



**REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

Thirtieth Anniversary of the  
Fourth World Conference on Women and Adoption of the  
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

**BOTSWANA COUNTRY REPORT 2024**

## ACRONYMS

AAP	Addis Ababa Action Plan	CHRSNAP	Comprehensive Human Rights Strategy and National Action Plan
AAFRAC	The Affirmative Action Framework for Remote Area Communities	COVID 19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
AAP	Affirmative Action Programme	CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities
ABSA	Amalgamated Bank of Southern Africa-Botswana	CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	DCA	Destitute Cash Allowance
ART	Antiretroviral Treatment	DCT	Disability Cash Transfer
ARV	Antiretroviral	DIF	Domesticated Indicator Framework
AWOME	Accelerating Women Owned Micro Enterprises	DPSM	Directorate of Public Service Management
BABPS	Botswana Association for the Blind and Partially Sighted	DREAMS	Determined, Resilient, Empowered, Free, Mentored and Safe
BAIS	Botswana AIDS Impact Survey	EmOMNC	Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
BDF	Botswana Defence Force	ETSSP	Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan
BEF	Botswana Editors Forum	E-WALLET	Electronic wallet
BGBVC	Botswana Gender Based Violence Prevention and Support Centre	FES	Fredrick Ebert Stiftung
BIUST	Botswana International University of Science and Technology	FNBB	First National Bank of Botswana
BMTHS	Botswana Multi-Topic Household Survey	FPTP	First Past The Post
BOCRA	Botswana Communication and Regulatory Authority	GBV	Gender Based Violence
BOFINET	Botswana Fibre networks	GCPB	Gender and Child Protection Branch
BOPA	Botswana Press Agency	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
BOPEU	Botswana Public Employees Union	GeAD	Gender Affairs Department
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action	GECAF	General Education Curriculum and Assessment Framework
BPS	Botswana Police Service	GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
BSDS	Botswana Strategy for Development of Statistics	GPI	Gender Parity Index
BSFS	Botswana Sustainable Financing Strategy	GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
BSSE	Botswana Senior Secondary Education Programme	GRPFM	Gender Responsive Public Financial Management
BURS	Botswana Unified Revenue Services	HCW	Health Care Workers
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management	HPV	Human Papillomavirus
CEDA	Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency	ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CEmONC	Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Neo Natal Care	ICT	Information Communication and technology
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	IDCC	Infectious Diseases Control Centres
CHBC	Community Home Based Care	IHL	International Humanitarian Law
		IMCTCP	Inter-Ministerial Committee on Treaties, Conventions and Protocols

INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework	PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
ISPAAD	Integrated Support for Arable Agricultural Development Programme	PreP	Pre Exposure Prophylaxis
LEEP	Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure	PTA	Parents Teachers Association
LIMID	Livestock Management and Infrastructure development	RACs	Remote Area Communities Programme
MDG	Millennium Development Goals	RADP	Rural Area Development Programme
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	RSTI	Radiological Service Training Institute
MIRA	Meat Industry Regulatory Authority	SAMIM	SADC Mission in Mozambique
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
MLG&RD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	SGC	Sector Gender Committee
MLHA	Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs	SHARP	Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Programme
MoF	Ministry of Finance	SHE	Safety Health Environment
MoH	Ministry of Health	SmartBots	Digital Transformation Strategy
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding	SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
MTCT	Mother-To-Child Transmission	STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
NAHPA	National Aids and Health Promotion Agency	STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
NAP	National Adoption Plan	TAFISA	The Association For International Sport For All
NCC	National Children's Council	TNDP	Transitional National Development Plan
NCD	Non Communicable Disease	TVET	Technical Vocational Education Training
NDP	National Development Plan	UHC	Universal Health Coverage
NEF	National Environmental Fund	UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
NFF	National Financing Framework	UNCRDP	United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities
NGC	National Gender Commission	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
NGPF	National Gender Programme Framework	UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
NOP	National Operational Plan	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
NPC	National Planning Commission	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
NPGAD	National Policy on Gender and Development	US AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
NSF	National Strategic Framework	VIA	Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid
NSPF	National Social Protection Framework	WASBO	Women and Sport Botswana
NTS	National Transformation Strategy	WPS	Women Peace and Security
OAP	Old Age Pension	WWVII	World War II Veteran Allowance
OGBV	Online Gender Based Violence	YOCA	Youth Counselling on Air
OSET	Out of School Education and Training		
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability		
PeP	Post Exposure Prophylaxis		
PFM	Public Finance Management		

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## SECTION 1: HIGHLIGHTS

### Introduction

The Beijing+30 Progress Report comes at an opportune time for Botswana where the National Gender Programme is fully aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as reflected in the Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP) and the formulation of the National Development Plan (NDP) 12. This report summarises the actions being taken by Government of Botswana in collaboration with Civil Society Organisations (CSO), Development Partners and the Private Sector to implement the commitments made through the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and other Instruments that promote Women's Human Rights.

The Report was generated by a National Team comprising of representation from: Government Ministries, Civil Society Organisations including Faith Based Organisations (FBO), Political Parties, Persons with Disabilities (PWD), Trade Unions, Parastatals and the Media. The report is presented as per the prescribed format.

The Report highlights achievements, challenges and setbacks on the National Response on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) during the past five years (2020-2024), it outlines measures which have been put in place towards the implementation of the BPfA. The Government of Botswana has made great strides in promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment since the last reporting period.

In order to demonstrate commitment, Government strengthened existing measures and introduced key administrative and legislative reforms, as well as acceding to critical International and Regional Instruments. The Country also adopted strategies with prioritised actions, timelines and resources towards enhancing gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls.

For the reporting period, Botswana acceded to the: African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The

Maputo Protocol) in October 2023, Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention) in November 2022 and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), in July 2021.

Botswana also made significant progress in protecting and advancing the rights of women and vulnerable groups by introducing administrative and legal reforms. These include; establishment of the Gender and Child Protection Branch (GCPB) by the Botswana Police Service (BPS) to respond to cases of all forms of Violence Against Children.

The Country furthermore, established Gender Based Violence Specialized Courts to speed up the judicial process on Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases. In addition, the second National Gender Commission (NGC) which is multi-sectoral was established. Furthermore, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender Based Violence which comprises of eight Ministers was established to give strategic direction on the National GBV Response.

Botswana continues to repeal discriminatory laws and replace them with gender responsive statutes. The following legal instruments were adopted;

- i. The Bail Bill adopted by Parliament in 2023
- ii. The Penal Code Amendment of 2021
- iii. Sexual Offenders Registry Act (2021)
- iv. Anti-Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act (2024)

In recognition of the need for special measures to address inequality between women and men, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana made a conscious decision to appoint **67%** of the specially elected Members of Parliament as females. Furthermore, **His Excellency the President appointed the first females** as: Minister of Finance; President of the Court of Appeal; Permanent Secretary to the President; the Commissioner of Prisons; the Commissioner of Police and Commissioner General for Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS). At local level **34%** of women were appointed as Councillors.

Botswana experienced challenges and setbacks in this reporting period emanating from gender stereotypes which have influence on the high GBV prevalence and the limited number of women in political leadership. From the 2018 National Relationship Study, GBV prevalence stands at **37%** amongst women and **21%** amongst men. Government through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural development also undertook a Survey on Violence Against Children in 2019. The Survey indicates that physical violence is the most common form of violence against children with **28.4% female** and **43.0% male** children experiencing it before the age of 18 years. The Survey further revealed that **9.3% female** and **5.5% male** children **suffered sexual violence prior to the age of 18 years**. Women’s representation on the other hand stands at **11%** and **18%** in Parliament and Local Authorities respectively.

To enhance Botswana’s progress in attaining Gender Equality and the Empowerment of women and girls, there is need to adopt Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) across all sectors.

## SECTION 2: PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

### 1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

#### Global Rankings

According to the Global Gender Gap Report of 2024, Botswana is positioned at **57** out of **146** countries with a total score of **0.73**. This score places Botswana at **position 11** in Sub Saharan Africa, marking a significant accomplishment towards inclusion.

Botswana is also amongst top scorers in Educational Attainment and Health Survival at scores of **1.00** and **0.98** respectively. The country comes 2<sup>nd</sup> on Economic Participation and Opportunity with a total score of **0.85**. The

country however still faces challenges in Political Attainment ranking 125<sup>th</sup> with a score of **0.088** (*World Economic Forum: Global Gender Gap Report 2024*).

#### National GBV Response

Noting that GBV is a complex phenomenon that requires a community-based and multi-sectoral approach, Government adopted a multi-pronged Response Strategy. This includes undertaking Legal and Policy reforms as well as Institutional arrangements.

#### Legal and Policy Reforms

- i. **Disability Act (2024)**: The Act provides for the establishment of the Disability Coordination Office and the National Disability Council. It also prohibits discrimination against individuals based on disabilities in areas such as employment, accommodation, and education. The Act further promotes equal access to goods, services, facilities, and land for People with Disabilities.
- ii. **Cyber Crime and Computer Related Crimes Act (2018)**: The Government recognises the importance of addressing cyber-crime. To this end, cyber security measures have been increased including establishment of the Cyber Crime Committee to coordinate efforts across Government agencies and the Private sector. Botswana Police Service established a dedicated Cyber Crime Unit to investigate and prosecute cybercrime cases including on-line Gender Based Violence. On the other hand, the BPS established a dedicated Cyber Forensics Branch to provide scientific and technical support to the investigations of cybercrime, digital forensics, internet related crimes, online child exploitation, GBV, social media and general crimes.
- iii. **The Bail Bill (2023)** was adopted by Parliament and still awaiting approval of the Act. Amongst its key provisions is the right of the complainant to have a say in the bail application of the suspect.
- iv. **The Penal Code Amendment (2021)**: Introduced harsher sentences for violent crimes such as rape, defilement and incest. For example; the minimum sentence of rape is raised from **10 years** to life imprisonment depending on the circumstances.



- v. **Sexual Offenders Registry Act (2021):** Introduced stiffer penalties for persons convicted of sexual offences. It also provided for the registration of sexual offenders and prohibited such persons from working with vulnerable groups such as Children, PWD and the Elderly.
- vi. **The Anti - Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act (2023):** It aims to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, also provides for prohibition, prevention and combatting of human trafficking. It further provides for measures to protect and assist victims of human trafficking. In addition, it increases the penalties for trafficking crimes from **USD10,000.00 to USD50,000.00** and from **15 years to 20 years'** imprisonment. Where the smuggling results in death of the victim the penalty is **USD100,000.00** or life sentence or both.
- vii. The Government adopted the Botswana **Climate Change Policy (2021) and the National Energy Policy (2021)** which each has a dedicated chapter on gender equality.
- viii. **The Revised Land Policy (2022)** provides for equal land ownership for both women and men, promoting economic empowerment and gender equality. The affirmative action in this Revised Land Policy also affords disadvantaged members of the society (remote area communities, widows, orphans, youth, PWD and the needy) access to land so that they are provided with opportunities to ensure their inclusion in the mainstream economy.

### **Institutional Arrangements and Specialised Programmes**

Government in 2020 established the High Level Inter-Ministerial Committee on GBV. The Committee comprises of Ministers from: Youth, Gender, Sport and Culture (Chairperson); State President, Defence and Security, Justice, Education and Skills Development, Health, Local Government and Rural Development; and Labour and Home Affairs.

The Committee reports quarterly to Cabinet. To date, the Committee has ensured strengthening of laws and establishment of Gender Structures at various levels such as District Gender Committees as well as a dedicated budget of **USD136,852.00** for the year 2024/2025 as

part of GBV Response. The Committee is supported by experts from Government, Development Partners, Civil Society Organisations, Traditional Leaders, Faith Based Organisations and the Academia.

**The Botswana Police Service** established the Gender and Child Protection Branch in 2021 to ensure a victim friendly environment for all victims of gender based violence as well as a child friendly environment for children who come in contact with the police. Further to this, Child Friendly Centers were established in furthering efforts of creating a specialized and child sensitive environment within the police. To date, a total of **8 Child Friendly** Centers have been set up across the country. Furthermore, In 2020, Government established Special Courts to speed up hearing of GBV court cases.

In an effort to improve public education, the **Legal AID** introduced the "**Mmueleli Wame**" (My Advocate) Programme which provides public education on human rights and access to justice. The Programme is aired on national television and radio.

Government also continues with the engagement of **Dikgosi** (Traditional Leaders) on mainstreaming gender into the Customary Justice System. To date, **755** Dikgosi have been trained, covering gender equality basic concepts, GBV and Human Rights and International Instruments and Domestic Laws on GBV.

Furthermore, to ensure effective coordination of gender mainstreaming efforts, District/Urban development planning, the Tribal administration established Botswana Tribal Administration Services (BOTASA) Gender Committee.

**District Gender Committees** provide oversight strategic guidance, monitoring the effective implementation of the District gender planned activities. Government established **28** against **31** District Gender Committees which are responsible for providing strategic guidance on the district GBV Response. The Committees are multi sectoral and chaired by the District Commissioner.

- i. **District Child Protection Committees** which coordinate and implement all child rights and protection activities at District level.
- ii. In 2021, the Botswana Prison Service also introduced the **Offender Reintegration Programme**, aimed at promoting rehabilitation and re-integration of GBV perpetrators into the society.

**With regard to shelters for GBV survivors**, Government currently provide financial support to the **2 shelters** run by Non-Governmental Organisations. The support has gradually increased from **USD75,000.00** in 2020/2021 to **USD740,000.00** in 2024/2025 financial year.

