

BOTSWANA

BOTSWANA'S RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO GOVERNMENTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION (1995) AND THE OUTCOME OF THE TWENTY- THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2000).

**Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs
Women's Affairs Department**

QUESTIONNAIRE

PART ONE:

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT.

Since the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) Botswana has made major strides in the advancement of women despite the fact that there are still gaps and constraints.

A major achievement in implementing the National Plan of Action for gender equality and advancement of women has been the adoption of two very important documents. In 1996, the Government promulgated the National Policy on Women in Development. This policy attempts to address the situation of women in Botswana in an integrated and multi-sectoral manner. It focuses on areas including:

- Elimination of all negative economic and socio-cultural practices as well as inappropriate laws which will be done through eliminating all forms of inequalities and inequities among women and men.
- Enhancement on women's health which will be achieved through promoting women's health including reproductive health and rights.
- Promotion of education and skills training which will be done by ensuring that education is designed to create gender awareness.
- Promotion of gender awareness in development planning which will be met through ensuring that the needs of women are identified and provided for.

Development of a gender sensitive legal framework

Also, in the same year, 1996, another milestone in the advancement of women in Botswana was reached with the Government's ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The convention, inter alia, on Women's rights emphasizes the need to review all laws and customs in order to remove gender bias. It also emphasizes the importance of public human rights education, gender sensitization and the provision of legal services to assist women whose human rights have been violated. Whilst there has been a continual revision of pieces of legislation to address gender inequalities in 1997/98 a comprehensive review of all laws affecting the status of women in Botswana was carried out. The study made observations and recommendations for redress.

Elevation of the status of the National Women's Machinery

It is worth noting that in 1996/97 the National Women's Machinery was upgraded to a full-fledged government department (the Women's Affairs Department).

Research and documentation

A number of studies have been carried out on the six critical areas adopted by Botswana. For instance, a study on the Socio-economic Implications of Violence against Women was completed in March 1999. A National Gender Programme (NGP) Framework and Plan of Action

(POA) were developed (from 1997-1999) based on the National Policy on Women in Development. The NGP is a long-term vision for Gender and Development in Botswana and the POA stipulates activities that need to be undertaken in the next six years. It also indicates key players, targets and stakeholders in the implementation process.

A consultancy to develop a comprehensive advocacy and social mobilization strategy for the National Gender Programme was commissioned with the main objective of developing a comprehensive strategy for consensus building, resource mobilization, and sustained commitment to the National Gender Programme. The terms of reference for the study included:

- Identification of key institutions and organizations “whose procedures and activities should embrace gender mainstreaming”.
- Formulation of a lobbying mechanism through which government can play a leading role in the adoption and implementation of the National Gender Programme, and;
- Identification of appropriate communication activities for social mobilization on the National Gender Programme.

Constraints

There is need to note that the National Women’s Machinery still lacks the critical human and financial resources that would enable it to execute its mandate fully; thus making the POA fully operational. The National Women’s Machinery has to prioritise (which is extremely difficult at times) because of these limitations.

The National Women’s Machinery has continually supported initiatives to empower communities to take part in the women’s issues and also promoting a sense of ownership gender mainstreaming activities. There should be rigorous information dissemination by the National Women’s Machinery, therefore, there is a need of decentralizing the operations of Women’s Affairs Department to sustain programmes at district and community levels. So far the Department opened two more offices in country, one at Francistown in 2000 and the other one at Gantsi in 2001.

Women’s issues are still viewed as the exclusive responsibility of the National Women’s Machinery. As such, other extension departments or divisions consider responsibilities in this regard as of secondary concern to their regular work. Therefore cooperation is thwarted, there is no agreement on respective roles and responsibilities of various government departments. As a result, there are more obstacles in realizing national goals for the meaningful empowerment of women.

