



**MINISTRY OF NATIONALITY, IMMIGRATION
AND GENDER AFFAIRS**

Botswana country report

ON

**AGREED CONCLUSIONS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
AND THE LINK TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

7TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

Botswana as a Member State of the United Nations remains committed to the Sustainable Development Goals especially Goal 5 on Achieving Gender equality and Empowering All Women and Girls. To this end, Botswana continues to implement the **2015 National Policy on Gender and Development** as well as the **2016 National Strategy Towards Ending Gender Based Violence**.

To ensure that women are afforded equal opportunities, **Government constantly reviews laws** to repeal those that are discriminatory and enact the ones that enable women and men to meaningfully contribute in development. For the period under review, Botswana is **drafting a Sexual Offenders Registry Bill** which is aimed at amongst others: creating a Sexual Offenders Registry; and banning child sexual abuse offenders from working in institutions dealing with children, People With Disability including those with mental conditions. In addition, **Government commenced mainstreaming of gender into the Water, Housing and Agriculture sectors**.

Botswana noting the significant role of the **Traditional Leaders** as custodians of culture continued their capacity building. For the period under review, a total of **114 Traditional Leaders from 3 Districts were trained on Mainstreaming Gender into the Customary Justice System and addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV)**. The training included; breaking gender stereotypes that are perpetuated by cultural norms and practices, promoting positive masculinity, and sharing of reproductive and care work as well as affording women and girls safe spaces to freely express their views on matters that concern them.

Government recognises that **women's economic empowerment** is central to the socio-economic, cultural and political transformation of women. To facilitate women's participation in the mainstream economy, the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency which is responsible for providing financial and technical support for establishment of sustainable citizen owned business enterprises **revised funding guidelines to accommodate women**. The revision includes: **increase in loan limits from USD50 to USD50, 000.00 for Micro/Small businesses; from USD50, 000.00 to USD1, 000,000.00 for Medium businesses and USD400, 000 to USD5, 000,000.00 for Large scale businesses**.

In addition, **interest rates were reduced from: 5% to 4.25% for Micro/Small businesses; 7.5% to 5.75 for Medium businesses and for Large scale businesses it is equivalent to the current prime lending rate of 5.75%.** There are special reduced interest rates for exceptional sectors being: manufacturing, mining, energy, construction, technology and innovations, agriculture, creative industry and tourism. Furthermore, **loan repayment has been increased from 5 to 20 years depending on the scale of business. Additional provisions include discounted Security requirements for People with Disabilities (PWDs), women and youth across all loan classifications.**

On promoting **women in leadership**, a deliberate effort was made to **appoint 4 out of being 67% of women as Specially Elected Members of Parliament.** Women in the Public Sector, Parastatals and Boards currently stand above 30%. Noting this gap, **women who stood for Council seats in the 2019 General Election were trained on life skills including public speaking.** To establish specific challenges faced by women in politics, Emang Basadi, **a Non-Governmental Organisation working in this area undertook a Study named "Mme O kae" which means "Where are the Women".** The Study mainly revealed that women lack resources, are confined by patriarchy and multiple roles to effectively participate in politics. To mitigate, the Study recommends provision of resources, intense public education and interrogation of gender stereotypes to open spaces for women. The Study was launched in the eve of the 2019 elections and national consultations will be undertaken to inform the National Action Plan.

Regarding Labour and Social Policies, the Labour Sector Consultative Council comprising of Government, Employee and Employer representatives met to consult on matters relating to COVID-19 and its effects in the world of work. In addition, the Ministry of Employment, Labour Productivity and Skills Development, International Labour Organization (ILO), Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU), Business Botswana (BB) and Botswana Federation of Public Sectors Union (BOFEPUSU) **signed the second generation Botswana Decent Work Country Programme (BDWCP) 2020-2024.** The Country Programme prioritises: Sustainable Employment Creation particularly for young women and men; Improved Quality

Social Protection and Conditions of Work for all; and Effective Labour Market Governance Institutions and Practices.