To further strengthen support to GBV survivors, the shelters make referrals and provide transport to access services outside their facilities such as meetings with legal representatives. Other support interventions include: Family counselling and reconciliation to ensure sustainability and lifelong benefits for survivors; Involvement of men in violence prevention initiatives; and Engagement of Religious Leaders/ Ministers in counselling services as preferred by survivors.

Noting the need for more places of safety, Government in December, 2021 undertook a **Feasibility Study on the Strengthening and Establishment of Safe Havens**. Recommendations are currently being considered in consultation with key stakeholders such as Civil Society, the Health and Education Sector, Child Protection Sector, the Police, Dikgosi and Faith Leaders.

To strengthen access to justice, the **Ministry of Justice developed Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines** in 2023. These outline specific roles of all sectors in the justice system and provide a strategic guide for mainstreaming gender within their different portfolios.

Access to justice for women living in poverty is facilitated through Legal Aid Botswana which has, as part of its core mandate, the protection, fulfilment and enforcement of fundamental human rights for marginalised and vulnerable citizens who cannot afford legal assistance. The assistance, which is provided at no cost, covers both civil and criminal matters.

Gender has been mainstreamed in the **school curriculum** which is currently undergoing further review to comprehensively include emerging issues. Efforts on reintegration of girls into school after pregnancy benefited **5 062** (2012 – 2022) young girls have been afforded an opportunity to continue with their education. The readmission procedure currently requires a fitness certificate as opposed to waiting for **6 weeks** and readmission is also allowed into the same geographical area.

In line with the President’s **Reset Agenda**, and in noting the need to build the capacity of learners from their early stage of development, Government adopted the **School Digitalisation Project** where all schools from primary to tertiary are connected with high-speed internet. Learners across the country are also provided with the necessary equipment and skills to interact and learn in a blended environment.

To increase the enrolment and participation of girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) adopted a Mentorship and Motivational Programme, STEM festivals and Science Circus where girls are encouraged to pursue careers in STEM. In addition, Mobile Science Circuses are carried out in rural areas to reach more learners.

In an effort to leave no one behind, learners with disability and special needs as well as those in rural areas are supplied with individual digital braille, note takers, magnifying tablets and scan-and-read equipment.

Botswana in 2022 undertook the **AIDS Impact Survey V (BAIS V)**. The Survey indicated that HIV prevalence among women is **26.2% and 15.2%** for males as compared to **BAIS IV** where prevalence was still higher among females than males with **19.2% and 14.1%** respectively. **For adolescent girls** and young women, prevalence ranges from **2.7% to 20.2%** compared to **1.6% to 6.5%** male counter parts. To address HIV/AIDS and women and men’s health, the National Strategic

Framework III is being implemented amongst other frameworks.

The National comprehensive program to remove human rights and gender related barriers to HIV and TB services, which is supported by the Global Fund's Breaking Down Barriers Initiative covered **15** out of **27** health districts and will gradually be scaled up nationally to promote human rights awareness and capacitate key and vulnerable populations.

In 2021, Botswana became the first high – burden HIV Country to be certified for becoming the first African country to be awarded the Silver Tier Certificate on the Path to eliminate Mother to Child Transmission of HIV by World Health Organisation (WHO). Noting that Botswana is currently at **95:98:98** target, Government expanded the mandate of National AIDS and Health Promotion Agency (NAHPA) to include Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). As such, in 2021, with the support of the WHO, Botswana developed an NCDs investment case to guide resource mobilisation for NCDs.

The shelter in Gaborone provides clinical services particularly Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV infection. It also screens and tests for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and provides HIV Testing and Counselling. In addition, the shelter provides contraceptive mixed methods to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Furthermore, the shelter provides treatment for injuries that could be suffered by victims. These services are provided through the support and guidance of the Ministry of Health(MoH).

To ensure empowerment of women, the Government of Botswana in partnership with UN Women are implementing **EntreprenHER**, a programme which aims to build capacity of women on entrepreneurial skills. As at February 2024, the Programme benefitted **621** women entrepreneurs through capacity building on business skills.

On annual basis, Government runs the Mr and Miss Remote Area Development Programme (RADP) pageant which is a deliberate effort to empower young men and women living in

remote areas to develop entrepreneurship skills. The top three contestants receive start-up funding for income generating projects. For the 2023/24 Financial Year, the prize money amounted to **USD9000**.

Botswana has made significant progress towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the Country experienced some **challenges and setbacks** during the reporting period. As reflected in the Global Gender Gap Report (2024), the representation of women in politics is one of the lowest in Africa.

To address this gap, Government in partnership with other stakeholders including Civil Society continues to build capacity of women vying for political office. For the 2024/2025 financial year, **USD3,46million** is allocated for political party funding to enhance the country's democratic principles.

## 2. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or Programmes?

- i. Education, Digitalisation and Information Communication Technology
- ii. National HIV Response
- iii. Women in Agriculture
- iv. Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Based Violence Response
- v. Empowerment of Adolescents

### Education, Digitalisation and Information Communication Technology

In Botswana, women constitute **53.6%** of social media users. **68.6%** are in WhatsApp, **51.4%** in Facebook Messenger, **43%** are in LinkedIn, and **31.8%** in Twitter. With regard to digital skills, women are at **18%** whilst men are at **31%**.

Appreciating the capacity of women in ICT, mobile service providers in Botswana developed products that benefit women including those in entrepreneurship. These are: Flexi Plans,

Electronic Wallet (E-Wallet), Talkmore and the Tshepiso (Pledge) Programme. In addition, there is a specific product for the hearing impaired.

Though Botswana has made significant progress in advancing women and girls in technology, the Country still faces challenges in closing the Digital Gender Gap due to limited access to digital infrastructure, high cost of accessing digital technology, limited digital literacy and social and cultural barriers.

To empower rural communities, Government through the Village Connectivity Project Phase I connected **665** Government facilities such as schools, dikgotla and health facilities with open Wi-Fi. The Phases II to IV will cover more than **362** villages and **212** public facilities. The Government through institutions such as BIUST is dedicated to promoting STEM subjects to ensure that girls also benefit and move away from the traditional subjects.

BIUST has strategies that motivate girls and the general public to change their mind-set about the STEM subjects and equally view girls as standing an equal opportunity like their counterparts. The Government organised campaigns and consultative strategy meetings to advocate for increased participation of girls in the STEM field. Moreover, in 2020/2021 BIUST enrolment stood at **597** being **289** females and **308** males [\*At a Glance Facts – Botswana International University of Science\*](#).

Furthermore, the Government has put in place policies to strengthen interlinkages in skills development including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to meet the market needs required to achieve the High Income Country Status.

There are special measures undertaken in the education sector that support and increase retention and completion rates at secondary school level especially for vulnerable girls and boys including those in remote areas. Through these measures, learners from remote area communities, and economically and socially disadvantaged groups are supported to access education and training.

To this end, an estimated **2,754** learners, that is; **8%** of the total enrolment, have accessed university level education in 2021/22 academic year. Teacher aide is available in the education system for Learners with special needs and the Country has developed a Language Policy through which children are taught in their mother tongue. The Policy commenced with the use of **13** languages in **119** schools in January 2023.

### **National HIV and AIDS Response**

The Botswana Revised National Policy on **HIV and AIDS** (2010) takes into account the gender dynamics of HIV and AIDS. The Government of Botswana adopted its third National HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework (2017-2023) which is extended to 2024/2025 to align it with TNDP. The Framework has integrated gender and women's empowerment. On HIV treatment, the Government has removed obstacles whereupon Antiretroviral Treatment (ART) are accessible to everyone regardless of their nationality, gender, race, socio-economic status and sexual orientation (Free antiretroviral treatment for non-citizens in Botswana - Aidsmap).

Botswana strengthened the Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme through the establishment of youth friendly communication strategies including "Wise Up"; a social media platform and "Youth Counselling on Air" (YOCA) which is a telephonic counselling service targeting youth. Other initiatives include community mobilisation, Information Education and Communication, capacity-building, and Youth Friendly Services.

### **Women in Agriculture**

According to the World Bank Report (2023), the Agriculture sector contributes **1.7%** of Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and **17%** of the total female and **25%** of the total male labour force are in Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) continues to mainstream gender in its Policies, Strategies and Programmes as guided by the National Policy on Gender and Development and achievements include among others; The establishment of the Sector Gender Committee (SGC). The purpose of the

Committee is to oversee gender sensitive programming, monitoring implementation of such Programmes as well as sensitising and evaluating initiatives in the sector. A Gender in Agriculture Strategy was adopted in 2020 following engagement with key stakeholders amongst them being women in rural areas and in agriculture.

Through the Strategy, implementation structures are being established to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the sector. The Gender in Agriculture Technical Committee has been established with representation from senior management for coordination.

To close the gender gap in agriculture, the Government adopted gender responsive programming which include the former programmes; Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development (ISPAAD) and the Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID).

Furthermore, Government reviewed the above mentioned programmes and adopted the Temo Letlotlo and Thuo Letlotlo in 2023 and 2024 respectively. The Government is implementing the Temo Letlotlo Programme which promotes inclusivity in rain-fed agricultural production systems that also provide a safe production environment for all. Since inception of the programme in 2023, a total of **41,808** microscale farmers benefitted from the programme which **23,758 (56.8%)** were women according to the Ministry of Agriculture report (2024).

Thuo Letlotlo support the unemployed youth, women, PWD who are already in production with grants under small scale categories for the programme packages. In addition, the Chema Chema Programme has a budget of **USD50million** and is anticipated to benefit women in the informal sector.

According to the BIDPA Report (2022), on the evaluation of socio-economic programmes in Botswana, it was indicated that **60.3%** of the beneficiaries (respondents) who benefitted from the LIMID Programme were women and were enrolled under resource poor packages. The report also reflected that a total of **USD54**

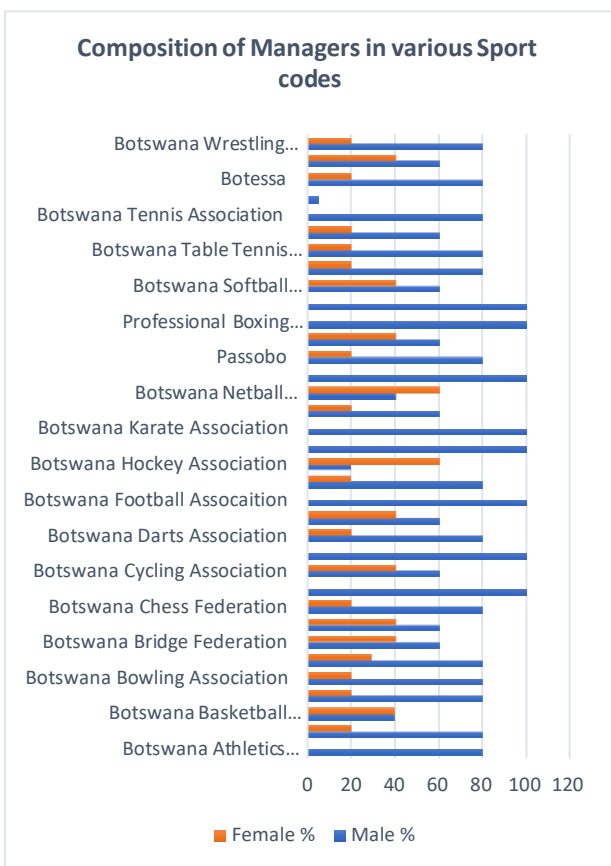
**Million (66%)** was used to finance these packages. **USD28 Million (33.9%)** of LIMID expenditures financed livestock infrastructure development projects.

In 2020/21 the former programme ISPAADD benefitted **50 903** women out of **92 766** beneficiaries (**54.9%**); **47 999** women out of **85 902 (56%)** in 2021/22 while in 2022/23, **41 270** women out of **74 576 (55.3%)** benefitted. On average, it shows that **55.5%** of women benefitted from ISPAADD.

Noting that land is a key resource in agriculture, the Government adopted special measures such as to increase women's access to and control over land, water, energy and other resources. At least **20%** of land is reserved for youth and women enterprises.

### **Gender Mainstreaming in Sport**

Women and Sport Botswana (WASBO) conducted the Gender Analysis Study on Participation of Girls and Women in Sport in 2022. In regards to women in positions of leadership, the results are depicted in **Table 1** below:



Results indicate that there are more males than females holding the managerial position. The statistics show that the percentage of males holding the managerial position is **78.7 %** as compared to females at **21.3 %**. There is no change in the women’s participation in leadership and managerial participation between 2018 and 2022. The average participation is still at **21.5%**.

In 2022, the sector adopted the Sexual Harassment and Gender Based Violence Policy for sport.

In addition, the sector launched the girls positive and safe coaching pathway programme. The programme is a collaboration with The Association for International Sport for All (TAFISA) and Nike, represents a ground breaking initiative aimed at empowering girls in sports. The comprehensive programme takes a multifaceted approach to empower girls in sports. It encompasses the development of the Coaching Girls Guide, which equips coaches with the necessary tools and knowledge to effectively

supports and mentor girls. Furthermore, the Coaching Her initiative focusses on empowering girls through mentorship and leadership development, instilling confidence and resilience within them.

Lastly, over **12** National Sports Associations (NSAs) underwent “Safeguarding in Sports Training for Organisational Focal Persons”. The safeguarding in sport module ensures that the welfare and protection of girls are prioritised, addressing critical issues such as abuse and harassment.

