Botswana: Millennium Development Goals, Status Report 2010

The Republic of Botswana and the United Nations - Botswana

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Botswana has an area of 581,730 sq km and a population of 1.99 million (2009 estimate). It has five major political parties and it is located in Southern Africa bordering Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Zambia.

About the Report: This report documents Botswana’s progress towards MDGs from 2000 to 2010. It details three major issues: Successes and challenges for each MDG, key policies and programmes for each MDG as well as monitoring progress for each MDG.

Under goal 1, the report says that about a third of the population lives below the national poverty line, poverty is also deep, inequality is high, and poverty responds sluggishly to growth. Unemployment, estimated at 26.2% of the labour force in 2008, up from 17.6% in 2005, is quite high, especially amongst the youth. The report indicates that household size is also a source of vulnerability to poverty as the bigger households are, the higher dependency ratios become. This is to say that family planning is an essential instrument in the battle against poverty. The report also notes that poverty has a gender bias. An estimated 33.1% of female headed households were poor compared to 27.4% of those headed by males. As a country, Botswana has adopted an aggressive stance on poverty. Its main strengths are: Political will, strong policy and programme response, a stable and growing economy as well as focus on basic needs.

On goal 2, school-based statistics show that Botswana has made and sustained significant progress towards universal access to basic education for boys and girls. This is attributed by high students' enrolment, school infrastructure, basic equipment, supply of teaching materials and teachers as well as investment in education sector. The report notes that the education sector in Botswana is very well resourced. It reads "it accounts for about 25% of public expenditure. In 2008/09, education was allocated 8.2% of the development budget and 28.5% of the recurrent budget. In 2009/2010, education accounted for 19.6% of the total budget. Investment in education has been increasing at an annual rate of 4% over the last decade." The Government’s investment in education is geared at expanding access and enhancing quality. The investment in quality focuses on lowering student-teacher ratios, higher teacher qualifications, pupil exposure to information communication technologies (ICTs), among others. Generally, the report notes that the primary school dropout rate is low and declining, which suggests growing appreciation of the value of education by parents.

On goal 3, the report indicates that Botswana has made good progress towards gender equality. It notes that gender parity has virtually been achieved in primary and secondary education. It further notes that the share of women in public and business sectors decision making positions has grown considerably. For instance, in 2009, the report notes that, "women accounted for 45% of senior management positions in the public service, up from 37% in 2005. Two of Botswana’s most powerful public enterprises, the Botswana Development Corporation and the National Development Bank, are headed by women. The Governor of the Bank of Botswana, (the Central Bank), the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Attorney General are women. One of the country’s three largest commercial banks and the dominant insurance house are also both headed by women." This, the report notes, is attributed to policies and laws that ensure fair regulatory balance for men and women in respect of access to opportunities, positions and resources. However, the report iron's out areas that require marked improvement. They include violence against women, political representation, as well as historical and culturally entrenched inequalities.
Generally, enrolment statistics suggest that Botswana has already achieved the MDG target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education. However, there are a number of critical areas where improvement is required. These include violence against women, women's economic empowerment, data capabilities for monitoring women's development issues and politics. In politics, for instance, women account for only 7 percent of the members of the current Parliament, down from 11% in the 1999-2004 Parliament and 18% in the 1994-1999 Parliament. Only 20% of Botswana's councillors are women, the same as in the 1999-2004 political cycle.

Regarding goal 4, the report notes that "child survival is strongly correlated with the aggregate health condition, the quality and accessibility of health care, and poverty. Thus, Botswana's high HIV and AIDS burden is an immediate threat to child survival. Children born with HIV are ultra vulnerable to disease and death. Children born into poverty are also vulnerable to malnutrition and disease." The report indicates that between 1991 and 1994, the Under Five Mortality Rate (USMR) fell from 63 deaths per 1000 live births (63/1000) to 50 in 1997, continuing a trend that dates back to 1971 when the USMR was 97/1000. Over the same period, the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) fell from 48/1000 in 1991 to 37/1000 in 1996. Both the USMR and the IMR have since deteriorated, respectively reaching 76/1000 and 57/1000 in 2007.

Under goal 5, the report shows that between 1991 and 2005, Botswana achieved the national maternal health target and was on track to achieve the global target. The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) dropped from 326 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1991 to 135/100,000, well within the national target of 150/100,000 by 2011 and well within the trend path required to achieve the steeper global target of 82/100,000. According to the report, the leading causes of maternal mortality are haemorrhage (28%); hypertension (16%); abortion (13%), sepsis (12%); HIV related (10.2%); and ectopic (4%). About 6% of deaths were attributed to unknown causes.

On goal 6, the report notes that AIDS national prevalence in 2008 stood at 17.6% compared to 17.1% in 2004. HIV and AIDS has a strong gender dimension. The prevalence rate for females was 20.4% in 2008 compared to 14.2% for males. However, the government has been at fore front towards lowering prevalence incidence by working with its partners in HIV prevention and mitigation, reducing the number of annual AIDS deaths (14,000 patients died in 2000 compared with 7,000 patients in 2007), and encouraging the uptake of voluntary HIV testing and counselling services in the country. In 2008, more than half of the population (56.4%) and a record 41.2% of adults aged 15-49 had been tested for HIV, compared to 2007, when less than 20% reported having tested for HIV.

On goal 7, the report notes that Botswana has ratified 10 Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) dealing with the key issues of climate change (4), drought and desertification (1), biological diversity (3) and waste management (2). Following the establishment of the Environmental Education Committee, many activities have been undertaken to improve environmental knowledge and awareness amongst the general public. Major challenges in this respect are Water and Sanitation as well as climate change.

On goal 8, the report notes that Botswana had transformed itself from a least developed country to an upper middle-income country. As its economy grew, Botswana turned increasingly to its own resources for development financing, and reduced dependence on foreign aid. By 2000, Botswana's aid had decreased to US $30.62 million in total and US17.8 per capita. It further notes that Botswana is a beneficiary of several regional and multilateral economic cooperation agreements such as the EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreement, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Free Trade Area and the Africa's Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA).