and social services, but goes beyond that to focus on causality through an integrated policy approach including many of the developmental initiatives undertaken by the state.⁵¹

An analysis of Botswana's overall performance in the area of social protection suggests that over the last couple of decades, the country has acquitted itself quite commendably about many of the above-mentioned salient features of social protection associated with any flourishing *developmental state*. Evidently, considerable numbers of citizens have benefited from a wide range of social protection initiatives. However, some shortfalls have been noted in the social protection system. One issue of concern relates to the apparent tendency on the part of the relevant authorities to simply focus on ensuring that social protection services are 'available' and 'accessible' to everyone who qualifies, without going further to worry about whether indeed the services are actually 'being used' by all concerned. Apparently, this problem has emerged due to failure on the part of the authorities to put in place effective monitoring and evaluation measures.⁵²

⁴⁹ See Chagunda, 2014.

⁵⁰ See Taylor, 2002.

⁵¹ See Taylor, 2002, p. 41.

⁵² See Ntseane & Solo, 2007.

LIBER AMICORUM

Concern has also been expressed regarding the lack of clear mechanisms for effective redistribution of the national wealth that is accruing from the mineral resources. RHVP⁵³ has observed:

While most Batswana have benefited from these achievements, the new wealth is very unevenly distributed and many individuals and groups are marginalized economically, socially and/or geographically.

With the social protection regime thus commanding a narrow base, poverty has remained an issue of concern. It has also been noted that the social protection schemes had tended to suffer from lack of coordination and poor targeting, poor implementation, ineffective utilisation of resources and lack of accountability.⁵⁴

Other than that, there has also been the concern that the various social protection schemes tend to be modest, a good number are means-tested and perhaps most important, that there is no evidence of clear commitment on the part of the state to promote a redistributive social security system hence in large part, these schemes have not contributed significantly to poverty eradication. Rather, they have considerably alleviated hunger and deprivation.⁵⁵ Gadbaloe⁵⁶ has also pointed out a further downside, which is that some of these schemes, especially the Destitute Persons Programme, had created a dependency syndrome instead of empowering people to get out of welfare. These apparent teething problems, however, ought not to detract from the tremendous strides that have been made.

While there may be substance in some of these criticisms, the fact remains Botswana's social protection regime can indeed be viewed as a model for Africa. Perhaps cognisant of this and to its credit, the government has steadfastly continued to push ahead with its development agenda as well as the expansion of its social protection regime. Statistics Botswana (2011) reported a marked decline in the overall number of persons living below the poverty datum line from 499 467 in 2002/2003 to 373 388 in 2009/2010. There is, therefore, no doubt that the various social protection initiatives in Botswana were bearing fruit as they were introduced out of a genuine desire on the part of the government to redistribute resources coming out of the country's resources. Granted, some of the initiatives could have been fashioned out in a paternalistic manner without meaningful initial participation on the part of the intended beneficiaries, but it is evident the leadership took the decisions as a result of genuine care about the welfare of the population. Huge strides have been realised since the days of the *charity* philosophy. But there is a need for Botswana to build in the *developmental state* mode to achieve unbridled *social justice*.

53 See RHVP, 2011, p. 3.

54 See Ntseane & Solo, 2007.

55 See Ntseane, 2017.

56 See Gadbaloe, 2010.

15.9

Case for a social justice approach to social protection in Botswana

Government attainment of the *developmental state* label, while commendable, however, has not necessarily translated into ensuring that all who deserved to access social protection are routinely catered for. Incontrovertibly, a sizeable proportion of deserving citizens have remained in the margins, despite the social protection programme being among the most comprehensive in the region. This was confirmed especially in an assessment conducted by BIDPA.⁵⁷ The World Bank⁵⁸ explained that BIDPA's assessment had "concentrated on social assistance programmes and aimed to provide information to contribute to Botswana's future social protection and labour strategy and policies to achieve the goals of Vision 2016". The Vision 2016 document regarding social protection, states thus: "All people will have access to productive resources regardless of ethnic origin, gender, disability, or misfortune. There will be a social safety net for those who find themselves in poverty for any reason. This will go hand in hand with the provision of good quality social security [...] aimed at vulnerable groups [...]".⁵⁹ There is evidently no lack of goodwill on the part of the government.