### Empowerment of Adolescents

His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana in October 2023 launched the National Commitment on Adolescent Wellbeing. The National Commitment solidifies Botswana’s dedication to the adoption of robust policies and programmes that prioritise investment in the wellbeing of adolescents. It outlines strategies aimed at enhancing wellbeing of adolescents including; Accelerating education and skills development; Promoting health and nutrition; Eliminating GBV; Promoting road safety and Employability and Job creation.

Since the launch, Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) have commenced implementation of the strategies embedded in the blue print.

In addition, Botswana’s Children’s Act of 2009 establishes the Children’s Consultative Forum which empowers and promotes child participation in matters that affect their wellbeing as well as influence policy and programming. The forum provides children with exposure to other global and regional platforms, broadening their knowledge and inspiring the development of new programmes within the country.

The four countries of Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe have since 2022, commissioned an initiative through which children are given a platform to engage with



their Heads of States and call for action while also creating a network of child advocacy among themselves.

To promote children's rights and their protection, Government and other players continue to hold dialogues with community leaders, extension teams and the general public on amongst others; early and forced child marriages, sexual exploitation and abuse, health, drug and substance abuse as well as other harmful traditional practices.

Since 2018, when the First Lady of the Republic of Botswana launched a national campaign dubbed: "**Eseng mo Ngwaneng**" a total of **112 000** people have been reached.

In addition, the Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-Free, Mentored and Safe (DREAMS) Programme reached **150 000** girls and young women across **11** districts in the country. DREAMS empowers adolescent girls and young women with social assets building skills, HIV and Gender Based Violence prevention and economic empowerment pathways. **15 000** Girls between the ages of 19-24 years were linked to education and skills development, employment entrepreneurship opportunities.

The **Dipalametse** (The Last Sprint) aimed at prevention of HIV, GBV and teenage pregnancy and empowerment of adolescents and young people reached **20 769** people in **7** districts covering **10** villages, **13 117** in-school youth, **5 974** out-of- school and **1 678** community leaders.

### **3. Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalised groups of women and girls?**

Botswana acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2021. As part of the domestication of this Convention, Parliament approved the Revised Disability Policy and enacted the Disability Law in 2023 respectively. This was a reflection of Botswana's commitment

to upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWDs.

Government is also working with Development Partners, Civil Society Groups and other stakeholders to empower PWD especially women and girls. UNFPA supported the Botswana Association for the Blind and Partially Sighted (BABPS) to implement Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for over **130** young people with visual impairment. The Programme is implemented in **4** educational institutions serving young PWDs. Other Civil Society groups like the Botswana Network for Mental Health have trained PWD (Hearing Impaired) on mental health issues.

The Government has taken steps to protect the rights of marginalised groups with specific reference to incarcerated women and girls. The Prisons Act (2017) was amended to provide for the modernisation of the prison service and emphasises on access to health and education for persons in incarceration amongst whom are women. In this regard, clinics are available in the facility to enable access to health services. The Botswana Prisons Service operates **2** Infectious Disease Control Centres (IDCCs) in North and South of the Country. These are clinics that provide HIV and AIDS related services to detained illegal migrants.

It is worth noting that Botswana has adopted the Alternative to Detention Strategy in the year 2022 to relieve expectant mothers, nursing mothers and children. Persons who are eligible for detention and have reliable hosts (where an Immigration Officer can easily access them), are released from detention to their hosts subject to written sureties.

While under custody, migrant women and children have access to free medical services including Antiretroviral Treatment. Women migrants who are not detained also have access to health services including antenatal care and immunisation for children. Botswana Prisons Service also introduced a Video Link Visitation System to facilitate virtual visits to prisoners by their loved ones.

#### 4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant and negative impact on the economy, and women were disproportionately affected. Statistics Botswana estimates that **53%** of people who lost their jobs or businesses were women and **47%** were men. By the end of 2021, only **8.2%** of those who had lost jobs or businesses had been able to recover. Of these, women were half the rate of men. In addition, **60%** of female-owned enterprises compared to **48%** male-owned enterprises defaulted on their loan repayment (**UNCDF 2021**). These were assisted with grants to resuscitate their businesses.

The pandemic also threatened to reverse the gains made in combating GBV. During this period, the Police recorded **2,789** cases of rape between January and November 2020 when the country was in extreme social distancing, compared to **2 265** during the whole of 2019. The Government embarked on the COVID-19 National Vaccination Programme which covered over **60%** of the eligible population by April 2022.

#### 5. Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or Programmes?

- i. Equality and non- discrimination under the law and access to justice
- ii. Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security
- iii. Political participation and representation
- iv. Gender Responsive Budgeting
- v. Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls

#### **Equality and non- discrimination under the law and access to justice**

Noting that **Section 15 (3)** of the Constitution of Botswana prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex amongst others, Government will continue to review laws and ensure that they do not discriminate against women and men. In addition, effort will be made to domesticate International Instruments that the Country is Party to. In cognisance of the fact that Gender inequality and inequity remain embedded including in the delivery of justice system, Government through the Ministry of Justice will promote a system wide approach to addressing gender issues.

To this end, gender management structures will be set up at all levels to ensure accurate articulation of gender issues as well as mobilisation of resources for meaningful systematic and systemic gender mainstreaming. In addition, effort will be made to develop critical gender mainstreaming skills and continuous inclusion of gender indispensable condition for ensuring justice is delivered by consistently removing all known gender related barriers.

Children are a critical component of society and need to be protected from all harms. Their access to justice is therefore fundamental to guarantee their safe passage to adulthood. Government on this note is committed to ensuring that children are not in any way prejudiced to access justice. For this reason, Government has prioritised reform of the justice system to align with Botswana's international obligations on the promotion and protection of children's rights. Strengthening child friendly justice is part of the national commitment to end violence against children; **"E Seng Mo Ngwaneng"**.

A child friendly road map has been developed to provide guidance and facilitate standardization among stakeholders in child justice. To strengthen children's access to justice, MLGRD is also in the process of developing a Memorandum of Understanding with Legal Aid Botswana to facilitate better access for children in conflict with the law. Measures will include strengthening the relations between referral mechanisms and service providers of the justice system including the judiciary, police, health care providers, education officials, social



workers, prosecutors, lawyers, and correctional officers.

### **Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security**

Empowering women and girls is critical for agricultural development and food security. As the Country develops climate adaptation and mitigation measures, women's vulnerability will be taken into account. The involvement of rural communities especially women in climate change adaptation initiatives will be central to the process. Government will strengthen awareness and hold information campaigns about climate smart agriculture in rural communities to enhance uptake of new technologies for implementation through funding facilities.

### **Political participation and representation**

Emang Basadi, a Non-Governmental Organisation working in the area of women political participation and representation undertook a Study named; "**Mme O kae**" (Where are the Women). Key findings of the Study are: that the electoral system of First Past The Post (FPTP) disadvantages women; lack of resources and multiple roles limit women in participating in campaigns; patriarchy also perpetuates discrimination and stigmatisation of women.

To mitigate these, the Study recommends: adoption of a different electoral system such as the quota system or proportional representation that can enhance women's participation and representation; provision of resources and special measures for women including shared burden of care, intense public education and interrogation of gender stereotypes to open safe public spaces for women.

To further strengthen the participation of minority and young women, sensitisation and mentorship programmes will be undertaken focussing on rural communities. This will include; training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, self-assertion and political campaigning.

### **Gender Responsive Budgeting**

The Gender Responsive Public Finance Management Assessment (2022) indicates a need to strengthen the coordination of gender equality policies and budget implementation to produce well-structured data for tracking gender mainstreaming across all sectors.

The macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment plays a critical role in the implementation of the BPfA in Botswana. Positive economic conditions and gender-responsive policies can significantly advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Botswana's efforts in implementing gender-responsive budgeting, promoting equal employment opportunities, supporting women-owned enterprises, investing in social protection, healthcare and education are steps towards creating an equitable economy.

### **Eliminating Gender Based Violence**

Considering the high level of GBV, Government will in addition to interventions provided above adopt specific measures targeting different populations. Key will be promoting messages on breaking the silence and community owned and driven initiatives that encourage reporting of GBV cases. This will motivate survivors to speak out and report their cases. In addition, it will inspire communities to prevent, protect and care for survivors as well as create safe spaces for them. The engagement of Dikgosi and Faith Leaders as well the Private Sector will continue to form part of the key stakeholders in the GBV response.

The Violence Against Children (VAC) Survey conducted in 2019 makes key recommendations on the holistic protection of children. These are implemented through the INSPIRE model which focuses on: **I**mplementation and enforcement of laws; **N**orms and values; **S**afe environment; **P**arent and care-giver support; **I**ncome and economic strengthening; **R**esponse and support services; and **E**ducation and life skills.

Noting that women and girls need protection within the cyber space, the Cyber Crime and Computer Related Crimes Act (2018) recognises

cyber harassment, cyber stalking, offensive electronic communication and revenge pornography as offences. On this premise, enforcement of the Act is central to prosecute crimes such as cyberbullying, cyber harassment, image-based sexual abuse and child sexual abuse materials.

Data collection will also be enhanced to inform targeted response at all levels of the community. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework developed in 2021 will therefore be paramount to all sectors especially those in the Referral Pathways.

### **SECTION THREE: PROGRESS ACROSS THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN**

#### **Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work**

##### **Critical areas of concern:**

##### **A. Women and poverty**

##### **F. Women and the economy**

##### **I. Human Rights of women**

##### **L. The Girl Child**

#### **6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)**

Over the past five years, the Government of Botswana adopted the second generation of the Decent Work Country Programme. One of the key priority areas is gender equality and women empowerment. According to the Decent Work Country Programme for Botswana (2020–2024), Botswana aims to be a country where all women and men have equal opportunity to actively participate in the economic, social, cultural and political development of the country. Government has undertaken the following:

- i. Regular inspections and sensitisation of employers and workers on basic labour standards,
- ii. Unpaid care and domestic work/work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity, paternity or parental leave, care services)

- iii. Paid Maternity Leave; pregnant employees in Botswana are entitled to **12** weeks of partly-paid maternity leave. During their leave, employees are eligible to at least **50%** of their basic salary.

The Employment Act does not provide paternity, parental leave and care services. However, some Parastatals, Civil Society and the Private Sector provide paternity leave to their employees.

The Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs is currently reviewing labour laws geared at improving terms and conditions of employment in the country and to align the laws with the International Labour Standards that Botswana has ratified.

Workers' rights are protected under the following Acts; Employment, Trade Disputes, Trade Unions and Employers Organization, Workers Compensation and others. These legal instruments provide labour standards such as the protection of wages, leave pay, severance benefits and paid public holidays.

The Department of Labour and Social Security conducts regular labour inspections and where inspectors detect incidences of violence, child labour, human trafficking and forced labour; the matter is reported to the police for investigation and prosecution.

In terms of recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, the Government of Botswana has made strides in the appointment of women in key positions in the Public Service. These include; the appointment of first women to the positions of Minister of Finance, Permanent Secretary to the President, President of the Court of Appeal, Chief Registrar of the High Court and Commissioner of Police. In addition, female Permanent Secretaries are at **40%**, Directors at **48%** and Magistrates at **64%**.

Botswana adopted the National Employment Policy in 2021. The Policy is intended to: ensure there is productive, gainful and decent employment available for all persons in search of work; and there is free choice of employment that suits one's skills and talents.

In spite of the challenges faced by the country on unemployment and poverty levels, the Government of Botswana has registered significant progress in economic development over the past five years and the Country is relatively on course to attain its objective of reaching High-Income Status by 2036. To this end, a number of initiatives have been implemented with the aim to empower marginalised groups. These include: targeted programmes for small and medium enterprises such as, Chema-Chema, Temo and Thuo Letlotlo as measures towards improving citizen well-being and economic growth. The Programmes have been structured to provide affordable short-term loans to citizens establish new and grow existing informal businesses.

The Wealth Creation Programme, (previously known as the Poverty Eradication Programme), has been instrumental in providing economic opportunities to the most vulnerable populations, including remote-area communities. By December 2022, **31 524** women and **10 416** men benefitted from the Wealth Creation Programme. Of these, **3 547** were youth, being **2 661** females and **886** males.

In addition, the Government has reservations and preferential treatment for women, youth and PWDs in micro-procurement, project maintenance and price preference.

### **7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?**

Government has put in place several new initiatives to alleviate low income earners most of whom are women in unpaid care and domestic work. These include: access to free electricity connection which effected from April 2024. In addition, Government launched the Structured Play and Stimulation Group Guidelines and Framework for Holistic Childhood Development. Government has also adopted a pre schooling

Programme targeting children aged **4** years thus minimising the burden of care for women and allowing for women's active engagement in income generating activities.

### **8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?**

In order to move the country towards a Knowledge-Based Economy based on leaving no one behind, Botswana has developed a 4IR Digital Transformation Strategy (SmartBots) to drive digital transformation across the economy, Government and society.

The Botswana national broadband plans have clear targets for women's inclusion, the national broadband strategy includes gendered targets for smartphone access, digital literacy and ICT graduates. The essentials for accelerating the country's digitalisation are in place.

The ICT policy and accompanying legislative framework has a whole of society approach that combines knowledge, skills and resources to build gender responsive digital services and a more inclusive digital environment. In addition, measures to remove the discriminatory barriers faced by women and girls' access, use and design digital tools (e.g. Costs of devices and data, lack of skills, safety concerns, restrictive social norms) are in place. Furthermore, there are opportunities to deepen cooperation and put in place building blocks for inclusion and gender-responsive digital and public infrastructure, promote knowledge-sharing and technology transfer, and strengthen digital data capacity-building to address the gender digital divide and support the achievement of the SDGs.