Gender Equality and Advancement of Women since 1995

Involvement of the NWM in policy development

The attention to gender balancing and advancement of women has improved since 1995 in Government policies. The different government departments have since started to include the National Women’s Machinery in the development of their policies to ensure that a gender perspective permeates their policies, examples of such policies include the Population Policy, the

Land Policy, and the Sports and Recreation Policy. However, the change has been rather slow. All Ministries now have Gender Focal Points (GFPs). There is improvement on knowledge in, and full appreciation for gender mainstreaming. The National Women's Machinery has conducted training in gender planning for:

- Gender Focal Points and the National Council on Women after the full establishment of these structures.
- Other officials and senior staff in the wider government structure.
- Members of Parliament, local government authorities, the House of Chiefs.
- Permanent Secretaries.
- Civil Society, Private Sector and the
- Media.
- Districts Development Committees.

There is, however, still a need to do more in this regard especially training of the media personnel in order to promote positive reporting of gender issues.

Public Response

The public's perception of gender equality and the advancement of women has changed since the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) which was followed by nationwide gender awareness building efforts at grassroots and district levels. The General public now views this as a challenge for every person and they are now beginning to grasp fundamental concepts relating to gender equality.

Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) dealing with women's empowerment have significantly increased in number over the past years. The University of Botswana, the Botswana National Productivity Centre, the Institute of Development Management are among many institutions which have taken gender equality and the advancement of women into consideration and offer training on gender. However, it is worth noting that there is no set standard, therefore, there are variations in the quality of training.

Globalisation of Trade

In Botswana, the removal of protectionist trade policies as dictated by the international economic environment may put the majority of local women at a disadvantage. Their commodities would have to compete with high quality products from outside. As a result local female producers would need to price products unprofitably low in order to attract consumers. While competition is ordinarily healthy for quality of products, this is likely to stifle women's initiatives in economic participation, as their access to markets is restricted. This competition might be healthy in the long-run, but in the foreseeable future it does not auger very well for the status of women in Botswana as they need to develop requisite skills and knowledge that should enable them to compete in the global economy.

So far statistics show that most Botswana women have not yet benefited from AGOA.

Collaboration and Networking

The National Women's Machinery has actively sought to establish partnership within government and the NGOs in order to facilitate the implementation of the National Gender Programme. Through the Women's NGO Coalition different NGOs have taken responsibility for different aspects of the programme. There is a regular NGO/CBO/WAD forum for information sharing.

There are ongoing training and capacity-building initiatives to train selected individuals from various government departments, the Private Sector/Parastals, NGOs and CBOs. Training programmes range in duration from one week to four months. The basic aim has been to provide participants with knowledge and skills that should facilitate the inclusion of a gender perspective into organization's policies, programmes and activities. WAD has also facilitated exchange programmes / visits with other countries for stakeholders.

There is an expanding network of national and local women's and human rights organizations that continues to look for opportunities to implement strategies around the six critical areas of concern for Botswana. Progress has been slowly registered due to constraints encountered.

PART TWO

PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND THE FURTHER INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. WOMEN AND POVERTY INCLUDING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

These two critical areas of concern were cited as Botswana's number one critical area of concern.

Women and female-headed households suffer poverty and economic marginalization more acutely than men and male-headed households in Botswana. This partly emanated from the culture of Botswana that for so long promoted men as decision makers, leaders and also from some laws that discriminated against women. However, since 1995 there has been some recognizable changes as strategies and programmes were put in place to address the issues as follows:

- The Botswana Government and UNDP signed an agreement that among other targets provided financial assistance to economic empowerment projects of women. This programme started in 1997 and ended in 2003. The assistance from this programme was extended to NGOs, CBOs and Women's groups. Groups like 'Kgetse Ya Tsie who benefited from this programme now produce several products made from locally available products. For example, Morula Jam, face products made from Morula oil. This group also initiated a micro credit and saving scheme for the members. They boast of membership of just over 1000. This we cite as a good example. Other groups are engaged in growing vegetables, bakery, pottery, etc. A video on women economic activities was developed to document some of the economic empowerment initiatives by women in 2001. This we also cite as an example.
- Besides this collaboration with the UNDP the Botswana Government gives funds through different Ministries for economic empowerment which women benefit from.
- The Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) deliberately stipulated that women should give 10% collateral to the funds they requested for projects while men gave 15%.
- The (FAP) scheme stopped in 1997 and funds were made available under Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise programme (SMME) Loan Programme. SMME was stopped in 2001 but was replaced by the Citizenship Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA). The aim still being to economically empower women and men.
- Women's NGO's have specific programmes providing funds, technical skills and education for economic empowerment projects for women.
- The Women's Affairs Department continues to organize women's expositions and assists women to take part in Trade Fairs both national and international.

