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Welfare Regime, Social Protection and Poverty Reduction

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prepared for the UNRISD project on
Poverty Reduction and Policy Regimes

November 2007 • Geneva



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Introduction

This paper discusses the role of social welfare regime in reducing poverty in Botswana. It begins by examining the evolution of social protection from pre-colonial era to the present day Botswana. The paper demonstrates that social protection schemes have always been part and parcel of Botswana economic and social structure. The analysis further unravels the relationship between a country's social policy, development strategy and poverty. Here, a review is made of national strategies and policies that are aimed at eradicating poverty. To throw light on the role of social protection and poverty reduction the paper provides a comprehensive description of social protection schemes currently implemented in the country. Social provisions that enhance entry, exit and retention of labor force such as the Workman's Compensation, Maternity Benefits and Health Insurance Scheme are also discussed. The developmental role of these schemes is briefly highlighted. The paper then describes succinctly how these programs contribute to poverty alleviation and management of idiosyncratic and covariate shocks and risks. The paper further demonstrates whether the welfare regime leans towards universalism or targeting. An analysis is then made using the Household Income Expenditure Survey (HIES) on whether all the poor are targeted by social protection schemes.

Finally, the paper interrogates the extent to which social security schemes reduce poverty. To answer this question, a simple analytic framework is adopted using the HIES data. In conclusion, the paper examines trends in the welfare regime. Here, a number of international and regional instruments are reviewed with a specific focus to understand the extent to which these have influenced reforms in the welfare regime. Some recommendations are put forward for the improvement of social protection schemes.

Within the context of this analysis, social protection is contextualized as referring to "public and private, or mixed and private measures designed to protect the individual against life cycle crises that curtail their capacity to meet their needs"¹. Social protection encompasses social allowance, social assistance, social security and social insurance schemes. The objective of these provisions is to enhance human welfare.

Evolution of Social Protection in Botswana

Prior to independence in 1966, Botswana relied on traditional support systems to address issues of poverty and destitution. The extended family system was seen as a social security regime when individuals went through life cycle crisis. The family provided a window of support during hard times and children were seen as a social safety net when parents became sick, disabled or old. The society during this time was guided by the principles of solidarity and reciprocity. The principle of solidarity emphasized a sense of unity, and shared responsibility towards other

¹ See SADC CODE on Social Security 2007 page 1

family members. Hence members within the family felt obligated to support each other in times of need. On the other hand, generalized reciprocity was exercised whereby each member of the family or kinship provided assistance without expecting anything in return.

At independence in 1966, the government acknowledged that solutions to social problems could still be found within the framework of customary law and traditional support systems². However, the devastating drought of the mid sixties necessitated government to intervene as people could no longer rely on subsistence economy. Invariably, with assistance from of the World Food Programme, the first formal social security program was launched to counteract the effects of drought in 1965. Vulnerable groups such as lactating mothers, pregnant women, pre-school children, and children aged 6-10, TB patients, malnourished children and primary children were the primary beneficiaries of this drought relief program. The rest of the community benefited from this program through what was called “food for work” (Ipelegeng). People were provided with food in return for work on community projects such as destumping of lands, building of teachers’ quarters, school classrooms and small dams, repair and construction of rural roads³. In addition to this, the national strategy for development focused on improving medical facilities, housing, education, water supply and creation of new industries.⁴

By the third National Development Plan (1970-1975), government articulated clearly the need to promote social protection through the principles of social justice and equality of opportunity⁵. Secondly, for the first time the national planning principles of democracy, development, self reliance and unity were pronounced.⁶ Key goals for this plan period were⁷:

- To secure the fastest possible rate of economic growth in a manner designed to raise the living standard of the great mass of the inhabitants of Botswana
- To maximize the number of new job opportunities
- To promote equitable distribution of income, in particular, by reducing income differentials between urban and the rural sectors through rural development.

In an effort to translate these key goals into action, the government continued to strengthen the community development department by employing more staff under the Food for Work and other feeding programmes. By 1970, over 2,000 projects had been undertaken involving 46,000 workers out of a population of 648,000⁸. In addition, a Home Economics Unit was established to organize, train and actively involve women to address challenges of drought, poverty and unemployment.