The Ministry of Communications, Knowledge and Technology has worked with private companies to **train and transfer skills in robotics and coding** to young people in Botswana (especially students) from 2023 into 2024. The training gave equal opportunity to both girls and boys.

The Ministry of Communications, Knowledge and Technology established a national Gender and Inclusivity Change Team to raise awareness in

matters relating to Research, Science, Technology and Innovation (RSTI) in the country. Efforts are anticipated to promote gender sensitive research.

Botswana signed the **SADC Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Organisation (WISETO)** Charter in August 2023 which promotes the participation of women and girls in STEM, and advance women's access into leadership and decision-making positions. Government embarked on a journey which intensified in 2023, to **promote the use of online digital services** such as application for permits and other online services. This will improve women's time use.

Businesses such as banks have collaborated with the private sector to mentor women and youth in business to capacitate them on business management skills and finding opportunities for funding and growth using technology. The initiative targeted women and youth across Botswana.

### School Connectivity

The Government of Botswana through the SmartBots project connected more than **600** primary and secondary public schools with internet of **100 mbps** thus increasing the accessibility to digitalisation. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase of the School Digitilisation Project, the Ministry of Education and Skills Development in 2022 and 2023 issued **52 000** laptops to secondary schools. **216** ICT equipment were also provided for schools with learners with special needs.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase Project, laptops will be provided for the **207** junior secondary schools starting with **15 410** gadgets for the teachers and lecturers in the Technical and Vocational Education and Tertiary Institutions. The Phase also includes the provision of Video Conferencing equipment for the Regional Education Offices.

Through Public and private partnerships with the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, primary schools across the country continue to receive mobile ICT laboratory (labs) equipment. To date, **480/766** primary schools have been provided with the

mobile ICT labs. The Ministry is also working with stakeholders to build capacity and awareness on cyber-security and safe internet practices to ensure that digital interactions and engagements are positive. These digitalisation initiatives serve to enhance access to information and online opportunities for all learners and their families as they lead to enhanced digital skills for the whole of society.

The upper secondary school level gender parity stands at **1:3** thus this marks a significant step in empowering the girl child.

The Ministry of Education and Skills Development also participates in the international events aimed at empowering the girl child. Out of the **150** learners who participated in the 2024 World Information and Telecommunications Society Day **96 (80%)** were girls. In addition, girls participate in the 'Girls in ICT Competitions', an initiative of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) held every April.

**9. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?**

The past five years has been characterised with extreme challenging economic environment caused by unprecedented range of uncertainties. The COVID-19 pandemic brought disruptions not only in the domestic economy but also across the global economy. The Pandemic weakened global demands for major exports, disrupted supply chains, and reduced consumption across a number of sectors. This was followed by the Russia/Ukraine conflict, in early 2022, undermining recovery efforts to pre-COVID growth trajectory. Recently there has been some threats on the diamond industry which also affected the performance of the local economy. Botswana is amongst the largest producers of rough diamonds, and the diamond mining industry remains the key driver of its economy. The diamond sector represents just under one-

third of Botswana's GDP, about one-third of its fiscal receipts, and more than two-thirds of exports.

Due to prevailing weaker global demand prospects, the domestic economy continues to be constrained. This subdued growth has led to a drop in Government revenues and a reprioritisation of Government spending plans and commitments including Gender responsive Programmes. Despite this shortfall, Government has continued to implement several macroeconomic policies and initiatives to support a more equitable economy and advance the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA).

The macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment significantly influences the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in Botswana.

The Government has prioritised infrastructure development in its budget allocation, recognising it as a critical enabler for enhanced productivity and sustainable economic growth. This aims to promote active participation of the private sector, women, youth, and citizens in general, to build resilience, strengthen inclusiveness, and increase growth.

While the initiatives and measures put in place demonstrate Botswana's commitment to implementing the BPfA, the recent Gender Responsive Public Finance Management Assessment indicates that more work is needed to fully integrate gender considerations into macroeconomic and fiscal policies. Further, the Assessment indicates a need to strengthen the coordination of gender equality policies and budget implementation to produce well-structured data for tracking gender mainstreaming across all sectors.

This recognition aligns with Botswana's broader commitments to global, continental, and regional development frameworks. The country's efforts contribute to the achievement of SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 10 on reduced inequalities. Furthermore, these initiatives support the aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063, particularly Aspiration 6, which

calls for an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth. At the regional level, Botswana's actions demonstrate progress towards meeting the targets set in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which aims to empower women, eliminate discrimination, and achieve gender equality and equity through gender-responsive legislation, policies, Programmes, and projects.

### Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

#### Critical areas of concern:

A. Women and poverty

B. Education and training of women

C. Women and health

### 10. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

Botswana has made several developments to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls in the last 5 years through adopting the following:

- i. the **Economic Inclusion Act (2022)** to enhance effective participation of citizens in the economy.
- ii. Introduction of the **Temo-Letlotlo Programme** which replaces the Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development (ISPAAD) Programme
- iii. **Wealth Creation Programme**
- iv. **The Affirmative Action Framework** for Remote Area Communities (AAFRAC 2015-2025).

Government has undertaken initiatives to enhance agricultural development and improve the livelihoods of rural communities, which are often the most susceptible to poverty and inequality. To this end, the Government has implemented the secure land tenure, provided financial support and market access to small-scale farmers to foster agribusiness growth.

Government has intensified efforts and commitment towards the eradication of extreme poverty by 2030 through Programmes that have been implemented to address poverty amongst



the marginalised groups such as women, girls and PWDs.

The Ministry of Entrepreneurship continues to implement **Wealth Creation Programme**. The Programme includes the: agriculture, housing, social protection, women empowerment and education sectors to create employment and improve livelihoods. A budget of **USD850,000.00** has been allocated for the 2023/2024 financial year.

The Government implemented a special dispensation for Rural Area Development Programme (RADP). The Affirmative Action Framework for Remote Area Communities (AAFRAC 2015-2025) has been reviewed through the support of UNDP with a view to establish its impact on the livelihoods of people. Implementation of the recommendations has commenced and stakeholders are continuously engaged.

Progress has been made in the provision of infrastructure in the rural areas to improve the investment environment and accessibility of services. This includes provision of electricity, water, roads, housing, sanitation, information communication technology as well as harnessing renewable energy sources.

Sectors continue to mainstream disability in their initiatives. To date, **11,782** PWDs access economic empowerment Programmes including affirmative action job placement. To decentralise services as well as to enhance service delivery at the level of local authorities, the Government approved the upgrading of **22** Subordinate Authorities to fully-fledged Councils.

Implementation of targeted citizen economic empowerment Programmes, aimed specifically at women, youth and other vulnerable members of society will be maintained. These include Women Empowerment initiatives, Youth Development Fund and the Poverty Eradication Programme. Affirmative action for these groups is being strengthened through amongst others, the Economic Inclusion Act, Local Economic Development Strategy and the Public Procurement Act.

The Botswana National School Feeding Programme has a universal coverage reaching school children from reception to standard seven in all Government owned schools. The Programme provides two on-site hot meals a day covering **364,859** learners in **764** public primary schools country wide. Thus, early morning breakfast before classes commence and mid-morning meals. A special dispensation of a third lunch meal is given to **23,049 learners** in Remote Area Settlements or from vulnerable communities. The Programme also caters for Secondary school students.

The report also states that progress has been made in the provision of infrastructure in the rural areas to improve the investment environment and accessibility of services. This includes provision of electricity, water, roads, housing, sanitation, information communication technology as well as harnessing renewable energy sources. In 2020, the rate of electrification stood at **90.74%** in urban areas and **26.38%** in rural areas. A total of **203** villages are being connected through SmartBots Village Connectivity Project.

### **11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?**

The Decentralisation Policy, through which services have been expanded is being implemented. The number of Districts has also been increased to improve accessibility of services. Some of the factors considered in establishing additional districts are homogeneity, population size, geographical factors, potential for growth, availability of infrastructure and resources, size of the areas or settlements to be served and the distance from the subordinate Headquarters.

Social safety nets are provided to the most vulnerable populations to cushion effects of poverty through destitution Programme, Community Home Based Care (CHBC), Orphan Care Programme, Drought Mitigation measures, Cash benefits such as a non-contributory Old Age Pension (OAP) World War II Veteran Allowance (WWVII, Disability Cash Transfer

(DCT) and Destitute Cash Allowance (DCA). In addition, through the universal Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme, which is one of the oldest social safety nets for under five children, expectant and lactating mothers as well as nutritionally at risk under-fives are provided with meals and nutritional supplements. Provision is both in kind and cash depending on the category of benefit.

Furthermore, Government has approved the National Social Protection Framework to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Botswana Social protection system to support the poorest households as well as coordinate and harmonise delivery of social protection services in Botswana.

The Ipelegeng Programme, which is a community based public works scheme has **69%** female beneficiation component. Through this Programme, people work in different public works projects on a rotational basis. Some exemptions have however, been made for certain groups of vulnerable people to not rotate upon recommendation of a Social Worker. Most of these comprise single female, able bodied, unemployed household heads with young children.

The Rural Development Strategy which aims at improving the livelihoods of Remote Area Communities (RACs) currently has **140** jobs created from **76** community economic empowerment projects. In addition, the formation of an Inter-Ministerial RADP Committee has contributed significantly in driving the Remote Area Development Programme as it meets regularly to discuss issues related to improvement of the livelihoods of Remote Area Communities across various Ministries.

One of the success stories of the women empowerment initiative is the Miss RADP Programme where young women are mobilised annually and winners are funded to engage in Entrepreneurship. The pageant has been running since 2013 with **2** young women participating from each of the **7** districts yearly. For the past 9 years **126** young women

participated. The queen receives **USD6,000.00** prize being **USD5,000.00** for an income generating project and **USD1,000.00** as cash prize. The 1<sup>st</sup> Princess gets **USD3,700.00** in prize money being **USD3,000.00** for income generating project and **USD700.00** as cash prize. Lastly, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Princess receives **USD2,500.00** being **USD2,000.00** for income generating project and **USD500.00** as cash prize. To date, **11** young women are running their own economic empowerment projects. Winners engaged in individual projects which include crafts shop, small stock, modelling, beauty parlour and other self-employment projects.

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development continues to provide housing units to destitute persons and remote area dwellers on an annual basis. From a target of **247** units planned for the current financial year (2024/2025), **117** have been allocated to women.

A total of **13 576** Wealth Creation beneficiaries have gone through technical training and **10 406** funded with **12 416** being packaged.

Out of a total number of **7 540** Village Development Committees (VDCs) membership, **5 245** are women. Furthermore, the number of women who hold executive positions stands at **2 227**. The executive committee includes chairpersons of committees, vice chairpersons, secretaries, vice secretaries and treasurers.

For the current planning period, **7** Day Care Centres will be constructed in remote area communities/settlements at an estimated **USD350,000.00**. This will enable children living in settlements to have well-structured and equipped Day Care Centre. The projects are intended to promote access to early childhood care, stimulation and learning.

**12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?**

Botswana is committed to achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) with the Government aligning national health strategies to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strengthening primary health care as the delivery vehicle to achieve equitable access to people-centred, non-discriminatory, comprehensive health services. Furthermore, Botswana adopted a legal framework that ensures access to Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) care, information and education. In this regard, the Country recorded a decline in AIDS related deaths from **5 300** (2017) to **5 100** (2020), total fertility rate from **3** to **2.8** births per woman and increase in contraceptive prevalence rate from **53%** to **64.7%** (2020).

Government continues to utilise the FP2030 commitment to reduce unintended pregnancies, strengthen HIV prevention among Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW), and promote condom use and voluntary male circumcision. Furthermore, Government continues to strengthen the incorporation of mental health education within existing Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and life skills programmes to address male and female adolescents and young people's mental health.

Efforts are also made to strengthen holistic prevention and treatment services for alcohol and substance use among male and female adolescents and young people, including strategies to reduce availability and build support networks.

To address the high prevalence of HIV amongst women and girls, Government provides Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT), Antiretroviral Therapy, Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PreP), Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), and condoms. With regard to condom distribution, according to the 2020 report of the Global HIV Prevention, Botswana is ranked amongst the best countries regarding the number of condoms distributed per person per year in the sub-Saharan Africa between 2018 and 2019. The report further applauds Botswana for narrowing the gap on preventive benefits of condom use in the 15-49-year age group.

Male Involvement in SRH and response to GBV guidelines which cover management of key populations and stipulate the referral process of victims to relevant stakeholders were reviewed in 2022 and are being disseminated to the entire health care delivery system.

Government increased access to cervical cancer screening and prevention through introduction of HPV Self collection as another cervical cancer screening modality and introduction of thermal ablation as an ablative treatment of pre-cancerous lesions. **201** Health Care Workers have been trained on HPV Self Care collection and Thermal Ablation pre-cancer treatment is offered in **51** facilities, HPV Self Collection is offered in **3** screening sites.

Botswana continues to strengthen cervical cancer screening services and conduct capacity building initiatives and raise awareness to create demand for services nationally. Service Providers have been trained on screening and treatment. The Ministry of Health has expanded the Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid(VIA) screening modality to **18** districts, **75** facilities and **35** Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure (LEEP) clinics. Furthermore, the Ministry is currently working on the national cancer control plan to strengthen screening, diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation services for all cancers including cervical cancer.