Upon implementation, the programme will deliver:

- Sustainable and decent employment for Botswana more especially young women and men in all sectors through an improved and enabling environment for sustainable enterprises.
- Improved social protection coverage for women and men to access social security and health benefits, occupational safety and health, including in the informal economy.
- Adequate protection of the vulnerable workers.

During the COVID-19, Government noting the need to provide effective and efficient service **employed additional temporary human resources** being: **952 Social Workers** and **921 Health Personnel**. Psycho-social support was identified as a critical intervention to mitigate the post COVID-19 effects. To support affected persons, **a technical team was set up to direct the Psycho-social support (PSS)** during this emergency. The team is coordinated by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and comprise of; Ministry of Health and Wellness, Ministry of Basic Education, a consortium of Civil Society Organizations, Faith Based Organizations and the University of Botswana. The team expertise include: Social Workers; Psychologists; Psychiatric Nurses; Teacher Counsellors; Mental Health and Behavioral Interventionists.

To address the escalating **Gender Based Violence (GBV)**, the Botswana Police Service established a Toll-Free line which is operated by a trained officer for prompt and appropriate response to GBV. Civil Society also expanded their contact lines and services to accommodate more clients and reporting. To strengthen the Referral Pathways, the Standard Operating Procedures for the Police, Social Protection and Education were completed. These will ease referral of GBV survivors within the institution and across institutions.

Noting the critical need for **sexual and reproductive health services** Government continued to provide such across the Country. These included: pre and post-natal care; monitoring of the

under-fives; and provision of Ante Retroviral Therapy (ART). Civil Society also provided Counselling to persons living with HIV/AIDS during this period.

To close the **socio-economic** gap created by COVID-19: Government **committed a total of USD35, 870, 083.00 for food packages** to households affected by the suspension of economic activities, majority of whom were women being 55% female headed households. These were in addition to those that were already in the safety nets; **including those providing care to the elderly, the sick and People With Disability.**

Furthermore, Government **continued to pay salaries** of all employees in both Local Government and Central Government comprising 64.6% of women employed in Local Government and 53.5% employed in Central Government respectively. In addition, Government **continued to pay wages** to 69.7% women in the Labour Intensive Public Works.

The COVID-19 pandemic required a **multi-sectoral and multi-pronged approach** with concerted effort for effective prevention and containment. Following this, the Government in collaboration with the United Nations Agencies in Botswana supported Civil Society being: Botswana Red Cross Society at **USD17, 828.22** and Botswana Gender Based Violence Prevention and Support Centre which offers GBV Survivors shelter at **USD5,523.00**. Funds were also used for training of Local Organising Committee in the fight against Gender Based Violence. The Ministry of Health and Wellness also supported additional shelters for GBV victims and survivors.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of implementation of strategies for gender equality and women's empowerment are central to determine progress, identify challenges and inform interventions. To ensure effective M&E, Government in 2019 developed the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the National Policy on Gender and Development. The Framework promotes consistent and centralized tracking of progress on gender and development activities to improve analysis, planning and programme development in line with the Gender Policy, National Development Plan 11 and Vision 2036. It also strengthens communication, information

sharing and collaboration among communities, development and implementing partners as well as policy makers for increased accountability at all levels.

It is important to highlight that **collection of gender disaggregated data during COVID-19 has been a major challenge**. This had impact on targeted response as the approach was more universal than specific to the differing needs of women and men and girls and boys. This however is a lesson that Botswana will address in data collection, going forward.

The **COVID-19 situation has made it harder for providing services such as screening for sexual and Gender Based Violence** as efforts and resources are channelled towards prevention and containment of the disease. In addition, **referral pathways remain disrupted**. To this end, Botswana has established the need for a **comprehensive Response and Recovery Plan** for the wide range and long lasting challenges presented by the pandemic.