The major challenge is that women continue to be burdened by reproductive roles. The policies still need to be analysed from a gender perspective, a skill many policy makers do not have. The other challenge in this area tallies with HIV/AIDS.

2. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

This is Botswana's second critical area of concern.

Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. In order to reach this goal, the following have been undertaken:

- The Women's Affairs Department has embarked on lobbying, public education, advocacy and social mobilization
- The Inter-party Caucus of Women Politicians was established in 1998.
- Political education projects by Emang Basadi an NGO and Inter party Caucus of Women Politicians, which target political parties and their women's wings. This year alone the Inter-party Caucus of Women Politicians has mounted workshops throughout the whole country for women candidates for elections for Parliamentarians and Councillors scheduled for late 2004.
- Advocacy and mobilization programmes by the SADC Gender Department.
- Affirmative action in the selection of specially nominated councillors and members of Parliament by focusing on women.
- Facilitation of gender mainstreaming in the Public Sector though still at minimal level.

Gender Representation in Botswana Parliament and Cabinet

INSTITUTION	1994			1999		
	M	F	F%	M	F	%F
PARLIAMENT	40	4	9	36	8	18.2
CABINET	13	2	19	13	4	23.5

The major challenges are the prevailing gender stereotypes and the absence of a comprehensive affirmative Action Plan focusing on promoting gender equality in all organizations both in the Public and Private Sectors. Botswana is going for elections in 2004 and the target of 30% representation has to be achieved.

The following tables give a picture of the situation in Botswana regarding representation of women in decision making positions especially in the Public Sector:

Table 1: Representation in party Central Committee by Sex.

PARTY	M	F	F%
Botswana Congress Party (BCP)	12	7	37
Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)	12	6	33
Botswana National Front (BNF)	21	3	14
Total	45	16	

Source: Women's Affairs Department (1999)

Table 2: Parliamentary candidates by Sex Per Political Party in 1999 Elections.

PARTY	TOTAL CANDIDATES	M	F	F%
BCP	40	37	3	8
BDP	40	34	6	15
BNF	40	39	1	3
Total	120	170	10	

Source: Women's Affairs Department (1999)

Table 3: Representation in Parliament and Cabinet

AREA	1994			1999		
	M	F	F%	M	F	F%
Parliament	40	4	9	36	8	18.2
Cabinet	14	3	21	13	4	23.5
Total	54	7		52	10	

Source: Women's Affairs Department (1990)

Table 4: Local authorities by Sex

AREA	F	M	F%
Mayors	1	9	10%
Town Clerks	5	23	18%
Councillors	70	409	15%
Total	76	441	

Source: Women's Affairs Department (1999)

Table 5: Elected and Nominated Councillors in 1999 Local Government Elections

District Council	ELECTED		NOMINATED		TOTAL
	M	F	M	F	
North West	35	5	2	4	46
North East	15	2	1	2	20
Central	84	22	6	9	121
Kgatleng	20	1	1	2	24
South East	13	5	1	2	21
Kweneng	39	11	4	4	58
Southern	35	9	4	4	52
Kgalagadi	18	2	1	2	23
Ghanzi	15	3	3	0	21
Francistown City	13	3	1	1	18
Selebi Phikwe	10	3	1	1	15
Gaborone City	21	4	3	1	29
Lobatse	8	3	0	2	13
Jwaneng	7	0	1	0	8
TOTAL	333	73	29	34	469

Source: Independent Electoral Commission (1990)

NB. Updated statistics on this area will be available this year after elections.

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

Botswana's third critical area of concern.