Government advanced implementation of the revised National Population Policy (2010) to reduce under five mortalities from **68** deaths per **1000** live births to less than **29** deaths by 2020, and to further increase life expectancy from **50.7** years in 2001 to at least **67.7** years. Available data shows that there have been remarkable declines in both infant and adult mortality over the years, mainly due to reductions in the HIV/AIDS mortality.

Initiatives to reduce maternal and infant mortality are on-going. Through the Emergency Obstetric Maternal and New-Born Care (EmOMNC) nurses and doctors are continuously skilled to attend to emergencies that emerge during pregnancy, labour and postpartum.



To-date, **120** nurses and doctors have been trained to attend to obstetrics and/gynaecology. As a way of promoting retention of nurses, the Ministry reviewed its pay structures to remunerate health care providers with overtime allowance of **30%** added to it **10%** for post basic courses like midwifery. This acts as an incentive to nurses in order to retain them to service.

**13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?**

**The Table below depicts Females and Males at Tertiary Level**

Student Enrolment by institution, type and Gender				
Type of Institution	Female	Male	Total	% Female
Private institutions	6,205	3,957	10,162	61.1
Private Universities	5284	4159	9,443	56.0
College of Education	961	448	1,409	68.2
Institute of Health Sciences	805	424	1,229	65.5
Technical Colleges	1002	986	1,988	50.4
Public Institution	6,087	3,518	9,605	63.4
Public Universities	14,161	8,661	22,830	62.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>34,505</b>	<b>22,161</b>	<b>56,666</b>	<b>60.9</b>

*Source: CSO, Tertiary Education Statistics, 2020*

Educational Curricula has been Strengthened to increase gender-responsiveness and eliminate bias, at all levels of education. The following are examples;

- i. Development of General Education and Curriculum Assessment Framework that

- explicitly advocates for improved education outcomes across all levels.
- ii. Review of the Botswana Senior Secondary Education Programme (BSSE).
- iii. Early Childhood Education and Play Groups Programme.

The Ministry responsible for Education, in partnership with the academia developed strategies to promote STEM Subjects at higher and lower secondary school with a view to close the gap and assist the girl child throughout their schools especially in the underserved rural areas. This includes National Science week, STEM Plus festivals, installation of tinkering labs for children with special needs with an aim to stimulate interest in stem projects starting from early childhood learning through Primary and secondary school levels. So far more than **1 800** girl children have been engaged and some attached to women in STEM related professions for mentorship. The trend has so far showed that **60%** of Females are in STEM Programmes both for Top Achievers Scholarship and for Mainstream sponsorship.

The Gender Parity Index (Educational Attainment) was **0.74** in the year 2019 and it improved to **1.02** in the year 2020. This may be attributed to deliberate decision to reserve **5% slots** for girls in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). In the year 2020, enrolment of girls increased by **52.5%**.

The country has introduced a week-long science camp offered by the Botswana International University of Science and Technology. The camp targets girl’s students attending schools in the rural and peri-urban villages to motivate them to improve education outcomes.

Social Protection Programmes were strengthened to create more inclusive opportunities especially for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners and other vulnerable adults’ groups.

Botswana provides free and compulsory ten years of Basic Education from Primary to Secondary school. The Country recorded a rising adult literacy rate of persons aged 15 years and above; **87.12%** females and **86.34%** males.

Trough the Affirmative Action Programme (AAP) the Government has reduced the entry points for Tertiary Education for children in remote areas. To date, **2 754** learners that is; **8%** of the total enrolment have accessed university education in 2021/22.

#### 14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

Botswana designed a short-term COVID-19 economic relief package to support the economy and complement disease containment measures. The package covered interventions such as three months' wage subsidies for workers in firms adversely affected by COVID-19, deferment of profits' taxes payable by firms, establishment of a loan guarantee scheme to support access to bank credit by affected firms, additional health expenditure as well as provision of food-relief support to affected and vulnerable households.

**Over USD2.1million** was contributed to the relief fund since the inception of the fund in April 2020. Of the total funds contributed, **USD2 million** was seed money from the Government and the remaining funds amounting to over **USD1.26million** was received from the Private Sector, Civil Society Organisations, Development Partners and individuals. More than **USD800,000.00** was disbursed to the wage subsidy, over **USD350,000.00** was for the food hampers while over **USD300,000.00** was for health supplies. Additionally, over **USD580,000.00** was disbursed to the Ministry of Basic Education for temporary employment of Safety, Health and Environmental (SHEs) officers. The over **USD900,000.00** was for evacuation and financial support to Batswana abroad (**BOPA,07 SEP 2020**).

Botswana also developed an Economic Recovery and Transformation Plan to support the restoration of economic activity and incomes, facilitate economic growth, accelerate economic transformation and build the resilience of the economy, as well as, to effectively implement a

roadmap for the national transformational agenda.

To encourage reporting of GBV cases, the Botswana Police Service and Civil Society (Childline, BGBVC, WAR), introduced tollfree lines which are operated by trained officers who deal with GBV issues. Civil Society also introduced on-line counselling facilities.

In addition, COVID-19 prevention messages were also communicated in some local languages including sign language and other forms.

#### 15. Over the past five years, which forms of Gender Based Violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritised for action?

Forms of GBV prioritised are: sexual, physical, psychological and economic violence.

Statistics indicate that the most prevalent form of Gender Based Violence is sexual and physical violence. The most affected are Women and children and men as perpetrators. The Costed National Strategy Towards Ending GBV guides the various Sector on Sector-specific interventions.

#### 16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritised to address Gender Based Violence.

**In addition to the information provided under Section 2, Question 1** Government intensified the national response on GBV and Violence Against Children.

The Botswana Police Service established the Gender and Child Protection Branch to:

- i. Provide support in the investigation of Gender Based Violence, offences involving children and human trafficking
- ii. Develop strategies, policies and guidelines on the prevention and response to GBV and Child related offences
- iii. Protect individuals from all forms of abuse

- iv. Enhance rapid response to GBV and child related matters
- v. Strengthen collaboration with key actors in the investigation of GBV related offences and matters related to children
- vi. Assist victims of GBV as well as children in contact with the law to access appropriate health and psychological support services
- vii. Serve as a focal point for GBV and child involved offences
- viii. Coordinate the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of relevant operational strategies, policies and procedures
- ix. Raise public awareness on the role of the police in GBV
- x. Raise public awareness on the role of the police in combating GBV

The Police further developed GBV Standard Operating Procedures which guide and standardise referrals.

Learners are capacitated amongst others on Comprehensive Sexuality Education through a television based programme named **Talk Back**.

Weekly Radio Programmes are also run covering sexual and reproductive health, drug and substance abuse and Gender Based Violence. Presenters receive live calls and answer questions and promote discussions to enhance understanding and mind-set change.

To ensure constant public awareness, the National Gender Machinery continues with public engagement through various fora. For the reporting period, over 200, 000 women, men, girls and boys were reached with GBV messages, gender responsive laws, gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, the Country annually commemorates International Women's Day, International Men's Day and 16 Days Campaign. His Excellency the President has since ascension of office been leading these commemorations demonstrating his unwavering commitment to women's empowerment.

### 17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender based violence?

- i. Development of the Life- Skills Education which is inclusive of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). Life-skills Education addresses identity and well-being (personal and social development, health promotion, human rights and sustainable futures). Issues of gender equality are embedded in all the education Programmes across all levels.
- ii. The Ministry of Education and skills Development utilises various programmes and policies to creating safe spaces in schools, namely; Peer Approach Counselling by Teens program, which is a platform where learners feel comfortable sharing issues of concern to themselves.
- iii. Safeguard Young People program
- iv. Safeguard Young People school-based policy which is being piloted in 6 schools
- v. DREAMS – DREAMS program has developed Safe Space guidelines that are used by mentors during their interactions with adolescent girls and young women. The DREAMS curriculum has 8 sessions that cover GBV prevention. All the mentors are trained on LIVES (a training on management of rape and intimate partner violence in humanitarian settings) to conduct violence identifications/screening and respond to disclosures of violence with first/line support.
- vi. Accelerating CSE and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) interventions, especially for marginalized communities, including plans to utilise digital and virtual outreach.
- vii. Advancing digital learning access and develop monitoring tools for inclusive education tracking.
- viii. Promoting a holistic approach to skills development encompassing CSE, life skills, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy.
- ix. Expanding continuous professional development for educators in CSE, ensuring alignment with accredited standards.

The Guidance and Counselling units in schools provide education and awareness on Gender Based Violence. The Guidance and Counselling has working relationships with Social Welfare, the Police, and the Community among others. This has provided a platform for the girl child to discuss and take action on issues of Gender Based Violence. The Education Sector has a

fully-fledged department that is responsible for Learners Support Services. Learners are guided through a Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). The Department also offers one on one counselling or group counselling. The teachers are also empowered more on strategies to deal with the learners.

Botswana is leveraging on its existing commitments and initiatives, like the Education Plus initiative and the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Ministerial Commitment on CSE to improve educational outcomes and the holistic well-being of male and female children and young people. Botswana became the 13th African country to join the Education Plus Initiative in 2023. Education Plus advocates for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) to complete secondary education against all odds. Additionally, it ensures that AGYW learn life skills and access Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services in and around their environment. It also ensures that every girl who completes secondary education has a pathway to an economic opportunity for them to avoid risky relationships.

Ministry of Education and Skills Development is implementing a Guidance and Counselling program in schools where the subject of Guidance is offered; and contains a strong component on Gender Based Violence and HIV/AIDS. The Ministry is also implementing the Life Skills program as well as LIVING: Botswana's Window of Hope Life Skills Instructional Materials for Prevention of HIV and GBV, where booklets on information on life - skills are currently being piloted in **10** schools in the Southern Region.

The ministry continues to conduct awareness raising initiatives through Guidance and Counselling structures in schools, as well as through collaborations with external stakeholders. Radio and Television platforms are also utilised to sensitize the schooling population on issues of bullying including cyber bullying

The Police mission statement has committed "to provide a professional Policing Service, in partnership with the Community" focusing on: Partnership policing; Proactive problem solving

programmes; Changing community mind-set; and Duty of all to actively participate.

**18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology facilitated gender based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)**

Government has taken a number of actions to prevent and respond to technology facilitated Gender Based Violence including; online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Some of the actions include; Cybercrime and Computer Related Crimes Act (2018) provides for imprisonment of up to one year for offensive electronic communication. It was drafted in line with best international practice, considering the seriousness of the offence and having regard to various international and regional instruments, such as the Council of Europe Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, Commonwealth Model Laws, SADC Model Laws as well as the laws of other international jurisdictions on this matter.

- i. The Data Protection Act (2022), regulates personal data and ensures that the privacy of individuals is maintained.
- ii. Media Practitioners Associations Act (2022) whose objective is to ensure professional conduct of journalists, provides for the establishment of disciplinary boards for action against journalists who publicise technology GBV amongst other things.
- iii. National Information and Communications Technology Policy was adopted to guide the development of ICT in Botswana.

Following the establishment of the Gender and Child Protection branch, a desk within the branch was created to investigate and offer support in the investigations of online GBV and online child sexual exploitation. The Botswana Police Service has in 2019 established the Cyber Forensics Branch. This branch is mandated to Provide digital forensic (electronic evidence), cybercrime investigation, support, technical and open source support to other police establishments in



various cases including cyber facilitated GBV and online sexual exploitation.

Implementing awareness raising initiatives targeting the general public and education settings to sensitise young people, caregivers and educators to ethical and responsible online behaviour.

### 19. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to resource women's organisations working to prevent and respond to GBV?

In Botswana, despite significant progress in women's rights and gender equality, GBV continues to be a major concern. Women in Botswana face various forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and harmful cultural practices. Botswana has various service and these include: Childline Botswana toll free line, Botswana Gender Based Violence Prevention and Support Centre (BGBVC) (operates free short message and the Botswana Police Service provides a GBV toll free line as well.

In 2020, the Government of Botswana provided financial support to the two shelters in Northern and Southern Region totalling **USD846,860.69**. This funding is aimed to improve the services and facilities available to victims of Gender Based Violence.

The shelters offer crucial support, including safe accommodation, counselling, and legal assistance to those affected by Gender Based Violence. Other interventions include; Family counselling and reconciliation to ensure sustainability and lifelong benefits for survivors; Involvement of men in violence prevention initiatives; and Engagement of Religious Leaders/ Ministers in counselling services as preferred by survivors.

### 20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

The freedom of speech is protected under Botswana's Constitution, specifically Chapter 12. The media environment in the country is free and diverse. Media practitioners in Botswana have a significant role in promoting women and girls rights through responsible reporting, advocacy and collaboration with stakeholders.

A number of initiatives have been taken by both Government and stakeholders to address the portrayal of women and girls' discrimination and/or gender bias in the media. These include;

- i. Media Practitioners Association Act (2022) Section 43 states that Journalists or Media Enterprise should have code of ethics with provisions for the protection of minors.
- ii. In 2020 Gender Links Botswana trained journalists on reporting about women's political participation in Botswana.
- iii. In 2021 Women and Sport Botswana (WASBO) trained media practitioners on gender sensitive reporting in sports.
- iv. Television Programmes Batho Pele, Mmueleli Wame, Lefatshe Boswa, and Letlhabile play a significant role in sensitising the public on various issues, including gender equality and women's rights.

### 21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?

Gender equality and women's empowerment in Botswana has progressed over the past reporting period with Botswana having made significant strides toward the protection of rights of marginalised groups, gender based violence prevention and equal treatment of women under the law.