² See Bechuanaland Protectorate Development Plan 1963-1968 pages 24.

³ See Transitional Plan for Social and Economic Development 1966-1969

⁴ Bechuanaland Protectorate Development Plan 1963-1968

⁵ See National Development Plan 1970-1975

⁶ These four principles have continues to guide the national planning process to date

⁷ See National Development Plan 1970-1975 page iii

⁸ See Ibid

Attention was also directed at the out of school unemployed youth who by this time were growing in number. Two specific youth programmes were initiated namely the formation of brigades aimed at skill training as well as the creation of youth clubs such as Scout and Girl Guides movement for character building.

Following these initiatives, the government launched the Bushmen Training and Settlement Project which was originally initiated by the Dutch Reform Church at D'Kar. The aim of this programme was to prepare Basarwa children for more positive and productive roles in society⁹. In 1975, government changed the name of this programme to Basarwa Development Programme with a specific focus to afford Basarwa opportunity to benefit from national economic development. Following the 1974/75 Rural Incomes Distribution Survey, it was found that severe poverty and deprivation affected many people residing in remote settlements other than Basarwa. The Basarwa Development Programme was further renamed Remote Area Development Programme (RADP)¹⁰. The new beneficiaries of this programme were all poor and marginalized communities located in the remote areas of Botswana.

During the national plan period 1973-1981, the Social Welfare Unit was established within the Department of Community Development to address emerging social problems. It had become clear that due to urbanization and other social change factors, the traditional family was slowly getting weakened. There was also evidence of the general decline in the traditional social safety nets as well as community responsibility. Majority of people were migrating from rural villages to settle in towns leaving the elderly alone. Similarly, squatter areas were also mushrooming in urban areas breeding serious problems such as crime, juvenile delinquents and general destitution.

In response to this crisis, government introduced the Labour Intensive Public Works Programme (LIPWP) in 1978 in partnership with the International Labour Organization and the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development. This programme promoted labour intensive methods to construct rural roads and related infrastructure. Poor members in the community were enrolled into this program and were paid for participating in the activities. Further, a National Destitute Policy was formulated in 1980 to specifically provide minimum assistance to destitute persons particularly the elderly.

In 1985, Botswana was hit by yet another crisis worse than drought. The first HIV/AIDS related case was detected. Within a very short period of time, the country experienced rapid spread of the disease. As early as 1992, up to 700 cases were reported¹¹. To date, the overall HIV prevalence rate in the general population

⁹ See Republic of Botswana/Ministry of Local Government. Review of Remote Area Development Programme 2003

¹⁰ See Ibid page 11

¹¹ See National Development 8 1997/98- 2002/3

aged 18 months and older is estimated to be 17.1%¹². Overall, the impact of HIV/AIDS has had devastating socio-economic effects on the nation as a whole. At the family level, a lot of children have become orphans. Current figures show that over 41,000 children are now officially registered as orphans¹³. In an effort address this crisis, government intervened by launching several programmes in the areas of prevention, treatment, care and support. In 1997, the Community Home Based Care Programme (CHBC) was launched to give HIV positive persons with fully blown AIDS the opportunity for enhanced nutrition while in the care of family members at home. Further, the Short Term Plan of Action for Care of Orphans (STPA) was launched in 1999 to respond to the critical needs of orphans. The STPA emphasized the importance of providing these children with psychosocial support in addition to food, clothing, education, shelter and other material packages. Other social security programs such as the Old Age Pension and the World War II Veterans were both introduced in the mid 1990s through a Presidential Directive to further improve the quality of life of the elderly people and to enhance their income security.

Poverty alleviating strategies and social protection

As reflected by the forging analysis, the desire to address poverty has been a major developmental challenge. Government continues to battle with this task. To this effect, a number of policy measures have been put in place. These include; Vision 2016, Rural Development Policy and the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction of 2003.