Education is a human right issue and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary, if more women are to become agents of change. Progress and achievements have been recorded as follows:

- Efforts and strategies have been made to attract women and the girl-child to Technical Education and Science subjects.
- The YWCA Teen Mothers and Diphilana Projects (UNICEF) initiated to enrol young mothers who had to leave school due to teenage pregnancy.
- Female enrolment at all levels of the education system has increased.
- The curricula and teaching materials are continuously being revised to make them gender-neutral.
- Collaborating and assisting NGOs that have programmes on this area e.g. Junior Achievement Botswana.
- The UB Science Programme targeting girls is growing and girls continue to enrol.
- The Policy of pre-school education has been finalised.
- The re-admission policy of girls is now fully operational who drop out of school due to pregnancy.

Major challenges are limited day care centre facilities and sex-segregated occupational stereotyping in schools and communities.

4. WOMEN AND HEALTH

Botswana's fourth critical area of concern.

Many health conditions that affect women and men are similar, but most of these are experienced differently. These differences are a result of the sex dimension, which is the biological and physiological make-up, but more importantly, they are a consequence of gender. Because women lack full and equal participation in private and public institutions, they experience different and additional health barriers to men.

Progress has been made in the following areas:

- Maternal and child health and Family Planning facilities are now available in every clinic.
- Safe motherhood initiatives programmes exist
- Nutrition for mothers and children under five years old
- Prevention of cancer of the cervix in Gaborone and Francistown Referral Hospitals.
- Counseling and Home Based Care for HIV/AIDS

- Programme to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV in some Hospitals.
- The National AIDS Council has been established. (This is the highest policy body in HIV/AIDS, it is chaired by the President)

Major challenges include the increasing rate of AIDS/HIV STDs within the population, men's lack of participation in health programmes and lack of access to reproductive health services by teenagers.

5. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Violence Against Women and the girl-child is a problem in Botswana. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Efforts made to date include the following:

- A Study on the Socio-Economic Implications of Violence Against Women was commissioned by Women's Affairs Department in 1999. This was an attempt to establish forms, extent and economic implications of this problem.
- Women in Law in Southern Africa undertook a number of studies on women and the Administration of Justice including advocacy and change of attitude among the Police, Health and Court officials dealing with victims of violence.
- Networking among key stakeholders on gender violence
- A Women's Shelter House established to assist battered women and children.
- Rape cases are now being heard in camera.
- The Penal Code was amended to ensure sterner measures taken for rape cases(1995)
- The Deeds Registry Act was also amended to enable women married in community of property to register immovable assets in their names and to empower them to give consent when joint property is disposed of (1998).
- Provision of limited support to NGOs such as the Women's Shelter (for battered and abused women and children) and Women Against Rape (legal literacy and aid for women and girls).
- Linking up with other Government initiatives such as the Police Task Force on Violence Against women 1997.
- Yearly commemorations of Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.
- Two study visits on this area to Mauritius and Zambia to share experiences and best practices put in place to curb this social ill were undertaken.
- Implementing the Commonwealth intergrated approach to combating gender based violence.

A major challenge is that violence against women is on the increase and there is absence of a comprehensive policy and laws dealing with gender violence. There is also inadequate data on various forms of violence. There is also an absence of legal assistance for the low-income groups.

As a plus to be cited, an English pamphlet explaining the amended laws affecting the rights of women in Botswana has been developed. The amended laws include the Public Service (Amendment) Act 2000, the Affiliation Proceedings (Amendment) Act 1999, the Penal Code (Amendment) Act 1998, the Criminal Procedure and Evidence (Amendment) Act 1997, the Deeds Registry (Amendment) Act 1995. The Women's Affairs Department has translated the

pamphlet to Setswana in order to increase its readership. The Department will continue to update this pamphlet as laws get amended.

HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birth right of all human beings. With this understanding the Government of Botswana has done the following in order to promote the rights of women.