The Republic of Botswana ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (better known as the Maputo Protocol). This is a ground-

breaking women's rights legal instrument that expands and reinforces the rights provided in other human rights instruments.

In 2021 Government also acceded to the CRPD and the same year Parliament passed the National Policy on the Rights of Persons with Disability. Parliament went further and passed the Disability Act in 2023. Government also introduced the Sex Offenders Act in 2021 to provide for the establishment of a register of sex offenders.

An Inter- Ministerial Committee on GBV was also established in 2021 to provide strategic guidance on the national response to Gender Based Violence as well as put in place mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of these efforts. At local level **28** District Gender Committees have been established and trained to implement the National Policy on Gender and Development.

Government also established the National Gender Commission in 2022 to monitor, facilitate and advise on mainstreaming of gender issues and inclusion of Persons with Disability, women, children, youth, older members of society, minority and - marginalised groups in National Development and Child Protection Branch in 2021 across its Police stations to deal with **GBV related** issues including domestic violence and offences relating to children. These efforts were further bolstered by the establishment of GBV specialised Courts by the Ministry of Justice dedicated to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and related cases to protect women, children and other vulnerable groups.

In 2020 the Government conducted a feasibility study on the establishment and strengthening of Safe Havens for GBV survivors. The study recommended a GBV one stop centre model for providing comprehensive care to survivors of Gender Based Violence, offering medical, legal and psychosocial services either within one location—a hospital or a stand-alone centre—or through a referral system that links services.

Construction of the Safe Haven's has been included in the National Development Plan 12 (NDP 12) which will begin in 2025. In 2020, the Government of Botswana provided financial

support to two shelters in Maun and Gaborone with a total of **USD 846,860.69**. This funding aimed to improve the services and facilities available to victims of Gender Based Violence, especially in light of the increased cases during the COVID-19 pandemic. Government also provides financial support to the shelters run by Non-Governmental Organisations. For the reporting period, the Government committed a total of USD1.5 million to support the housing of GBV survivors.

## Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

### Critical areas of concern:

- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

## 22. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country taken to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

The participation of women in public life and decision making remains a challenge for the country. Even though breakthroughs have been made in increasing women's representation in the Public Sector, more challenges remain in the political domain. The Global Gender Gap Index ranks Botswana among the least performing countries in the world holding just **11%** of parliamentary seats and **18%** at local authorities. However, the Government through collaboration with other stakeholders has been working towards the promotion of women participation in politics. After the 2019 General elections, **4** women out of **6** positions were nominated Special Members of Parliament and were all allocated ministerial positions.

Trade Unions also support women empowerment and have reserved special quotas for women. For example, Botswana Public Employees Union (BOPEU) has reserved a seat

specifically for women for its second Deputy President portfolio. A significant number of Political parties have mainstreamed gender in their party manifestos and continue to sensitise their members on women empowerment issues.

Government in collaboration with other stakeholders continues to conduct capacity building for aspiring women politicians in preparations for the 2024 General Elections. UNDP in partnership with the Gender Affairs Department has developed a training manual for Women in Politics in Botswana and will be conducting **15** trainings countrywide in 2024 to train women in campaign management and other key elements associated with standing for political office.

Botswana Caucus for Women in Politics has also been officially recognised and registered. This should improve the representation of women in political office.

### **23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?**

The freedom of speech is encapsulated in the maxim "***Mmualebe o bua la gagwe***" (every person has the right to his or her own opinion). In 2022 parliament repealed the Media Practitioners Act (2008) and replaced it with the Media Practitioners Association Act.

The intentions of the Media Practitioners Association Act are as follows:

- i. Regulate the media and register journalists to achieve professionalism in the media.
- ii. Establishment of a Statutory press council, under which two committees (Complaints and Appeals Committees) are to be established to adjudicate and mediate between media houses and the aggrieved.
- iii. Establish committees, with two representatives coming from independent media organisations, Botswana Editors Forum (BEF) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa-Botswana (MISA-Botswana).

One of the key components of the Media Practitioners Association Act is that it calls for the development of Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics recognises that gender equality is intrinsic to freedom of expression; that all women and men have the right to communicate their views, interests and needs, and that "giving voice to the voiceless" is critical to citizenship participation, and responsive governance. The Act indicates that the Code of Ethics should include the following aspects:

- i. Duties and obligations of journalists and media enterprises.
- ii. Protection of minors.
- iii. Gender equality.
- iv. Protection of persons suffering from a physical or mental disability.
- v. Advertising.
- vi. Fair competition in the media industry.
- vii. Protection of privacy of individuals.
- viii. Unlawful publication of defamatory matter in accordance with the provisions of the penal Code.
- ix. Continuous professional development of journalists.
- x. Sexual exploitation or abuse.
- xi. Unbiased and unfair treatment.

Government in partnership with other stakeholders has also conducted several capacity building training programmes to improve the representation of women in media by promoting policies and ethical codes that support gender equality. In 2022 the World Association of News Publishers trained over 60 Botswana women in newsroom management under its leadership Programme.

The Programme also identified sexual harassment in the newsrooms and Online violence against women journalists as impediment to professional growth and one of the key reasons for many women journalists leaving the profession. Since 2020, Gender Links Botswana has been running media capacitation programmes to train and equip journalists with tools to cover gender and women in politics. In 2023, The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)-Botswana, in collaboration with Fredrick Ebert Stiftung (FES), ran media workshops on Elections and Gender sensitive reporting.

**24. Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (Government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country took over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.**

The Government of Botswana is fully convinced that promoting gender equality and harnessing the productive potential of women can guarantee Botswana sustainable socio-economic development in the twenty-first century. To this end, the Government has developed targeted support to women through Programmes and policies that ensure and accelerate their sustainable participation in socio-economic development; with the aim to reverse imbalances created by previous policies and Programmes which impacted negatively on women and hindered their effective participation in the economy. The Government has therefore established the National Gender Commission, Inter Ministerial Committee on Gender Based Violence and Gender committees which are coordinated by the Gender Affairs Department.

The Gender Affairs Department under the Ministry of Youth, Gender, Sport and Culture is the overall gender machinery mandated to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender issues in the development process. The Department uses the National Policy on Gender and Development which aims at promoting gender equality and eliminating gender- based discrimination. This policy provides a framework for integrating gender considerations into all aspects of national development.

To ensure that women continue to enjoy their full human rights, the Government established the National Gender Commission to monitor implementation of the National Policy on Gender and Development which emphasises gender mainstreaming across sectors. In addition, the Commission monitors the environment to ensure that women and men equally access the socio-economic, cultural and political opportunities in the Country. Furthermore, the Government established the High Level Inter-Ministerial

Committee on GBV to guide the National GBV Response. Establishment of District Gender Committees also continues and a total of **13** committees were established during the reporting period.

The amount allocated to the Gender Affairs Department for the 2024/2025 is **USD101,960.00**. The Department works with NGOs, CBOs, CSOs, women's organisations and groups that are promoting gender issues. To enhance the capacity of the National Gender Machinery in the promotion of a gender responsive budgeting approach, the Government with support of the UN Women trained all **72** National Gender Machinery Programme Officers on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in 2022. In addition, The National Gender Machinery capacitated **28** District Gender Committees on Gender and Development. Furthermore, each Committee is allocated a budget ranging between **USD500** and **USD1000** towards implementation of their plans.

Botswana through the Gender Affairs Department has engaged with traditional leaders (Dikgosi) on mainstreaming gender into the customary justice system, the traditional leaders together with the Department have already established Gender Committees and developed action plans in their respective communities. These committees also try to address gender issues at district level.

**25. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women's organizations)**

Botswana has established several mechanisms and institutions to promote gender equality and empower women. These initiatives are designed to address various aspects of women's rights, economic empowerment, political participation, and protection against Gender Based Violence.

One of the anchoring mechanisms is the establishment of Gender Focal Persons from all



sectors. The designated officials from parastatals, Government Ministries and Departments are tasked with mainstreaming gender into their policy-making, planning, and programming.

Government intensified efforts to mainstream gender through active engagement of various sectors as evidenced by the Gender Strategy in Agricultural Sector; development of Climate Change Policy and the current mainstreaming of gender into the Justice System. Other administrative reforms include; establishment of the Gender and Child Protection Branch by the Botswana Police Service and the establishment of Specialised Courts by the Administration of Justice to expedite the hearing of Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases.

The Government of Botswana in April 2022, undertook its fourth Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment alongside its first stand-alone gender-responsive Public Financial Management (PFM) assessment. The purpose was to evaluate the adequacy of the country's public finance systems to implement gender policies and associated laws. The results aim to improve the Government's PFM on the equitable distribution of resources, particularly at the level of the Ministry of Finance.

The report noted that although the Government of Botswana was committed to gender equality and development, there was no evidence of the formal adoption of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), and that was a gap that needed to be addressed. The PEFA and gender-responsive PFM assessments also identified weaknesses in coordination of gender equality policies, with a lack of well-structured oversight, and data for tracking gender mainstreaming across service delivery centres. The Government has taken initiatives towards addressing these gaps.

**26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?**

Botswana has a national human rights institution. The Office of the Ombudsman was conferred with a mandate to investigate human rights violations through the Ombudsman (Amendment) Act of 2021. The Act that was operationalised in July 2023 expressly confers the human rights mandate on the Office of the Ombudsman in accordance with the Paris Principles.

The functions of the Ombudsman office under the Act include the investigation of human rights violations both the public and the private entities, collaboration with the civil society, research, inspections, independent monitoring and reporting of the country's progress on human rights issues to treaty bodies. A highlight of the Act is the enforcement of Ombudsman decisions on issues of human rights, against recalcitrant entities through a court order. The office is currently undergoing restructuring which will enable it to effectively execute its role of promoting the rights of women and girls as well as the rights of other marginalised and vulnerable groups.

Following Government rationalisation, a new Ministry of Justice with the sole responsibility for the justice portfolio was established in April 2022. The new Ministry now houses the Human Rights Unit, which is the national focal point for the coordination of human rights issues.

Section 56 of the Children's Act criminalises neglect, ill treatment and exploitation of children whereas Sections 57 to 61 of the Act stipulates specific offences which can be perpetrated against children. There is a case management system which the Government utilises to capture the number of these offences and it informs interventions for children who are found to be in need of protection. A protection order which results in the removal of a child to a place of safety that has been duly established as per the provisions of Section 97 of the Children's Act may

be issued for a child who is deemed to be in need of protection.

There are currently **373** children in child welfare institutions across the country and **20** in foster care. Such facilities are routinely inspected to ensure their compliance to child welfare standards and are issued renewable licenses on an annual basis. The pilot foster care Programme has currently been extended to **4** more districts. Regarding the monitoring of the welfare of children placed in alternative care, each child has an individual care plan which is monitored by resident social workers.

The Commission recommends several legislative and policy reviews that would advance gender equality, including amendments to the Constitution to enhance protection from discrimination and advance the right to land; recommendations to advance the representation of women and PWDs, particularly at national and local levels; and criminal reform to increase penalties for sexual violence. In addition, the commission recommended that Section 15 of the Constitution be expanded to include intersex and disability as grounds for non-discrimination.

**27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?**

Botswana is cognisant of the role of women in realising durable peace and security. The country subscribes to the ideals of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; the African Union Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment and the SADC Regional Strategy on Women, Peace and Security.

Strides have been made to address challenges of women’s advancement and inclusion in the military, law enforcement and the broader security sector in Botswana. Regarding the advancement of women actors as decision making within the security sector, it is worth

noting that Botswana appointed the first female Commissioner of Prisons in 2021. In addition, Botswana appointed the first female Commissioner of Police in 2024.

Since the last reporting period, Botswana has increasingly appointed women in the military, law enforcement and the broader security sector.

**The table below shows the percentage of women in security sector institutions of Botswana**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Percentage of Women</b>
Botswana Defense Force	8.5
Botswana Police Service	35
Botswana Prison Service	22.2

Botswana appreciates the support of development partners in the implementation of Women Peace and Security strategies. In September 2023, Botswana signed a bilateral commitment on Women, Peace and Security with the United States of America. The country requires technical support to develop and implement the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

The Action Plan amongst others envisage that the BDF will establish a Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Programme, social welfare policies and implement some organisational reforms in line with WPS. The aim of the action plan is that by 2029, the BDF should be a more inclusive, efficient and combat ready force.

**28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?**

The security apparatus in Botswana has adopted gender mainstreaming and continues to integrate gender into their Programmes and policies. The Botswana Defence Force (BDF) continues to recruit female soldiers and currently **8.5%** of its workforce is women. The number of women at the Botswana Police Service is at **35%**, with **21%** representation at senior management level (Assistant Commissioner to Commissioner positions). In 2021 Botswana Prisons Service appointed its first female Commissioner after six decades and this achievement was also recorded by the Botswana Police Service who appointed its first female Commissioner in 2024.

Botswana deployed her troops to Mozambique since 2021 to participate in the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM). The SAMIM mandate includes supporting Mozambique to combat acts of violent extremism by neutralising the terrorist threat and restoring security to create a secure environment. Since the deployment started, **3%** of the SAMIM contingent comprised women.