The recurring challenges concerning coverage and targeting suggest the need for the government of Botswana to seriously consider embracing and promoting a *social justice*-based social protection system. There is consensus that "Social protection is not charity or a commodity but a right" (Sustainable Development, 2014). Plagerson⁶⁰ quotes the late South African President, Nelson Mandela as stressing the viewpoint that, "Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice". Clearly, Botswana needs to take urgent, deliberate steps to embark on the social justice path, where its social protection regime is concerned. Already, commendable strides have been made in this direction.

The statement in Botswana's Vision 2016 document documented above is consistent with the key tenets of a *rights-based* approach to social protection. However, such declarations of intent will need to be backed up by a well-articulated legal framework. First prize would be to take a leaf from South Africa, where the country's social protection regime is embedded in the country's constitution. Such a move will ensure the government can be held accountable if it defaults, and such a move is the hallmark of a genuine *social justice* approach. Once the government of Botswana has fully embraced the *rights-based* (social justice) approach to the provision of

⁵⁷ See BIDPA, 1997.

⁵⁸ World Bank, 2014, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Government of Botswana, 1997, p. 9.

⁶⁰ See Plagerson, 2014.

social protection, then decisions such as *who* gets *what* benefits and for *how* long, would not continue to be the preserve of the state alone. Other than that, once the government has taken steps to embark on this noble route, the policy implementers would then be in a position to move beyond the notion that social protection services are accessible to everyone, to one where they ensure that services are being utilised by all concerned. Above all, when that time arrives, social protection services in the country would be ‘needs’ tested rather than ‘means’ tested, as seems to be the case at the moment.

Be that as it may, all this should never detract from the fact that Botswana has proved to be a leading light where social protection provision in the region is concerned. Bar the implementation challenges, the country has acquitted itself sufficiently well for its programme to qualify as a model for Africa.⁶¹ For this reason, the country has several lessons to offer to the rest of the SADC region.

15.10

Lessons for the SADC region

15.10.1 Political will to finance social protection programmes

This is the number one object lesson where the rolling out of social protection programmes is concerned. Many SADC countries tend to depend on development partners such as the donor community and NGOs to finance their social protection programmes.⁶² There is a need for these countries to show political will as this will help unlock appetite, on the part of governments, to roll out viable social protection programmes. According to Devereux and Getu,⁶³ externally driven social protection projects have little domestic traction. Botswana almost entirely funds its social protection programmes from domestic government revenue,⁶⁴ suggesting unbridled political will. Indeed, government participation is crucially pertinent when it comes to rolling out social protection initiatives.⁶⁵ The SADC region should, therefore, take a leaf from Botswana’s example and ensure that a reasonable percentage of their annual budgets goes towards social protection programmes.

15.10.2 Political stability and citizen participation are paramount

Political stability and solid governance, coupled with citizen participation, are evidently a pre-requisite for successful rolling out of viable social protection

⁶¹ See RHVP, 2011.

⁶² Mupedziswa, 2018, pp. 2-9.

⁶³ See Devereux & Getu, 2013.

⁶⁴ See RHVP, 2011.

⁶⁵ See Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2012.

programmes. In Botswana, the prevalence of peace has ensured scarce resources are directed towards social protection programmes, rather than to the purchasing of military hardware, for instance. Corruption is at a minimum. Botswana is a relatively stable democracy, has generally facilitated citizen participation in decision-making in many spheres of endeavour.⁶⁶ Yet in many SADC countries, vulnerable groups tend to be rendered voiceless, with hardly any avenues open for citizen participation. It is therefore little wonder that in many SADC countries, social protection programmes are, as Devereux and Getu⁶⁷ put it, designed and delivered above the heads of the people it intends to benefit, suggesting a lack of participation. Governments in the SADC region ought to do everything necessary to create a conducive environment, that will facilitate meaningful participation in social protection provision.