Achievements:

- Signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1996)
- Signed a Gender and Development: A Declaration by Heads of State or Government of Southern African Development Community (SADC) (1997)
- Signed the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children: An Addendum to the 1997 Declaration on Gender and Development by SADC Heads of State or Government (1998).
- Commissioned a Study on All laws Affecting the Status of Women in Botswana (1998)
- Legal and Administrative measures undertaken to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women. The following are cited:
 - The Citizenship Amendment Act 1995 brought equality of citizenship rights of both women and men.
 - The Matrimonial Causes Act allows for equitable distribution of matrimonial property on divorce depending on the marriage regime.
 - Application proceedings has lessened the discrimination and increased the maintenance fee.
 - The Employment Act Cap:47:01 was amended in 1992 covering the following sections
Section 115: women no longer prohibited to work underground
Section 16: women can work at night without their expressed consent
Section 119: women's maternity allowance cannot be lost due to failure to give notice and actual date of confinement.
 - Section 18 of the Deeds Registry Act was amended to enable property by married women.

Consultation are on going on rectifying, acceding and signing the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The major challenge that remains are the contradictions that exist between Customary Law and Common Law.

There is also an urgency to effect fully compliance to the CEDAW e.g. non-enrolment of women in National Institutions, for example, the Botswana Defence Force.

HIV/AIDS

The First National Conference on Gender and HIV/AIDS in Botswana was held in June 2001. Over 200 participants attended the conference. They were drawn from Government institutions, Parastatals, Private and Civil Society Organizations including NGOs the University of Botswana and Research Institutions. Several Members of Parliament attended the conference. The overall objective was to provide an understanding of the social dynamics of HIV/AIDS and the relationship between gender and HIV/AIDS.

The Conference focused on seven areas of concern within the context of Gender and HIV/AIDS.

- Human Rights
- Economic Empowerment
- Health Care
- Gender Based Violence
- Women in Power Sharing, Decision Making
- Gender and HIV/AIDS in Education and Training
- The Girl Child

Following this workshop the Commonwealth Secretariat visited Botswana in September 2001 on Gender Mainstreaming in HIV/AIDS. The mission met with representatives of Government Ministries/Departments, NGOs working with people living with HIV/AIDS, and Inter-governmental Agencies, the Botswana National Council on Women and the National AIDS Coordinating Agency. During their meetings it was acknowledged that HIV/AIDS programmes have been mainstreamed across sectors while gender issues have not been considered in most HIV/AIDS interventions within and outside Government. Several conclusions were made which include commissioning a gender issues paper that will inform all interventions, and serve as an advocacy tool to enable senior policy makers, politicians and members of the National AIDS Council to understand the relevance of gender issues to all operations related to the pandemic, capacity building, developing training materials, to mention just a few.

When the National AIDS Coordinating Agency revised its HIV/AIDS strategy consultations were made with the Women's Affairs Department to assist mainstream gender into it. It should be cited that there are many NGOs working in this area.

PART THREE: INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The National Women's Machinery was established as a Unit in 1981 with two officers. In 1991 it was upgraded to a Division headed by a Coordinator and to a Department in 1996 headed by a Director. Currently it has 11 professional staff members and 34 support staff with five Sections in three Divisions. The mandate of the Department is to facilitate the integration of women in national socio economic development, particularly through the promotion of gender sensitive policies by:

- Formulating and interpreting gender and development policy, or components thereof and establishing performance standards
- Promoting the development of gender sensitive sectoral policies and procedures
- Monitoring and evaluating all projects undertaken by partners and providing technical as well as professional advice on gender planning and budgeting
- Promoting effective publishing /packaging /dissemination of information on gender and development
- Co-ordinating and facilitating capacity building efforts through training in various aspects of gender and development.

The National Gender Machinery is one of the twelve Departments in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs. It links with other Ministries/Departments through the Gender Focal Persons. The Department has piloted gender mainstreaming in four ministries which will unfold to other ministries. The Botswana National Council on Women (BNCW) was established as the highest advisory body at policy level to Government in gender and development issues. The BNCW reports to the Minister. The total budget of the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs for 2003/2004 is P100 million. The Department's allocation is P6 million. The budget allocations has been increasing inline with increases in the whole Government budget over the past two years.