**29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?**

To demonstrate commitment to the global call for accountability of international humanitarian law and human rights, Botswana recently signed, ratified or acceded to the following instruments:

- i. The Nuclear Ban Treaty (2018), the Arms of Trade Treaty and the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons of July 2020.
- ii. In 2023, Botswana enacted the Serious Crimes of International Concern Act. The Act which criminalises core crimes under the Rome Statute namely, crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes and crimes of aggression.
- iii. The Biological Weapons (Prohibition) Act (2018); the Chemical Weapons (Prohibition) Act (2018); Nuclear Weapons (Prohibition) Act (2018) and Biological and Toxins Weapons (Amendment) Act No 10 of 2022. The institution established to implement these legislations is the Chemical, Biological, Nuclear, Radiological Weapons Management Authority.
- iv. The Drug Enforcement Agency was established in accordance with the Illicit Traffic in Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act of 2018. The agency is mandated to disseminate information on the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and investigate complaints of alleged violation of the Act.

To enhance judicial mechanisms that redress and prevent violations of the rights of women and girls, the Ministry of Justice in collaboration with development partners, has developed a Road Map on Child Friendly Justice System and Guidelines on Gender Mainstreaming. Botswana is currently reviewing its criminal justice System to enhance inter-agency cooperation to better realise the constitutional right to protection of the law.

The Office of the Ombudsman was transferred from the Ministry for State President and placed under the Ministry of Justice. As alluded to above, the Office was conferred with the Human Rights mandate and transformed into a national human rights institution. As is restructuring, consideration will be made to offer target services to women, girls and other marginalised and vulnerable groups. Other Departments under the Ministry of Justice which ensure the justifiability of human rights are the Courts, the Land Tribunal and Legal Aid Botswana which provides free legal representation for indigent citizens who wish to apply to Court for redress following violation of human rights.

To foster a meaningful engagement between Government and Civil society, the Government established the National Human Rights Coordinating Committee in June 2020. The Committee comprises Government Ministries and Civil Society Organisations and is co-chaired by the Ministry of Justice and a representative of the Civil Society.

Botswana's 2020 Draft Comprehensive Human Rights Strategy and National Action Plan (CHRSNAP) is a product of the cooperation of Government and Non-Governmental Organisations through the National Human Rights Coordinating Committee. Additionally, there exists an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit which combats trafficking in persons, including women and girls. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act was amended in 2024 to strengthen protection of victims. The Unit is currently implementing the Anti Human Trafficking National Action Plan (2023-2028).

### 30. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

In order to eliminate discrimination and violation of the rights of the girl child including adolescents, the Botswana Police Service established a Gender and Child Protection Branch in April 2021 to address GBV and all offences relating to children.

The Anti-Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act (2023) introduces provisions that deal specifically with sex trafficking of minors under Section 2 and Section 9A. The penalties range from a minimum mandatory sentence of not less than 30 years and a maximum of life imprisonment with a fine of approximately **USD100 000.00** without the option of a suspended sentence.

Teacher aid is available in the education system for children and the country has developed a language policy in which in the first two years of Primary Education, children will bridge with their

mother tongue. That is, children have an opportunity to appreciate concepts with their mother tongue. The policy commenced with **13** languages in January 2023.

Regarding vaccination against HPV, 55% of girls aged 9-13 were vaccinated in 2020. The coverage increased to around 90% in 2023.

In the Promotion of Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM), the Government has organised campaigns and consultative strategy meetings to advocate for increased participation of girls in STEM fields. Social Protection Programmes were strengthened to create more inclusive opportunities especially for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners and other vulnerable adult groups. The Government has put in place policies to strengthen interlinkages in skills development including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and related systems to the educational system to meet the market needs required to achieve the High Income Country Status.

### 31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

The Government of Botswana has prioritised the involvement of women in the management of natural resources, especially in the processes of sustainable benefits and decision making. Botswana reviewed and updated its environmental policy frameworks to ensure that women and other vulnerable groups can adapt and be resilient against the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss.

The following are policy frameworks within the environment domain that have integrated gender issues:

#### **Climate Change Policy, 2021**

The policy calls for gender integration in all actions relating to mitigation and adaptation as it recognises that women are mostly affected by effects of climate change. It provides a framework to respond to existing and anticipated climate change impacts

### **Tourism Policy, 2021**

The policy aims to position Botswana as a tourist destination of choice by year 2030 and beyond by elevating the recognition of tourism as a priority growth area and aggressively developing and promoting the sector. It provides opportunities for women and other vulnerable groups to participate and benefit meaningfully from the tourism industry.

### **Integrated Waste Management Policy, 2021**

The policy enables for communities, especially women, to participate in the circular economy and generate sustainable livelihoods from waste material. It provides a platform for integrated sustainable waste management through adequate planning and resourcing, improving waste regulation and governance and increased shared responsibility among stakeholders for the protection of public health and the environment.

### **National Adaptation Plan Framework, 2020**

The framework guides the development, implementation, and monitoring of adaptation actions geared towards ensuring that national vulnerability to climate change is significantly reduced.

### **National Action Program to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, 2022**

The program aims to maintain productive lands as well as to reverse land degradation and to halt desertification in Botswana. The NAP also aims to mitigate the effects of drought in dry lands. The policy recommends actions to protect women and other vulnerable groups from effects of land degradation and desertification. It also proposes actions for sustainable livelihood through use of non-timber forest products.

### **National Environmental Education Strategy and Action Plan, 2023**

This is a five-year Strategy aimed at increasing environmental awareness through attitudinal change, readiness to learn, opportunities to share experiences and the recognition of traditional systems of managing natural resources. The strategy provides community members with knowledge on sustainable environmental management, including on dealing with effects of climate change and other environmental problems.

The above environmental policy frameworks have enabled for the ease of participation of women in natural resources management. For instance, the CBNRM Policy's implementation is supported by the National Environmental Fund. Therefore, Botswana's integration of gender perspectives into environmental policy frameworks has been a success, and a continuous process of policy and action improvement has been adopted.

### **32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and Programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?**

Botswana developed policy frameworks and operationalised measures that are gender considerate into aspects of disaster risk reduction and resilience to effects of climate change.

### **Implementation of the Environmental Assessment Act**

The act compels for the consultation of communities before any development projects are undertaken. As part of consultations, communities are informed of the proposed development project and its likely impacts. Importantly, communities are allowed to share their views and advice on the project. This process assists in addressing environmental impacts that are likely to occur during project implementation. As a result, environmental and



climate change vulnerabilities on communities, especially women are greatly reduced through a statutory enforced consultative process.

### **National Environmental Fund (NEF)**

The NEF was established by the Government of Botswana through Statutory Instrument No. 70 of 2010 to provide grants to community-based organisations' projects that provide for sustainable use of natural resources; implementation of community based natural resource management activities; eco-tourism and national heritage sites development; rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems; promotion of activities related to protection of the urban environment, climate change mitigation and adaptation, waste management and pollution control, environmental awareness and education, and environmental research and monitoring; and capacity building and training Programmes in environmental management and sustainable development.

The NEF has supported a total of **63** community projects to a combined grant total of **USD712,380.00**. This support has been important in building community resilience to disasters and effects of climate change as well as ensuring that they benefit sustainably from natural resources in their environs. It must be noted that most of the projects supported by the NEF are in rural areas, where there is greater need for community adaptation and mitigation.

## **SECTION 4: NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

### **33. Does your country have a valid national strategy or action plan for gender equality?**

Botswana created an enabling environment to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (SDG 5). **The Vision 2036, National Development Plan and the Transitional National Development Plan, Economic Recovery and Transformation Plan** recognise that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but it is critical for inclusive economic growth, poverty reduction,

social development and peace and security. At the apex, is the National Planning Commission (NPC) which is mandated to provide inclusive leadership in national strategy development, planning, implementation coordination and performance monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, the NPC is tasked with coordinating the domestication, localisation and implementation of SDGs and attainment of BPfA in Botswana.

Botswana's current national machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women is spearheaded by the Ministry of Youth, Gender, Sport and Culture led by the Minister. The national gender strategy is actualised through the **National Policy on Gender and Development (NPGAD) of 2015**. The Policy has an approved national gender machinery institutional structure that comprises the National Gender Commission, Gender Affairs Department, Advisory Committee on Men and Boys and Women Girls Issues, District Gender Committees and District Development Committees.

In 2022, the Ministry of Finance undertook a Gender Responsive Assessment of Public Financing Management (GRPFM) to assess the adequacy of the Country's Public Finance Management Systems in response to gender policies and associated laws. The assessment was done in recognition that the current gender responsive programmes or initiatives are not aligned to the ongoing PFM reforms and the assessment will assist with the formal recognition of gender issues within the public finance management cycle and daily operational decision making (**PEFA: 2022**).

A summary of the assessment of the study conducted by the Ministry of Finance in 2022 indicates that:

- i. The current gender responsive programmes or initiatives are not aligned to the ongoing Public Finance Reforms (PFM) reforms and the assessment will assist with the formal recognition of gender issues within the public finance management cycle and daily operational decision making. The assessment is used as a litmus test for tracking service delivery using

sex-disaggregated results to enable enhancement of equitable access to services.

- ii. The country is not doing very well in terms of preventing and eliminating gender inequality in some sectors and overall unsatisfactory performance is on Gender Based Violence (GBV) which has worsened since the outbreak of COVID 19 especially during the lockdown period (2020 Social Services Report).
- iii. The initiatives of tracking gender mainstreaming within PFM systems, especially the budget cycle, are still lagging behind hence the current tools are not adequate for the existing gender related policies and Programmes.
- iv. The assessment will form part of the evaluation of the country's PFM systems and long term improvement on the equitable distributions of financial resources.
- v. Gender Responsive Public Finance Management (GRPFM) makes gender an integral part in fiscal and budgetary decision making and brings focus to the recognition that fiscal policies (both expenditures and revenues) have different impacts on men, women, girls and boys.
- vi. Gender Responsive Budgeting is intended to ensure that PFM can contribute to addressing gender specific needs and closing gender gaps in men and women's opportunities for economic, social, and political participation and thus development outcomes.
- vii. The results of this assessment will raise awareness on where the country is lacking in terms of PFM systems responses to gender mainstreaming and also make policy makers realise how they can use gender to track the impact of budget allocation on the society and general service delivery (PEFA: 2022).

**34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion for the national budget that is invested in the proportion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.**

The Botswana Integrated Sustainable Financing Strategy (BSFS) was developed using the standard Integrated National Financing

Framework (INFF) process, originating from the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA). This agenda introduced over 100 policy actions for UN Member States to finance sustainable development, transform the global economy, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The INFF process emphasises the importance of attracting both domestic and international private capital to supplement Government and official development assistance, in order to support the transition from human-centred Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to ecosystem centred SDGs. Needless to say that on financing for development, the AAAA, as well as the SDG 17, recognizes that all types of financing are needed for the implementation of the agenda (MoF:2023).

The primary objective of this Strategy is to narrow the SDG financing gap by implementing policy, regulatory, capacity and financial instrument reforms, providing a **gender-responsive, green and climate-smart SDG financing strategy** based on dialogue and partnerships for the goals and with a focus on SDG localisation through decentralisation.

**35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

There are various structures through which stakeholders can participate. These include;

- i. Vision 2036 Council
- ii. National Planning Commission
- iii. National SDGs Secretariat
- iv. Joint National Steering Committee on SDGs and Technical Task Force
- v. SDGs Focal Persons in line Ministries
- vi. District Gender Focal Points
- vii. Parliamentary Select Committee on SDGs
- viii. Botswana Joint National-UN Steering Committee (United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
- ix. National Gender Commission
- x. EU Gender Dialogue
- xi. Budget Pitso

- xii. Bogosi Pitso
- xiii. Women's Parliamentary Caucus
- xiv. District Development Plan engagements
- xv. District Gender Committees

**36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.**

Representatives from Government Ministries, the Private Sector, Trade Unions and Civil Society Organisations participated in generating the Report. Sectors made direct input on areas that fell within their jurisdiction. The High Level Inter-Ministerial Committee considered that Report as per Internal Protocols and approved its submission.

**37. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.**

Botswana constantly continues with the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, UPR and other UN Human Rights mechanisms that address gender equality. The monitoring of implementation lies with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Below are intended actions regarding implementation:

**The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**

Botswana presented her second periodic report on the ICCPR to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva, Switzerland from 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021. Following this process, the Committee issued concluding observations aimed at guiding Botswana to improve her human rights situation. In October 2023, the Ministry of Justice circulated the concluding observations to Government

Ministries and Departments for implementation. We attach Botswana's second periodic report, the concluding observations and the implementation plan which some stakeholders have populated.

The next steps are:

- i. Formulate a zero-draft report on the progress made by Botswana in implementing the recommendations in the concluding observations. The draft report should be updated regularly in preparation for the next reporting cycle.
- ii. Submit by November 2024, information on the implementation of the recommendations made by the committee in paragraphs 22 (liberty and security of persons), paragraph 26 (trafficking in persons and forced labour) and paragraph 30 (treatment of refugees and asylum seekers).
- iii. It is expected that in the year 2027, the Human Rights Council will submit to Botswana a list of issues whereas Botswana is expected to respond within one year after receipt thereof.

**The Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**

Botswana presented her combined seventeenth to twenty-second periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Geneva, Switzerland in November 2022.

Following this process, the Committee issued concluding observations aimed at guiding Botswana to improve her human rights situation. In October 2023, the Ministry of Justice circulated the concluding observations to implementing Government Ministries and Departments for implementation. We attach the combined seventeen to twenty-second periodic report, concluding observations and the implementation plan which some stakeholders have populated.

The next steps are:

- i. Submit a follow up report on the implementation of recommendations contained in paragraph 12 (National Human Rights Institution) and paragraph 20 (lands, territories and natural resources) of the concluding observations.