15.10.3 Prudent management of resources

Botswana is renowned for the prudent management of its mineral wealth especially the revenue accrued mostly from diamonds, which by most accounts has been put to wise use.⁶⁸ This has enabled the country to mobilise considerable resources for social protection programmes. Many SADC countries are equally endowed with large deposits of a variety of minerals, but poor management has meant a fair percentage of the earnings from minerals have not been officially accounted for. For example, looting and corruption resulted in Zimbabwe losing revenue widely believed to be in the region of USD 15 billion from the rich Marange diamond fields. These are resources that could have gone towards social protection programmes.

15.10.4 Efficiency through the introduction of innovations in IT

One major challenge faced in terms of social protection provision in the SADC region is that the programmes tend to suffer from poor information management mechanisms, resulting in poor record keeping. This, in turn, has created inefficiencies that include missing names and 'double-dipping' on the part of beneficiaries.⁶⁹ Botswana has gone around this problem by introducing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) based management information systems, including the electronic registry system and identity cards (smartcard) which has helped enhance administrative efficiency in the country's social protection programmes. Other countries in the SADC region may wish to take a leaf from this innovation. However, such systems work better where electricity supplies are generally reliable, and sadly for many SADC countries, electricity supplies are erratic, especially in the countryside. This means such systems might not work efficiently.

⁶⁶ Mafela, Maundeni & Mookodi, 2011, pp. 7-10.

⁶⁷ See Devereux & Getu, 2013.

⁶⁸ See Bauer & Taylor, 2005.

⁶⁹ See Mupedziswa, 2018.

15.10.5 Redistributive justice

Linked to the themes of democracy and participation is the need to promote redistributive justice. In a democracy, the geographical distribution of social protection beneficiaries is expected to follow that of the overall population and this will ensure that needy citizens do not fall through the cracks. Yet, in many SADC countries, the geographical distribution of social protection programmes has not been consistent with population distribution, rather political influence has been the norm. Consequently, social protection programmes have, in such cases, failed to reach the vast majority of those needing assistance.⁷⁰ Botswana has managed to achieve this goal remarkably well as geographical distribution has broadly followed that of the overall population (76% rural).⁷¹ Additionally, while in many countries in the SADC, coverage has tended to be haphazard; in Botswana social protection programmes are generally, fairly well targeted, attesting to the commitment and effective administration of resources on the part of the government.

15.10.6 Social protection should speak to poverty alleviation

According to Olivier, Kaseke and Mpedi,⁷² most social protection systems in the SADC region are hardly linked to poverty alleviation in any significant way, the reason being that most of the schemes were envisaged as a temporary measure only meant to stop people from sliding deep into poverty. In the case of Botswana, the situation is markedly different, with some initiatives (e.g. Destitute Persons Programme) having in them an inbuilt rehabilitative component. This strategy is meant to facilitate empowerment and capacity building, whose ultimate goal is to create an environment conducive for self-reliance. RHVP (2011) has observed that a major preoccupation of the government of Botswana has been to avoid dependency on, and promote 'graduation' from, social protection programmes. In short, social protection programmes should not be of the type that promotes dependency syndrome.

15.10.7 Role of non-formal systems should be recognised

Many SADC countries have tended to underplay the critical contribution of the non-formal social protection system to the overall welfare of their populations. Olivier, Kaseke and Mpedi,⁷³ note that the core values of the non-formal system include self-help, inherent solidarity, contribution obligation and entitlement, cultural

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ See RHVP, 2011.

⁷² Olivier, M., Kaseke, E. & Mpedi, L.G. 2008. *Informal Social Security in Africa: Developing a Framework for Policy Intervention*. Paper presented at International Conference on Social Security, Cape Town, 10-14 March 2008.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

expression and social identification. In Botswana, the role of the non-formal social protection system has generally been appreciated. SADC countries, therefore, need to seriously consider and appreciate the role of indigenous social protection systems in social development.

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