Vision 2016 was launched in 1997 with the following pillars (i) an educated and informed nation, (ii) a prosperous, productive and innovative nation (iii) a compassionate, just and caring nation (iv) a safe and secure nation, (v) an open, democratic and accountable nation, (vi) a moral and tolerant nation and (vii) a united and proud nation¹⁴. With respect to poverty reduction, the vision document pronounces that Botswana will be “a compassionate and caring society, offering support and opportunity to those who are poor, including all people in the benefits of growth” (Presidential Task Group, 1997:8). The Vision document projects that by the year 2016, efforts will have been made to eradicate absolute poverty so that no part of the country will have people living with incomes below the poverty datum line. With specific reference to social protection, Vision 2016 states:

“All people will have access to productive resources regardless of ethnic origin, gender, disability, or misfortune. Botswana will have succeeded in helping people to escape from the poverty trap.... 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, in partnership with the private sector and NGO’s, aimed

¹² CSO (2004) Botswana AIDS Impact Survey

¹³ See Ministry of Local Government, Department of Social Services

¹⁴ See Presidential Task Force 1997 page 8

at vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, orphans and terminally ill” (Presidential Task Force, 1997:9)

The Revised Policy for Rural Development on the other hand proposes mechanisms to increase economic empowerment and self-reliance in the provision of social protection schemes¹⁵. Regarding security and social protection, the Revised Rural Development Policy seeks to improve the coverage, targeting, adequacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of social security programs. In addition, through these schemes, government wants to have an in-built mechanism for facilitating rehabilitation of beneficiaries to reduce dependency on social protection schemes. An effort will also be made to ensure that income transfers through social protection could generate positive ‘multiplier’ effects on the rural economy in terms of first supporting the poor and second, stimulating effective demand for goods and services to boost private sector employment¹⁶. (Note: cancelled the last 2 sentences)

Finally, the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction of 2003 (NSPR) is the latest poverty reduction strategy that aims to harmonize and coordinate various poverty reduction initiatives. The unique feature of NSPR is to improve coordination and implementation of existing poverty alleviation policies and programmes.¹⁷ Another thrust of this strategy is stimulate economic growth and to expand employment opportunities either through creation of jobs or facilitating self employment. The NSPR recognizes the need for government to continue providing social security programmes to the most vulnerable members of the society. Specific areas of focus of this strategy address the following¹⁸;

- Sustaining livelihoods of the poor by enhancing their income earning opportunities and providing economically sustainable employment opportunities
- Enhancing human capabilities by giving the poor access to information, facilitating the establishment of partnerships with the private sector, equipping them with basic marketing and organizational skills and developing business skill development for the educated but unskilled youth.
- Enhancing participation of poor who are beneficiaries of the Remote Area Development Programme by empowering them towards self-sustenance I remote areas

The role of social protection and poverty reduction

Besides government strategies outlined above, government and the private sector provide a wide range of social protection schemes which are aimed at reducing

¹⁵ Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2002, Revised National Policy on Rural Development

¹⁶ See Revised National Policy on Rural Development page 7-8

¹⁷ See Republic of Botswana. National Strategy for Poverty Alleviation of 2003

¹⁸ See Ibid page 15 to 17

poverty as well as providing a social safety net for individuals, groups and families. This paper reviews the following schemes:

- Destitute allowance
- Orphan care program
- Vulnerable groups schemes
- School based food programme
- Old age pension
- World War II veteran allowance
- Labour and drought relief programs
- Remote area development program
- Pensions Schemes
- Maternity Benefits
- Health Insurance Schemes

Program for destitute persons

The National Policy on Destitute persons was first introduced in 1980. The objective of this policy was to ensure that government provides minimum assistance to the needy persons to improve their health and welfare conditions and to alleviate poverty. The formulation of this policy was a direct response to the withering of the extended family system and the social support that was part and parcel of pre-independent Botswana society. With the advent of urbanization, migration and changing family forms, a significant number of people were left without any means of support.

In March 2002, the old National Policy on Destitute Persons was revised to take into consideration the changing economic challenges that the poor and needy face. Interestingly the objectives of this scheme remained unaltered “to ensure that government provides minimum assistance to the genuine destitute persons to ensure their good health and welfare.”¹⁹

The revised policy defines a destitute person as:

- a) An individual who, due to disabilities or chronic health condition is unable to engage in sustainable economic activities and has insufficient assets and income sources. Insufficient assets and income sources refer to a person

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