- ii. Formulate a zero-draft report on Botswana’s progress in implementing the recommendations on the concluding observations. The draft report should be regularly updated in preparation for the next reporting cycle.
- iii. Submit by March 2026, the twenty third to twenty fourth periodic report as a single document.

**The Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**

Botswana was reviewed by the Human Rights Committee in May 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland. Following the review, the Ministry of Justice coordinated the consolidation of the country’s position on the recommendations issued during the review. The statement of the position on the **296** recommendations issued to Botswana at the UPR in May 2023 was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September 2023. Botswana accepted to implement **206** recommendations, partly accepted **5** recommendations, and did not commit to implement **85** recommendations. The next action is to coordinate the compilation of the mid-term review report which should be submitted **2** years following the date of the review. The Human Rights Council will issue a calendar which will indicate when Botswana’s 5<sup>th</sup> UPR cycle report is due.

**African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)**

Botswana acceded to the Protocol to The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in October 2023, on the twentieth anniversary of the Protocol. Botswana was last reviewed by the Commission on Human and People’s Rights in 2018. The attached concluding observations which were received following that review.

**Human Rights of Women**

Government continues to improve its institutional frameworks geared towards ensuring systematic follow up and implementation of recommendations from treaty bodies. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Treaties, Conventions and Protocols (IMCTCP)

continues to ensure Botswana’s compliance to international agreements, including reporting and follow- up on recommendations from treaty bodies.

The National Human Rights Coordinating Committee which comprises Government Ministries and Civil Society Organisations foster a meaningful engagement in various human rights issues, including on reporting on progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.

**SECTION FIVE: DATA AND STATISTICS**

**38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?**

The following is a comprehensive summary of the most important areas where Botswana has made the most progress over the past five years. The topics covered the following:

**Education: Overcoming Historical Inequalities**

One of the most remarkable areas of progress is in education. Gender statistics from the 2022 census reveal the emergence of reverse inequalities, particularly in post-secondary education where females now predominate, especially among younger cohorts. This shift marks a significant departure from historical patterns where males had higher educational attainment. The census data shows that younger women are increasingly accessing and excelling in higher education, although older women still lag behind men in obtaining certificates and advanced degrees. This generational change underscores the impact of policies and programmes aimed at promoting gender equality in education. By addressing these disparities, Botswana is fostering a future where educational attainment is not hindered by gender.

## **Labour Force Participation and Economic Engagement**

Improvements in labour force participation rates among females represent another critical area of progress. The 2022 census data indicates that women's participation in the labour force has seen significant improvement over the past five years. However, challenges remain, particularly concerning the disproportionate engagement of women in unpaid housework and higher unemployment rates compared to men. Despite these challenges, the data highlights a positive trend towards increased female labour force participation. Efforts to support women's economic empowerment, including initiatives to enhance female entrepreneurship and reduce the burden of unpaid work, are beginning to yield results. These advancements reflect Botswana's commitment to creating a more inclusive economy where women can participate fully and equally.

## **Addressing Child Marriage and Marriage Trends**

The census data also reveals important trends in marriage, with the percentage of the married population diminishing. A notable concern highlighted is the issue of child marriages, which disproportionately affect young girls. Efforts to combat child marriages are critical to protecting the rights and futures of young women. The decreasing marriage rates, combined with targeted interventions against child marriages, suggest a societal shift towards recognizing and addressing gender-based vulnerabilities. By focusing on these issues, Botswana is making strides in safeguarding the well-being and autonomy of women and girls.

Botswana's incorporation of gender statistics in the 2022 Population and Housing Census has provided a comprehensive understanding of the country's progress in gender equality. The most significant areas of advancement include narrowing the gender gap in population distribution, achieving educational parity among younger cohorts, improving female labour force participation, and addressing critical issues such as child marriage. These findings underscore the effectiveness of policies aimed at promoting

gender equality and highlight areas where continued efforts are needed. As Botswana moves forward, maintaining and building upon these achievements will be essential in creating a truly equitable society for all its citizens.

### **39. Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?**

Botswana's strategic priorities for strengthening national gender statistics over the next five years are centred on producing a comprehensive Gender Statistics Report aligned with the SDGs, mainstreaming gender into the Botswana Strategy for Development of Statistics II (BSDS II) by Statistics Botswana, evaluating and improving administrative data collection tools, identifying data gaps, and developing strategies to address these gaps.

These efforts are essential for providing accurate and detailed gender-specific data that supports the country's commitment to achieving gender equality and empowering all individuals regardless of gender. By focusing on these priorities, Botswana aims to enhance its capacity to monitor progress, inform policy decisions, and promote sustainable development through gender-responsive statistics. The following are the ways in which we will improve the gender statistics:

#### **Producing the Gender Statistics Report**

A primary priority is the production of a comprehensive Gender Statistics Report by Statistics Botswana. This report will be aligned with the SDGs, focusing on populating relevant SDG indicators. The objective is to provide detailed and reliable gender-specific data that reflects the progress and challenges in achieving gender equality. This report will serve as a crucial tool for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders to track progress, identify gaps, and formulate effective gender-responsive policies.

## **Mainstreaming Gender in the Botswana Strategy for Development of Statistics (BSDS) II**

It must be noted that Statistics Botswana is still in efforts to draft the strategy. Botswana Strategy for Development of Statistics (BSDS) II will prioritize the mainstreaming of gender into the national statistical strategy. This involves integrating gender perspectives across all statistical activities and ensuring that gender-disaggregated data is systematically collected, analyzed, and reported. By embedding gender considerations into the BSDS II, Botswana aims to enhance the visibility of gender issues and ensure that statistical processes contribute to gender equality objectives.

### **Evaluation of Administrative Data Collection Tools for Gender Department**

Another critical priority is the evaluation of existing administrative data collection tools used by the Gender Department. This evaluation will assess the effectiveness of current tools in capturing gender-specific information and identify areas for improvement. The goal is to ensure that administrative data systems are robust, reliable, and capable of generating high-quality gender statistics. Enhancing these tools will improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of gender-related data collected through administrative processes.

### **Identifying Gender Statistics Data Gaps**

Identifying data gaps in gender statistics is essential for developing a complete picture of gender equality in Botswana. This involves a thorough review of existing data sources to pinpoint areas where gender-specific information is lacking or insufficient. Once these gaps are identified, targeted efforts can be made to address them, ensuring that all relevant aspects of gender equality are adequately monitored and reported.

### **Developing Strategies to Meet Data Gaps**

To address the identified data gaps, Botswana will develop and implement strategies aimed at improving data collection and analysis. This may

involve designing new surveys, enhancing existing data collection methodologies, and leveraging technology to gather more detailed and timely gender-disaggregated data. Collaboration with various stakeholders, including Government agencies, non-Governmental organizations, and international partners, will be crucial in developing innovative solutions to meet these data gaps.

## **40. What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?**

Botswana prioritised a set of domesticated SDG gender indicators to effectively monitor and measure progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Indicators are reported annually on the Domesticated Indicator Framework (DIF) by Statistics Botswana. These indicators are critical for assessing the country's performance in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into national development strategies. The following paragraphs detail the key gender-specific indicators that Botswana focuses on:

### **Indicator 5.5.1: Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments and Local Governments**

This indicator measures the representation of women in political and decision-making positions. Monitoring the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local Governments is essential to assess progress towards gender equality in political participation and leadership.

### **Indicator 5.5.2: Proportion of Women in Managerial Positions**

This indicator tracks the presence of women in managerial roles across various sectors. It is crucial for evaluating gender equality in the workplace and ensuring that women have equal opportunities for career advancement and leadership.

**Indicator 4.5.1: Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous people and conflict affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated.**

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in education measures the relative access to education for males and females. It is calculated for different levels of education, including primary, secondary, and tertiary. This indicator helps in assessing gender equality in educational attainment and identifying gaps where interventions are needed.

**Indicator 5.6.1: Proportion of Women Aged 15-49 Who Make Their Own Informed Decisions Regarding Sexual Relations, Contraceptive Use, and Reproductive Health Care**

This indicator assesses women's autonomy and decision-making power in matters related to their sexual and reproductive health. It is vital for understanding the extent to which women can exercise their rights and make informed choices about their bodies.

**Indicator 3.1.1: Maternal Mortality Ratio**

The maternal mortality ratio is a critical indicator of women's health and the effectiveness of health care systems in providing maternal care. Monitoring this ratio helps in identifying progress and challenges in reducing maternal deaths and improving maternal health services.

**Indicator 5.4.1: Proportion of Time Spent on Unpaid Domestic and Care Work, by Sex, Age and Location**

This indicator measures the amount of time that women and men spend on unpaid domestic and care work. It is essential for understanding gender disparities in the distribution of unpaid labour and informing policies aimed at achieving a more equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities.

**Indicator 5.2.1: Proportion of ever partnered women and girls aged 15 years**

**and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and age.**

Monitoring the prevalence of Gender Based Violence, including intimate partner violence and other forms of violence against women and girls, is crucial for assessing the safety and well-being of women. This indicator helps in evaluating the effectiveness of measures to prevent and respond to violence.

**Indicator 8.3.1: Proportion of Informal Employment in non-agriculture employment by sex**

This indicator tracks the proportion of women engaged in informal employment. It is important for understanding the economic vulnerabilities faced by women and ensuring that policies address the challenges of informal sector workers.

**Indicator 5.a.1: (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure**

Ownership of land and property is a key factor in women's economic empowerment. Monitoring this indicator helps in assessing women's access to economic resources and their ability to secure livelihoods and economic independence.

**Indicator 5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex**

This indicator measures the digital inclusion of women and their access to information and communication technologies. It is essential for understanding gender disparities in digital literacy and connectivity and ensuring that women can fully participate in the digital economy.

## 41. Which data disaggregation are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

Key Data Disaggregation for addressing gender issues in major surveys are: The Botswana Population and Housing Census and the Botswana Multi-topic Household Survey (BMTHS).

To effectively address and monitor gender issues as revealed by the 2022 Population and Housing Census, it is crucial that major surveys routinely provide detailed and disaggregated data. This disaggregation enables a nuanced understanding of gender disparities and supports the formulation of targeted policies. The following outlines the key areas where data disaggregation is routinely provided:

### **Population Demographics by Gender and Age**

Disaggregating population data by gender and age is fundamental. This includes the total population, with a breakdown by gender across different age groups to monitor the gender ratio and understand demographic shifts. Detailed age-specific analysis, such as within specific brackets (e.g., 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, etc.), for both males and females helps capture trends and challenges faced by different age groups. This disaggregation is vital for identifying age-specific gender disparities and informing policies tailored to various life stages, including childhood, adolescence, and old age.

### **Educational Attainment**

Education data should be broken down by levels of education, such as primary, secondary, and post-secondary, disaggregated by gender. Additionally, analysing educational attainment within specific age cohorts helps highlight generational changes and disparities. This approach enables the identification of progress and remaining gaps in educational attainment between males and females, particularly focusing on younger and older cohorts.

### **Labour Force Participation**

Labour market data should include employment status, disaggregated by gender, encompassing categories such as employed, unemployed, and economically inactive. Further, it should break down the type of employment, comparing full-time, part-time, self-employed, unpaid family workers, and informal sector employment across genders. Disaggregating by the sector of employment e.g. agriculture, mining, tourism, services helps identify sector-specific gender disparities. Detailed labour market data supports policies aimed at enhancing female labour force participation and addressing gender-specific economic challenges.

### **Income and Earnings**

Income data should be disaggregated by gender, comparing male and female earnings across various employment types and sectors. This includes examining income disparities between full-time, part-time, self-employed, and informal sector workers, disaggregated by gender. Understanding the gender wage gap and formulating strategies to ensure equal pay for equal work is facilitated by this detailed income data.

### **Household Composition and Housing**

Household data should include the gender of household heads to analyse the distribution and socioeconomic status of male-headed versus female-headed households. Additionally, gender-disaggregated data on access to housing and living conditions is essential to understand gender-specific housing challenges. This disaggregation provides insights into the living conditions and vulnerabilities of female-headed households.

### **Health and Disability**

Health data should be disaggregated by gender, including health status, access to healthcare, and specific health issues affecting males and females. Disability prevalence by gender is also critical to address specific needs and support services. Gender-disaggregated health data helps address gender-specific health disparities and improve overall health outcomes.

## **Marriage and Family Structure**

Data on marriage and family should be broken down by marital status, with gender-specific data on categories such as single, married, divorced, and widowed. Additionally, data on incidences of child marriage should be disaggregated by gender and age. This helps understand trends in marriage and family structure and address issues like child marriage, which predominantly affects young girls.

## **SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

Botswana has made significant strides in advancing gender equality over the past five years through legislative reforms, social support initiatives, and gender-sensitive programming. However, challenges persist, requiring continued efforts to address financial inclusion, improve data management and strengthen coordination mechanisms. By building on existing initiatives and addressing underlying barriers, Botswana can further advance gender equality and foster inclusive development for all its citizens.

Noting that gender is evolving, there is need for constant capacity building of the National Gender Machinery, Gender Focal Points for all key stakeholders in the gender space. In addition, there is need for financial and skills transfer to facilitate comprehensive mainstreaming of gender across all sectors. On this note, the Government of Botswana will continue to forge partnerships with Development Partners, the Private Sector, Academia and Civil Society to improve the status of women as the Country moves towards the National Vision 2036, Agenda 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063.



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