The establishment of mechanisms and institutions to promote the advancement of women as an integral part of gender mainstreaming is a prerequisite for achieving gender equality. The following have been accomplished in Botswana:

- Promulgation of the Policy On Women in Development in 1996.
- Formulation of the National Gender Programme Framework (1998).
- Women's Affairs Department (WAD) elevated to such status in 1997
- The establishment of the Women's Non-government Organization Coalition.
- The establishment of University of Botswana Gender Project Planning Committee (GPPC)
- International, Regional and National Networking fora established
- The Development of an Advocacy and Social Mobilization, the National Gender Programme Popular Version and a Short Term Plan.
- The Formation of the Botswana National Council on Women (BNCW) – the highest advisory body to the Government on all matters relating to women in development (1999)
- Gender focal Points in Ministries have been established and this is expected to promote ownership of the Policy on Women in Development.

The NWM works very closely and systematically with NGOs through the Women's NGO Coalition an umbrella body for them. Achievements include the implementation of the National Gender Programme Framework, communication flow between the NWM and NGOs that are

affiliates of the Coalition. The NWM also facilitates quarterly meetings between itself and NGOs, Community Based Organizations and Women's groups. This forum meets only in Gaborone the capital. There are suggestions that we should move to other parts of the country so that most of the clients could be reached.

The major challenge that still prevails is lack of ownership of the Policy on Women in Development by some Government Ministries, Civil Society and the Private Sector.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The gender mainstreaming pilot project was conducted in the four Ministries of Labour and Home Affairs, Finance and Development Planning, Local Government and Commerce and Industry in 2002. Gender policies for these Ministries and Gender Action Plans were developed. The Women's Affairs Department is presently working with the Ministries and Departments in monitoring the implementation of the Action Plans. The funds for the gender mainstreaming pilot project were from the GOB/UNDP Programme.

The NGO Coalition was funded to mainstream gender into the operations of its members. Information reaching the Women's Affairs Department points to the fact that the money given was just enough to mainstream gender into the NGO Coalition Secretariat activities.

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGET

In February 2002, an Officer of the Commonwealth Secretariat organized workshops on gender budgeting/gender responsive budgeting for Senior Government Officials and Members of Parliament.

The NGO Coalition was contracted to pilot the Gender Responsive Budget Analysis Project in the Ministries of Labour and Home Affairs and Local Government. Some departments of the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs were addressed. The Ministry of Local Government has not been addressed yet.

PART FOUR: MAJOR CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THEM

Gender equality in access to education and productive resources continues to remain a challenge. Progression of females to tertiary and higher level of education is reduced because of the nature of the education system, which is often cited as gender insensitive. This leads to lower levels of achievement of females at higher levels of education.

Cultural and social influence on gender equality in access to education is also important. In some cultures females are forced into pre-arranged marriages at puberty stage forcing them to leave school early. The ability to retain girls of different cultures in school remains a challenge especially in the Western and North Western parts of the country.

With the unfolding HIV/AIDS epidemic, increasingly more girls and women will be required to care for sick family members, compromising their attendants at school. Efforts to strengthen Home-Based and Orphan Care will assist children in their right to education and go a long way in helping to attain gender equality in access to education.

Access to agricultural land and other productive resources like credit collateral and seeds is still a problem. This limits the participation of women in high value businesses that require heavy investments, leaving them to venture into the relatively less productive aspects of the informal sector.

The challenge of globalisation and Botswana's competitiveness requires full participation of all capable people in decision-making irrespective of gender. Therefore, the will and practices to harness the full potential of women present a challenge within the context of the social and cultural perception that women cannot lead men "*ga dinke di etelelwa pele ke manamagadi*".

These perceptions require transformation of patriarchal relations in the whole society, which are entrenched in the beliefs and attitudes of the people that men are superior, or that men can only hold certain jobs and be in certain positions. Unfortunately, these views are held by some of the women themselves.

Finally, the impact of inadequate participation of women in decision-making poses the challenge of improving the economic status of women. There is a clear connection between poverty and exclusion from policy making and decision making. The paradox is that poverty further excludes women from decision-making structures at the political and governance structures even in the rural areas.

This paradox raises a fundamental question: Do the gender policy and programmes address the entrenched stereotypes that influence gender relations and the participation of women in decision making?